

Try to find the positive elements in a job

by Michael_Kinsman

For many years, I rode an elevator to work with a woman who looked like she was being ordered to walk a gangplank. I didn't know her at all, but I could tell she was not a happy camper.

I saw her outside the office one day and she was laughing and enjoying herself. Obviously, this was someone who needed another job.

It's like that sometimes, even when you don't realize it. Little annoyances about your job can subtly build until you find yourself feeling trapped.

There are two paths people commonly choose when this happens. They either jump out the window into another job, or they continue in their work resenting every second they spend on the job.

Or there is another option that most people don't think about: They can change their attitude and work to make the job one they can endure and even enjoy.

"Four Secrets to Liking Your Work" is a book by organizational consultant Ed Muzio, management professor Deborah Fisher and Intel recruiter Erv Thomas.

"Job misery costs the employer a lot, but it costs the employee everything," Muzio says.

But the book's promise of four secrets to a happier work life is overly simplistic. The book actually calls for a combination of self-assessment, attitude adjustment, job-task tinkering, skill-building and change of perspective that is useful for anyone trying to salvage a job that seems to have swallowed them up.

There is no quick-fix in this work. Nor are their four secrets.

What there can be, however, is a constructive way of dealing with a job that you have learned to dislike.

Surveys show that as much as 70 percent of workers would like to find other jobs because they are not happy in their current positions. But 70 percent of workers don't have to change jobs to be happy. A small percent do, but a far larger number would be better off finding contentment in their present job.

Muzio, Fisher and Thomas believe that you first need to make certain that you have chosen the right job in the first place. But since even well-matched jobs may prove stressful, understanding the sources of stresses and friction in your work can go a long way toward solving your at-work issues.

They urge individuals to look at what bothers them about their jobs. Often it is not the type or the amount of work, but how they react to the people and systems they run up against each day. If you can figure a better way of dealing with those, then you stand a good chance of being happier in your work.

Since we work best when motivated in our work, we need to make sure the jobs we have drive that motivation. If we are not inspired, we tend to suffer, we are less happy and, ultimately, we resent our positions. Much of this has to do with choosing the right job, but we also have to make certain that we accept the goal of the job at hand.

Since we all take pride in our work, we need to also look at the positives our job offers us. Too often, we concentrate on the problems of the job, but seeing the benefits of our work on our lives and those of others can make a job more meaningful. Everyone's job has an end result, whether we are working on airplane assembly lines, writing computer coding or waiting tables in a restaurant.

There can be plenty of satisfaction in seeing how we contribute to helping others, but we often have to look beyond ourselves.

We also need the skills to do the jobs we face. That means not only the classroom training that gives us the hard skills, but the personal and interpersonal skills required to handle the stresses of our job and the relationships we have to maintain to do our jobs effectively.

Workers need to remember that no matter what they do or accomplish in their work, when they go home the job is all about them. It's not about meeting a company goal or deadline, or turning a handsome profit. The job is about feeling that you are doing work that is meaningful to yourself. And nobody can assess that better than you.

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