



Life² - organisation outline

Contents

1. The need for our work
2. Our aims
3. Our work and topic areas
4. Life² in numbers
5. Impact
6. What people say about us
7. Where do we want to go from here?

1. The need for our work

In many ways we're very lucky to be living as westerners in the modern world. We've got more material wealth than ever before, better education, better healthcare and more opportunities in life.

But things are still not quite right. Evidence (including Layard, 2005) suggests that, although we've generally become richer in the last half century, our increased material wealth has not made us any happier, and many people are searching for more meaning in their lives. People need help to do this, but it is not available in mainstream society, except in religions, self-help and new age ideas, which many people may feel are unsuitable for them.

We also live in a world that is more complex than ever before and in which we are faced with a wide range of influences and pressures on our identities, including consumerism, the pressure to seek material success and the need to be thin. For example, each of us is subject to around 1,600 commercial messages every day. These influences and pressures can seriously harm people's quality of life and restrict their potential for flourishing lives. There are currently very few organisations that help people to understand this situation, deal with these influences or build self-determined, happy and confident lives.

Modern lifestyles and societies present a range of challenges to our mental health – from the pressure we're under to succeed from an early stage in our lives through to the rushed lifestyles we lead. In 2007, there were 34 million antidepressant prescription items dispensed in England alone - nearly four times more than in 1991.¹ 1 in 4 people suffer from mental health problems every year.

Each of us also faces a number of serious ethical choices about how we should live our lives in a world with environmental and social problems. Again, people need some new skills, information and ideas to help them make these choices effectively, but very few currently exist in modern society, as campaigning groups and organisations seeking 'ethical living' tend to deal with issues in a rather shallow way focussed on guilt or demands for action that doesn't educate them, allow them to make their own decisions or produce particularly effective long term behaviour change. This view

is supported by leading experts on behaviour change such as WWF ('Weathercocks and Signposts' report, 2007).

On top of all this, we are living through the worst financial crisis since the great depression of the 1930's, and this is causing many people (and the media) to question the direction in which society is heading and the values and priorities we hold. People need help to do this, as well as to re-evaluate what they want from their own lives in the light of changed financial or work circumstances, or the threat of these changes. Again, very little such help is available in mainstream society at present.

In conclusion, we live in a world that is vastly different from the one that existed 50 years ago, and this world places a whole new set of pressures and challenges in front of us as individuals.

The institutions and systems around us in society that support and educate us (from schools to local advice centres) are not yet adequately geared up to help us respond to these challenges, and don't give us the full range of life skills, guidance and ideas we need to flourish in the modern world.

This represents a major gap in provision, affecting both people's ability to flourish and to make an effective contribution to society, whether it is as an active member of a local community or an individual seeking to make their lifestyle more sustainable.

One of the main aims of Life² is to start to fill this important gap, and provide people with some of the guidance and ideas they need.

2. Our aims

We are a not-for-profit organisation helping people to live happier, wiser and more meaningful lives within the pressure and complexity of the modern world.

We provide people with interesting, no-nonsense ideas, information and tools to help them see their world more clearly and live well. We do this by offering publications, courses, ideas and other resources. Have a browse around our website at www.lifesquared.org.uk to find out more.

More specifically, we aim to:

1. Make people better informed about key ideas and aspects of the world around them, so that they can develop a sense of perspective on their lives in the great scheme of things, make better decisions in life and live with greater wisdom – living lives that are more self-determined, ethical, happy and meaningful.
2. Provide people with ideas, skills and guidance to help them live lives that are more values-driven, featuring more compassion, empathy and sustainability (amongst other qualities).
3. Provide people with ideas, skills and guidance to help them live happier and more meaningful lives – including helping them to identify the lives they really want, learn the 'art of living' and have a greater appreciation and enjoyment of the experience of life.

Our work not only aims to bring a range of important internal benefits to the individual, but also aims to improve the world around us by equipping and motivating people to get more involved in the world – from their local communities to global issues. For example, Life Squared offers a new and powerful approach to gaining behaviour change from the public on key issues such as sustainable living and social justice. To date, organisations seeking such change have been relatively unsuccessful in engaging people in the major behavioural and attitudinal changes that are needed and we believe this is partly because they don't go 'deep' enough into people, offering only superficial solutions which inevitably gain only superficial changes. By contrast, our approach is a holistic one that gets to the core of the individual – their worldview, motivations and ability to take

well-informed action. By helping people to identify and understand their values, as well as to live in a way that's more in line with them, we believe we offer a potentially powerful means of gaining for positive change on a wide range of ethical issues.

