

What Is This Job Doing to You?™

The Question Beneath Performance

A Foundational White Paper for The Second Formation™

Most professional conversations focus on performance.

Goals.

Metrics.

Strategy.

Execution.

Growth.

Results.

Career progression.

Leadership effectiveness.

Organizations ask:

How are you performing?

Investors ask:

How are things going?

Boards ask:

What are the results?

Colleagues ask:

What are you working on?

All of these are legitimate questions.

Important questions.

Necessary questions.

Yet there is another question that is asked far less frequently.

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A question that often reveals far more about the human experience of work.

A question that moves beneath performance and into formation.

What is this job doing to you?

The Question Most People Never Ask

Many people spend decades evaluating the impact they have on their work.

Far fewer evaluate the impact their work is having on them.

The distinction matters.

Every role changes us.

Every organization shapes us.

Every leader influences us.

Every culture leaves its imprint.

No one passes through these environments untouched.

The question is not whether we are being shaped.

The question is how.

Work is never merely something we do.

Work is also something that works upon us.

The Hidden Curriculum

Every organization has two curricula.

The formal curriculum consists of strategy, objectives, policies, expectations, and procedures.

The informal curriculum is often far more powerful.

It teaches:

What is safe.

What is dangerous.

What receives recognition.

What receives punishment.

What receives attention.

What gets ignored.

Who succeeds.

Who struggles.

What can be spoken.

What must remain unspoken.

Over time, people adapt.

Not because they lack integrity.

Not because they lack courage.

Because adaptation is one of the most natural human responses to environment.

The challenge is that adaptation often occurs gradually and unconsciously.

Until eventually a person realizes they have become someone slightly different than they intended.

The Influence of Leadership

Perhaps no factor shapes the experience of work more powerfully than leadership.

A mature leader creates conditions that support development.

Curiosity.

Learning.

Psychological safety.

Accountability.

Growth.

Truthfulness.

Healthy challenge.

An immature leader often creates different conditions.

Fear.

Hypervigilance.

Defensiveness.

Accommodation.

Distortion.

Silence.

Exhaustion.

Many people assume they are reacting to a job.

Often they are reacting to a leader.

Or a leadership system.

One of the most important questions a person can ask is:

What is the maturity of the people leading this organization asking me to become?

The Drift Toward Accommodation

Human beings are remarkably adaptive.

The longer we remain inside a system, the more likely we are to accommodate it.

We adjust our expectations.

Adjust our behavior.

Adjust our language.

Adjust our emotional responses.

Adjust our ambitions.

Adjust our standards.

Adjust our sense of what is normal.

This is not necessarily unhealthy.

Adaptation is often required.

The danger emerges when accommodation begins replacing awareness.

When adaptation becomes identity.

When survival becomes a way of life.

When a person slowly loses sight of the difference between who they are and who the environment requires them to be.

Success Does Not Eliminate the Question

Many people assume these concerns apply only to difficult jobs.

The opposite is often true.

Some of the most profound forms of drift occur in highly successful environments.

High performers are rewarded.

Promoted.

Trusted.

Relied upon.

The role expands.

Responsibility increases.

Achievement accumulates.

Yet success does not exempt a person from reflection.

In fact, success may make reflection even more important.

Because successful adaptation can conceal significant personal costs.

The organization may be thriving.

The career may be advancing.

The compensation may be increasing.

Meanwhile the person may be becoming:

More isolated.

More reactive.

More exhausted.

More cynical.

Less present.

Less curious.

Less connected.

The external indicators improve while the internal experience quietly changes.

A Different Kind of Audit

Most organizations conduct financial audits.

Operational audits.

Performance reviews.

Strategic assessments.

Few people conduct a personal formation audit.

Questions such as:

What qualities has this work strengthened in me?

What qualities has it weakened?

How has my capacity for relationship changed?

How has my sense of purpose changed?

How has my emotional life changed?

What has become more alive?

What has become quieter?

These questions are not luxuries.

They are forms of stewardship.

Awakening

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For many individuals, The Second Formation™ begins with awareness.

Not dramatic awareness.

Simple awareness.

The realization that a question deserves attention.

What is this life doing to me?

What is this role doing to me?

What is this leadership environment doing to me?

What am I becoming?

These questions often mark the beginning of a deeper developmental journey.

Not because something has gone wrong.

Because something important has become visible.

The Work of The Second Formation™

The Second Formation™ invites successful men to examine the impact of achievement, responsibility, leadership, and adaptation upon their lives.

Not to reject success.

Not to abandon contribution.

Not to retreat from responsibility.

But to develop a clearer understanding of who they are becoming while carrying those responsibilities.

Because ultimately the most important outcome of a career may not be what a person accomplished.

It may be who the person became while accomplishing it.

Reflection Questions

- What is your work currently asking of you?
- What is your work currently doing to you?
- What qualities has your work strengthened?
- What qualities has your work diminished?

- What have you had to accommodate?
 - What have you had to ignore?
 - Who are you becoming?
 - Do you like the direction of that formation?
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A Foundational Question

What is this job doing to you?

About The Second Formation™

The Second Formation™ is a structured developmental process for successful men in the second half of life who are exploring identity, purpose, contribution, and legacy beyond role and achievement.

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