

Article Career change

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Measuring progress

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By Charlotte Housden



If you've been reading my series of posts, you'll know that making changes in our work, career and life can be tough. We shift every day. We're tweaking this, adapting that, sometimes huge pivots, but none of them are easy – big or small. Over the past few years, I've been researching how people successfully navigate change and what we can learn from them. Here is what I've written about this topic on the Aston site:

- [The why and where of change](#)
- [Will you swim, jump or fly?](#)
- [Untangling your whats and your hows](#)
- [What's in your toolbox? Resourcing yourself for change](#)

In this post, I'll cover how we measure progress and why we often assess ourselves in the wrong way.

When we measure other people or ourselves, we often use numbers – the 'how much' approach. We look at the goals our football team scored. We assess our progress at work using our appraisal rating. We check our fitness against our finishing times for a 5K or a marathon. In all of these, we're focusing attention on quantity, not quality measures, the 'how well'.

We forget about the quality of our sleep and just look at the hours we've slept. We don't take the time to reflect on how proud we feel when we've learnt a new skill. We just look at the score we got on the exam. We look at how many friends we have, not the quality of our relationships.

Don't worry, most of us do this because we live in a world preoccupied with numbers. We're taught to look for the big wins, rather than the more subtle feeling-based shifts in how we live our lives. In fact, it's the quality side of things that can often be our friend. Qualitative measures are often a better scorekeeper of progress the quantitative ones.

So, if your change project isn't moving as quickly as you'd like, why not bring in some quality-based measures as well? You'll find it more motivating and you'll see those subtle shifts taking place. Below is an exercise you might like to try. Why not think about what quality measure you could use in the right-hand column? That way you might balance out 'how much' and 'how well' more evenly.

Quantity (how much)	Quality (how well)
Number of lengths in the pool, or press-ups, weights lifted, games won, speed of running (or any other number you use to measure progress in your weekly exercise)	What you could use here instead e.g. amount of fun you had whilst playing football with friends, the beautiful sunrise you saw whilst you were running?
Number of new clients, new business leads, or things you have sold.	What would you put here instead?
How quickly you finished an action, piece of work or a project.	How might you measure this in terms of 'how well'?
How much you spend on your partner's/ child's birthday presents, or family holiday.	How might you assess the quality of time you have with your family/loved ones?
The number of calories you've eaten today on a diet, or the kilos you've lost on the scales.	What's another way of measuring progress here?

I've listed out some tips below that you might like to reflect on when you're measuring progress:

Baseline. Know where you are before you begin a change project. How will you know how far you've travelled unless you note down the starting point?

Different ratings. Work with different measures to identify smaller steps in your progress. Use 'how much' and 'how well' measures and measure yourself, as well as asking others what difference they might see.



The Good, The Bad and The Ugly. Review what's going well as often as what isn't. It's more motivating to focus on the improvements – it will help you to keep going when you feel like giving up. But instead, we often focus on where we've failed – there's even a name for it (negativity bias).

So, how will you assess your progress in work or life? Will you focus just on 'how much' measures, only thinking in numbers? Or will you also focus on 'how well' measures so that you can see subtle shifts in your change projects?

Charlotte Housden is a Chartered Coaching and Occupational Psychologist. She runs a consulting practice focusing on coaching and leadership development programmes for international organisations, coaching senior executives in their roles, and helping others at crossroads in their careers. To find the book search for *Swim Jump Fly: A Guide to Changing Your Life* on Amazon or visit the [Swim Jump Fly](#) website. You can contact Charlotte via [LinkedIn](#) or ch@charlottehousden.com

Cartoons and illustrations by Private Eye cartoonist Simon Pearsall who created 100 original images for the book.

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Discussion

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