

# Banking the win of simple business innovation



By [Douglas Kruger](#)

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Are you using the power of digital to make things worse?

The digital revolution has divorced us from the tyrannous bonds of time and place. In the past, to get almost anything done, we had to present ourselves, in person, at a specific place, at an appointed time. Then wage war with a bored clerk.



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Douglas Kruger 15 Jun 2017



In the digital world, however, we can send our work or information online, and we can do so at 3am if we wish. We can act remotely and outside of time parameters, thus greatly increasing our reach and capacity.

Curiously, however, many organisations are not capitalising on this fact.

Take international embassies. In many cases, when applying for a visa you can now fill in all of your details online. Brilliant, right? What a time saver! Not so fast. Despite the online application process, some of these embassies also require that you present yourself at their offices in person, during very limited office hours, to hand over the printed version of the same application form. So rather than 'banking the win' of a new digital age, which would free up their customers from time and place requirements, they instead invite duplication of work. Digital hasn't negated time and place. Instead, it has doubled workload. In reality, there is no advantage to their online application process.



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That's not smart. Agile organisations are empathetic and allow their users to bank the win of digital freedom. Your organisation doesn't need the same information twice, and forcing a person to give you duplicate forms in digital and paper format is actually worse than the old system of paper only.

## Take the 'three into one' challenge

Any time that one of your customers is forced to fill out the same details more than once, you are wasting their time and affording the competition an opportunity for a competitive advantage. Duplication is the primary candidate for simplification.



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I remember using the services of a courier company to ship some books overseas. I filled in the same details effectively four times: once on the online application, once when I filled in the commercial invoice, once on another form when the delivery guy arrived and I had to run back and forth between the driveway and my office scrambling to find all of those details again, and once more on an invoice accompanying my product.

That's ludicrous.

Here is what they should have done, and I offer it to you as a challenge for your staff:

Ask: What three could be replaced by one? This search applies to anything – forms, levers, buttons, people, processes, etc.

Ever walk through an international airport's security and have five people in a row ask for your ticket, check your passport, check your ticket again, and so forth? One person could do those jobs, once. Now, here is an even more radical idea, proposed by Edward De Bono, the famed father of lateral-thinking: what if you challenged people to make their own jobs redundant... but paid them for the job anyway?

Using government divisions as examples of organisations in need of simplification and improvement (no surprise there), he suggested that if a public servant could abolish his or her own job, that person should nevertheless continue to receive the full salary, because the cost is no greater and now there is a saving in all the support costs. That bright individual could then be released to take a second job and get two salaries. De Bono notes: 'Of course, the job would have to be genuinely abolished and not just dumped on someone else.' Under such a system, just imagine the incentive for people to find ways to simplify systems and make things more effective. Right now, there's none. But for double pay?

And perhaps the greatest part of this approach is that you don't have to come up with the improvement yourself. You need only permit it, if it works. The people who understand the function can apply their own insight and intelligence into finding ways to make it happen.

## What if...?

What if you challenged your people to turn three into one? Three forms into a single form. Three levers into a single lever?

Three jobs into a single job?

## ABOUT DOUGLAS KRUGER

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