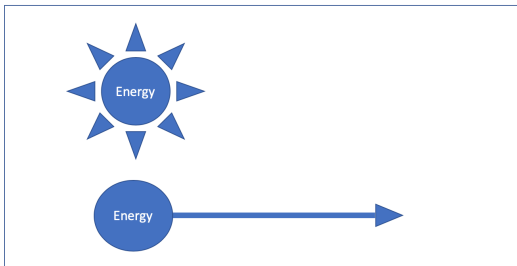


## Why less is better

*Why less is better* is a philosophy of life, work and career that will change the way you prioritise and allocate your precious time. It's transformational because you will learn how to stop, ask 'Am I investing in the right activities?' – and act accordingly.

### Key concept

The concept of less is better is brilliantly expounded in *Essentialism – The Disciplined Pursuit of Less* by Greg McKeown. Greg argues there are far more opportunities and activities in the world than you have time and resources to invest in. While many are potentially good ideas, the reality is most are trivial and few are vital.



Essentialism teaches you to focus on the vital few – and as a consequence reap enormous enduring personal and professional benefits.

The difference between the vital and the rest is captured in the graphic. In both images the same amount of energy (size of the circle) is expended. In the top one energy is spread across many activities, moving you only slightly forward – and crucially pulling you in different, often

opposing, directions. You are always busy with little to show for it; it creates stress. Whereas, in the bottom image the energy is singularly focused like an arrow in one direction. The result? You make rewarding progress towards your high priority goals.

Put another way, the essentialist lives by design. The non-essentialist, by default. Which do you prefer? If you don't prioritise your life, others will.

### Applying the concept

Applying essentialism is like the growing trend to **closet cleaning**. Here are three essentialist actions to clean your career closet, **3Es**.

- 1. Explore and separate the trivial many from the vital few**  
Essentialists take time to explore and consciously evaluate more, rather than fewer, options. This is because they know they are punting their career on the pursuit of a few big priorities and do not intend to place bets on lots of races. They can confidently state why this is the right priority on which to focus at this time.
- 2. Eliminate non-essentials**  
Most of us say 'yes' because we are eager to please or make a difference to an individual, our company or a cause. Amongst Peter Drucker's many celebrated aphorisms is this **one**:  
*People are effective because they say 'no', because they say 'this isn't for me'*. Saying no mostly runs contrary to social expectations; it takes courage, compassion and caring communication if offence is to be avoided.
- 3. Execute by identifying and removing obstacles**  
This technique is a powerful example of **Kurt Lewin's** famous theory of force field analysis which shows that the most productive way to move from A to B is to remove the roadblocks rather than push harder and harder as you try to reach B. To make something happen, invest in removing obstacles like your own habits, uncooperative people, inadequate resources and lack of information.

### More on this topic

My post **To be a top performer, manage your energy not your time** 5 minutes reading

Greg McKeown **TED Talk** 45 minutes viewing