We aim to make our output as accessible as possible to people – both in its tone and pricing.

3. Our work and topic areas

Our work covers a wide range of subjects. We've broken these down into 3 categories:

1. Know your world

Modern life is complex, so we've brought together the key pieces of information you need to live well, presented in an interesting way. Some of it is to help you get perspective on your life in the world, and the rest is to be more informed about important things that affect your life and how you live it.

Topics in this section include:

- Perspective
- How the world works
- How people work
- You and the world
- How ideas work

2. Grow yourself

To live a wise, compassionate, happy and meaningful life we need to learn how to think in certain ways and about certain topics - from critical thinking to working out what really matters to each of us in our lives. We'll show you how to develop these skills.

Topics in this section include:

- Seeing clearly
- Being you
- Living your own life
- Being a good person
- Promoting your health

3. Live well

There are so many options in modern life and pressures on us to live in particular ways that it can be difficult to see that there are important and simple ways to live better. We aim to present some of these ideas and provide links to some of the people and organisations that provide them - including ourselves!

Topics in this section include:

- Inner life
- Living with values
- Appreciating life
- Money
- People & relationships
- Work
- Home & leisure

4. Life² in numbers

Already, in the short time since we launched in June 2009, we have:

- Received over 120,000 visits to our site
- Had over 7,000 copies of our publications downloaded
- Built a mailing list of over 5,000 contacts
- Been featured in publications such as The Ecologist and praised by contacts such as Stephen Fry, Lord Richard Layard, Jonathan Porritt and AC Grayling.

5. Impact

Our work has already helped people to do the following:

- Cut down on their levels of shopping and consumerism
- Understand the pressures that consumerism brings to their lives and how to regain their identity and life from it
- Reduce their carbon emissions
- Be aware of some of the pressures and complexity of modern life, and how to both deal with them and thrive within them
- Understand how to live more ethically and develop a practical plan to do this – resulting in changes in behaviour and positive impacts in various areas, including the environment and social justice
- Stand back from their lives and consider what they really want from life, then put a practical plan together to do this and take action to achieve it – resulting in happier and more meaningful lives
- Understand their place in history, the size and history of the universe, how they affect the world, how they can manage their money more effectively, how they can improve their relationship with time, how exposure to nature can improve their quality of life, how they can travel without flying, how their money is spent by the government and many other things.
- Have a more ethical and meaningful Xmas
- Explore the profound pleasure and meaning in Peak Experience

6. What people say about us

“The course has been really useful in reflecting and focussing on my life and making practical plans to work towards a future I hope to realise” - participant on our ‘just think...’ course

“I have thoroughly enjoyed the course and I have not only made changes [to my life] but now have definite aims and goals as well as differing perspectives on important issues” – another participant on our ‘just think...’ course

“Excellent publication - it really brought things together very eloquently” – Jonathon Porritt, environmentalist, broadcaster and writer on our ‘The problem with consumerism’ booklet

“A really exciting and timely idea” – Pamela Nowicka, author and film maker, on our ‘Consumerism’ theme

“The admirable goal of ‘just think’ is to help people take a well-informed, considered and independent approach to life, by learning how to think for themselves. I give my whole-hearted support to that aim” - A.C. Grayling, Writer and Philosopher

“I love it” – Sallyanne Flemons, Editor of Daisy Green Magazine, on our ‘Mind Diet’ leaflet

“It's really nice that The Amazing booklet exists. I hope it will reach a lot of people” – Rosalind, UK

“I have stumbled across your website and I really respect where you are going with it. After spending a good couple of hours reading some articles I feel way happier than this morning so thought I would drop you a line to say a massive thank you!” - Sarah, UK

7. Where do we want to go from here?

Our success to date demonstrates that there is a large potential audience with great appetite for our work, even though we have run the organisation to date with very limited resources. We have often been told, when introducing Life² to people for the first time, that it is ‘just what is needed at the moment’. The organisation and its aims strike a chord with people, and the time is clearly right for Life².

Our work has already helped a number of people to learn, challenge their worldviews and improve their lives demonstrably, as well as enabling them to make changes to their behaviour that have a significant, tangible effect on the planet and society.

We have ambitious plans and an almost limitless number of ideas for new services and content, and aim to become the leading organisation, both nationally and internationally, helping people to live more enlightened lives.

Life²

www.lifesquared.org.uk

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ⁱ Office for National Statistics, Social Trends 39, p.103