



Take This Job and Love It!

Think you've got a bad job? Drew Carey worked as a Denny's waiter once in Las Vegas. Confucius, the great Chinese philosopher once worked as a grain inspector. Everybody seems to complain at one time or another about their job. Either the pay isn't enough, the conditions are intolerable, the co-workers don't pull their weight or the boss is too overbearing. MSNBC.com had an article in September, 2003, that said job satisfaction in America has dropped to an all-time low (although they've only been surveying since 1995). According to their recent poll, only 48.9% of American workers are satisfied with their jobs, down from 59% in 1995. The article went on to say that, generationally speaking, the most dissatisfied Americans are aged 45-55. The most satisfied? Workers over 65 years of age. In fact they were the only group to have more satisfied than not (54%) overall.

What brought all this on? Weak economy? Pay scales? According to the Conference Board, a New York-based research group, the top reasons were lack of promotion opportunities, few bonus plans and poor job training. Lynn Franco, Director of the Conference Board said, "As technology transforms the workplace--accelerating the pace of activities, increasing expectations and productivity demands, and blurring the lines between work and play--workers are steadily growing more unhappy with their jobs."

Other recent surveys show that worker loyalty is at an all-time low. I believe it. I talk to many business leaders who say they feel their employees are just in it for the paycheck, without any loyalty to the organization or product/service it renders to customers. Many workers tell me they are waiting for an upswing in the economy to look for a new job. Online job banks, like Monster.com have flourished and gained more acceptance among job seekers and company HR managers.

Me? I love what I do! Sure there are days that I spend more time doing mundane duties that help support my speaking, but on the whole it's about the best job in the world (Sometime I'll tell you why I never plan to retire). Want to know my secret? Can't get no satisfaction? First, learn to see the value in what you do. What product do you produce? What service do you provide? Do you feel that it is something that adds value to others lives? Do you feel that people are better off with your goods and services? Do you have a deep-seated conviction that people actually need or will benefit from what you produce?

Often we lose sight of our service or product's value during the regular work-a-day world on the job. While sitting in the doctor's office just today, I heard a man talking to a lady about what he does. He rebuilds brake pads on eighteen wheel trucks. He said his shop is the best in the business and that trucking companies rely on him to keep their drivers and products safe. He said this with a pride in his voice that spoke of his uniqueness. "No one else does what I do as well as I do it," he told her. Wow! I'd hate doing what he does for a living, but he not only likes it, he's the best (at least in his own eyes). But isn't that what is most important? Shouldn't we feel like we do the best at what we do? I'm sure the truck drivers who know him are appreciative, but that's just icing on the cake for him. I remember meeting with the National W.I.F.E. (Women Involved in Farm Economics) Convention last year. Farmers have taken a beating in the past 40 years, but these men and women were proud that they grew produce and cattle better than anyone else in the world.

There will always be a call for American farmers' products because it's one of the things Americans do best. Next, find what you like to do. I had a friend tell me about ten years ago: "Jim, spend the first part of your life finding what you like to do. Then get people to pay you to do it in the second half." What would you do if nobody paid you to do it? Curly, Jack Palance's crusty character in "City Slickers" said it best, "The meaning of life is just one thing. Get that right and nothing else matters..."

What is your one thing? When you find it, you'll realize that not everybody likes doing it as much as you. I get up in front of large crowds of people and speak, train or entertain. That is usually listed as people's biggest fear--getting up in front of a large audience. They fear this more than falling (that's my biggest fear!), failing or spiders and snakes. To me it's like heaven! I spent the first half of my life finding what I like to do. As I said before, find the one thing that you would do if no one paid you to do it, and spend the second half of your life getting them to pay you for it.

I come from a family of educators. My father, my mother, my aunt and my grandmother were all teachers or school administrators. They loved teaching. Sure, they had headaches on the job--terrible ones, but they valued what they did in young people's lives. They had a natural respect for knowledge and commitment that more education would make you a better person. This came out in the way each taught their students. I remember my brother-in-law switching careers at about age 50. He teaches high school now and loves it. He's always had a tendency to instruct others; now he gets paid to do it.

What would you do if there was no pay involved? This helps you on those days that the pay isn't enough to help you overcome your problems. That brings us to the next point. Have a positive, healthy attitude about problems on the job. Everyone's job is fraught with difficulties. Problems occur all the time. It's how you view them that makes the difference. Either they are solvable or a continuing string of setbacks. Problems can be opportunities for you to learn from.

