



FAKE IT but you **WON'T MAKE IT**

by Greg Wiens

Fake work is something that most leaders today struggle with. It is a relatively new problem, borne of the information age. During the industrial age, efficacy was measured by the number of widgets produced. But in today's marketplace, where coworkers do business from across the globe and the measurement of success tends to be much more abstract, it can be difficult to determine which activities directly or indirectly contribute to the bottom line, and fake work emerges.

The book *Fake Work* by Brent Peterson and Gaylan Neilson explains that “real work” is an activity that is critical to the strategies and goals of any organization, while “fake work” is not aligned with the strategic plan or goals of the company. Ironically, sometimes real work and fake work can be the exact same activity under different circumstances. Fake work often feels like real work because it keeps people busy and tasks are still accomplished, but the end products are simply irrelevant to the mission of the organization.

This phenomenon is so true in the church. Many churches I work with have no idea what their mission is, and even if they did, they have no way of assessing how their jam-packed event calendars contribute to it. It is one thing to know that most churches in America are plateaued or in decline, but linking the activities of a church to its health is a much more challenging task. The concepts of this book clearly apply to the local church. However, many would not be able to apply its principles to the local church environment.

According to Peterson and Nielson, the 10 leading causes of fake work are:

1. Failing to understand your job—your real job
2. Failing to recognize the finish line
3. Failing to focus and prioritize
4. Failing to understand the people around you
5. Failing to communicate about the right things
6. Failing to understand the importance of your team
7. Failing to clarify and drive strategy from top to bottom
8. Failing to see the execution gap—alignment, then execution
9. Failing to manage—no matter what level
10. Failing to see that culture creates an environment of fake work

Each chapter in the book cogently outlines an approach to preventing these failings. The authors are careful to include practical lists for dealing with each cause of fake work as well as action steps to get on the right path toward real work and away from fake work.

FAKE WORK IN REAL LIFE

Fake Work is a helpful book regardless of one's position within an organization. CEOs and grunts alike will find helpful tools to make work more effective and productive. However, regardless of status, to stop doing fake work and start doing real work requires real, honest courage and evaluation. It is difficult to be willing enough to examine entrenched and even encouraged work habits and then change them, especially when these changes will "upset the apple cart" for many people around you.

Traditions themselves reinforce fake work. So one must be willing to think honestly and evaluate the effectiveness of the traditions that are held so dear. This is where many churches would simply be unwilling to apply some of the principles in *Fake Work*. Too many churches make traditions the end in themselves, rather than as means toward effective missional work, which was their original purpose.

This book challenged me to think strategically about all of the activities that comprise my working world. As much as this book helped me think through my efforts to be productive, the content is very difficult to assimilate. Much of the book entails illustrations from the consultants' experiences in working with companies to overcome each of the 10 areas that cause fake work. Though these examples are helpful, at times they were laborious to read through. The principles in this book are invaluable, but digging them out and applying them, especially to a local church environment, may be a chore.

***Fake Work: Why People are Working Harder than Ever
but Accomplishing Less, and How to Fix the Problem***

by Brent Peterson and Gaylan Neilson

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