

Enjoyment in the workplace



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A recent Globe & Mail survey of 8,250 readers indicated that only 26% of Canadians placed engagement or fulfilment as what mattered most about their jobs. An overwhelming 51% cited the pay cheque as the highest priority, with the balance of five per cent preferring title/status and six per cent benefits/perks.

While not a great aficionado of polls, the results struck me as being somewhat in agreement with my own deductions after consulting to several thousand people over the last decade. In our own industry I regularly encounter achievers who, in mid-career, find that they are unhappy despite their success. Trapped in lifestyle commitments and family obligations, focus is unequivocally on the next pay cheque. Many seem to regard workplace enjoyment as a youthful ideal that has no place in the real world. Clearly, there is no entitlement to enjoyment as a career priority. Would not such a person, over

time, erode their own ability to fully apply their excellence and competencies?

Logically, then, enjoyment/happiness is a vital ingredient in the career fulfilment recipe!

Listening to the successful and happy people I deal with, I have distilled what I believe to be the sequential criteria for career enjoyment/happiness:

- Knowledge and full investment of core-competencies (using oneself to the fullest)
- Conscious pursuit of enjoyment
- Like-minded validation (making sure the employer/team of choice is able to accommodate both skill-set and personality)
- Adequate compensation
- Evolution (the opportunity to grow

individual who simply says: "I want to enjoy my work... and this is what it will take to make me happy!"

Encouraging people to explore this approach takes persuasion. Strange!

Equally interesting is the indignant reaction when organizations insist on a series of interviews to establish the right fit. Few would marry someone after the first date... why would they then sign up with a company about which they know so little? Perhaps if enjoyment was a firm objective, applicants might be keener on finding the right environment, as opposed to the right pay cheque?

Stressing the desire to be fully engaged and happy is one of the best ways of self marketing and establishing worth in the eyes of the prospective employer. Would

“ Are you prepared to be who you are/want to be, or will you insist on becoming who you are expected to be? ”

professionally/personally)

The old adage "Be careful what you ask for..." is directly relevant here. If the primary career objective is securing the biggest chunk of cash possible, then can any individual expect full competency investment, enjoyment and a like-minded environment to automatically follow?

Although the above criteria seem obvious, they come at a price. Well-paying organizations, of necessity, often have rigid expectations as to each individual role. Obedience and adherence to process are required to a greater degree than the more entrepreneurial/creative environments that have traditionally less-attractive compensation packages.

Deciding what price one is willing to pay for investing in the right environment requires a great deal of ongoing introspection and objective setting. Most happy professionals I know have, at some point, decided to de-prioritize the pay cheque in order to achieve greater levels of self-investment and enjoyment.

In today's vortex of business networking, branding, business messages, professional resumes/cover-letters and interviews, I seldom come across an

anyone want to work for an organization that found this odd or a tall order? We are not robots, nor are we slaves/prisoners. We are humans with unique personalities that need to be accommodated if we are to be productive and happy.

Our industry attracts a higher proportion than most of people who desire to invest both creativity/original thinking and business acumen. Many need to simultaneously execute, manage and create in order to fully enjoy their work.

Frustratingly this is not always possible in environments where content and strategy are dictated by financial people in remote boardrooms. People who find themselves in this situation will be faced with the task of balancing out professional integrity and career enjoyment against corporate process.

Needless to say, there is no right or wrong here. People are free to follow their own minds and, pay the price for choices made. Perhaps the keystone for enjoyment lies in the challenge I always put to students on the brink of professional careers: "Are you prepared to be who you are/want to be, or will you insist on becoming who you are expected to be?"