Your perspective makes the difference. I heard a former COO tell a group that problems aren't opportunities. He managed a trucking firm and said that when he had a truck broken down on the side of the road that was nothing but a problem. I spoke to him afterwards and said, I still think it's an opportunity. It's an opportunity to show that trucker that you'll be there to rescue him and get

him going again. It's an opportunity to show other employees how you will support a lone employee stranded on the highway. Did you know that every miracle in the Bible began with a problem? John Maxwell says, "If you have a problem, you're a candidate for a miracle." He goes on to say that if you don't have a problem, then you don't get a miracle. Are you a candidate for a miracle? Are the problems on your job overwhelming? Are they bigger than the reward you get for doing the job? Learn to beat your "blahs." Everyone gets the blahs, but many get them every week on schedule.

Mondays are traditionally the worst day of everyone's work week, and with some good reasons. For instance, did you know that you are more likely to drop dead from a heart attack on a Monday than any other day of the week? A great stock market crash occurred on Monday, October 19, 1987. The Dow Jones Industrial average slipped over 508 points on that day. Other notable Mondays in history were: The Titanic sank on a Monday. The atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima on a Monday. Jesse James was shot and killed on a Monday. For those of you my age and older, John David, VP of Sales for the Ford Motor Company introduced an exciting new car proposal, called the Edsel on, you guessed it, a Monday.

Most people don't need a Monday to start pitying themselves, though. They are victims of the wrong thinking and the wrong type of pity. Eugene H. Peterson says, "Pity is one of the noblest emotions available to human beings; self-pity is possibly the most ignoble." He goes on to say, "Pity is adrenaline for acts of mercy; self-pity is a narcotic that leaves its addicts wasted and derelict." What are you doing to liven up your job? How can you see something new each day? How can you instill challenge and anticipation into a mundane task? Many people when suffering setbacks ask the question, "Why?" They never make real progress in their lives until they move beyond that question.

By the way, appearance plays a major role in our attitudes about work. It often reflects an inner happiness or dissatisfaction. Do you dress for success? Drab people usually dress accordingly. Color has an enormous impact on our emotions. Workspace color as well influences our attitudes. To raise your excitement level yellow and red are good. Blues and greens tend to have a calming effect on us. Learn to personalize your appearance and work area, where possible.

Find ways to lift your spirits with a splash of color! Even if it's changing the screen saver or desktop image on your computer regularly, do something to liven your emotions. Eric Hoffer says, "When people are bored, it is primarily with their own selves that they are bored." Verbal appearance says a lot, too. Change your voice mail frequently to something better. People have started complimenting the fun messages I have on mine.

Reward yourself for a good day's work. This is a good exercise to start learning how to set goals. Set personal goals. Set work-related personal goals. Set goals each day and week. Make them substantial, but attainable. Practice setting small ones at first. When you achieve them give yourself a "bonus." Then progressively each week raise the bar. Set goals that stretch you. Start dreaming BIG. Then, be sure to reward yourself each time you are successful. Make it something worthwhile to you. You are a better authority on what reward gets you motivated than anyone else.

What activities do you enjoy most? Some people treat themselves to a nice dinner, a round of golf, a weekend trip (do this one sparingly) or a shopping spree. Go ahead and spoil yourself. You've earned it and you deserve it. Invest in others. Dr. Georgia Witkin, a noted psychologist says that it is almost impossible to be bogged down with negative feelings when you are busy helping someone else. Remember the first step to loving your job? Find value in what you produce for others. Find value in your job by reaching out to co-workers. Often you'll probably find they are suffering from the same feelings that have kept you down.

Even in suffering, there's strength in numbers. I have a change presentation that begins by having people change their appearance several times in a few minutes. It's fun and funny to watch. Every time I lead a group in this exercise, though, participants look at themselves for ideas of things to change, not at others in the room going through the same changes. It surprises them when I tell them at the end that there were at least 25 things they could have changed by just looking around at everyone else in the room. But they always look down at themselves first and say they can't think of any changes to make. Hold your head up! Look around to see who else is going through the same emotions you are. Help each other out.

Finally, if you can't be satisfied with what you do, find what you want to do--and do it. Launch out! I did. Most businesses fail in the first three years because of a lack of confidence and commitment on the part of the entrepreneur. They don't realize that it takes commitment to that one thing they like doing over everything else. Sure it will be rough at first. Everything worth having is worth sacrifice. Find what you like to do. Radio talk show host Dave Ramsey says that you can do it in 48 days. Just think, you could be almost a month and half away to a new, exciting and more beneficial career. Society will be a better place for it--you'll be better, too.

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