



## Time Management and Productivity Expert Laura Stack Bridges the Gap Between Good Enough and Great



DENVER, Colorado, December 18, 2012 – At a time when most Americans are competing intently for opportunities to get ahead, too many employees have settled into a comfort zone that’s merely “good enough.” In her latest blog titled “[Bridging the Gap Between Good Enough and Great](#),” time management and productivity expert Laura Stack challenges readers to move beyond being “just good enough” to get by.

Stack, who makes a career of looking at productivity from every angle, says the changing face of the American workplace is not helping matters. A growing population of people working from home isn’t rushing to set up the ideal home office that Stack recommends, and in fact many admit to working from bed. In a recent Wall Street Journal article titled “[More Work Goes Undercover](#),” Stack discusses the phenomenon and its effect on work quality.

Some folks who work from bed justify their choice with claims that working with people from scattered geographic reasons makes working from bed unavoidable. Stack says that think it will make them more productive. More often, though, it gives people an excuse to procrastinate during the workday.

“They think, ‘I’ll just put in a few hours at home in bed tonight anyway, so I have plenty of time to check and price tickets for my next vacation,’” Stack says. The result can be work that is rushed, incomplete, or simply “good enough.”

The philosophy of doing just what is necessary to get by is not a new one, Stack says. It’s one children learn in elementary school, when the smarter children don’t need to work hard to achieve an A grade, and others learn they can get away with just enough effort to earn a C and still pass.

“Yet, we all know the difference between passing and passing with flying colors,” Stack says. “In the workplace, we call the gap between passing and passing with flying colors ‘discretionary effort,’ because ultimately, the employee determines how hard he or she works.

“Do they just scrape by or strive to set a shining example?”

Stack says that success or failure as a leader depends on the ability to tap discretionary effort. While some leaders use positive reinforcement (a carrot), others use negative methods (a stick).

The Carrot is a method of incentivizing a goal by offering a reward. Offering a child \$50 as a reward for a straight A report card is a great incentive, and everyone wins. Offering an employee extra incentive in the form of additional vacation time, public praise, money or another form of reward is often a surefire way to increase productivity in the workplace.

The Stick is a method of making an example out of a person who is a low producer. Stack says she is not a fan of this method, but has been told by some leaders that they sometimes have no choice. If there is a layoff, the lowest producer is going to be the one shown to the door.

Microsoft uses the Stick system, she says, rank-ordering their employees for performance reviews and bonuses.

“Out of 10 employees, two will get glowing reports, seven will meet standards, and one will get a bad review,” Stack says. “Make your people aware of this if they don’t ‘get it’ already.

“Let them know they need to maximize their productivity to avoid a similar fate, and those capable of discretionary effort will be more likely to pour it on.”

Stack says that a third option, one she calls “The Hybrid,” encourages employees to raise their own personal standards.

“Consider establishing your own set of standards that exceed the organization’s,” she says. “If the company accepts a seven on a scale of one to 10, tell your people you’ll accept nothing less than an eight.”

Stack reminds her readers that leaders are duty-bound to find ways to encourage employees to do more than just enough to get by. Dangling a carrot often works well, as does stirring up team pride which is the intended result of the “Hybrid” method; staff members understand that by setting and achieving superior standards, they are putting themselves ahead of the crowd.

For information on bridging the discretionary effort gap, visit [TheProductivityPro.com website](http://TheProductivityPro.com), Email [Laura@TheProductivityPro.com](mailto:Laura@TheProductivityPro.com), or call 303-471-7401.

### **About Laura Stack:**

[Laura Stack](#) is a time management and productivity expert who has been speaking and writing about human potential and peak performance since 1992. She has implemented employee productivity improvement programs at Wal-Mart, Cisco Systems, UBS, Aramark, and Bank of America. Stack presents keynotes and seminars internationally for leaders, entrepreneurs, salespeople, and professional services firms on improving output, lowering stress, and saving time in the workplace.

The president of [The Productivity Pro®, Inc.](#), a time management firm specializing in high-stress environments, Stack is the bestselling author of five books: [“What to do When There’s Too Much to do” \(2012\)](#); “SuperCompetent” (2010); “The Exhaustion Cure” (2008); “Find More Time” (2006); “Leave the Office Earlier” (2004). The 2011-2012 President of the National Speakers Association and recipient of the Certified Speaking Professional (CSP) designation, Stack has served as a spokesperson for Microsoft, 3M, Xerox, and Office Depot and is the creator of The Productivity Pro® planner by Day-Timer. Widely regarded as one of the leading experts in the field of employee productivity and workplace issues, Stack has been featured nationally on the CBS Early Show and CNN, and in USA Today and the New York Times.