



Motivation: Key to a Better Job

recognition, affiliation, or something else?

As a career coach, I often encounter people who've run out of steam professionally or who've become plateaued or pigeonholed in their organizations.

Still others have limited self-images of what they can achieve, an image often shaped by a boss or an organization.

I believe the key to personal effectiveness at work (and to job satisfaction, also) is knowing what motivates us to perform at our best. It's then up to us to seek opportunities to fulfill these motivations. When a job no longer motivates us, it's time to move on.

Jobs have lifecycles, so take stock of where you are and decide if that's where you want to be. Consider the following:

1. Do you enjoy what you do? Nobody's excited about their job all the time, but you need to derive something from the work each day if you're going to perform effectively. And money usually isn't a motivator. We're motivated by the desire to do good, to be effective, to connect with others, to be creative, or to make a difference. What really lights your fire? Have you gotten away from that in your work? You may have, yet not even know it.

2. Does your organization want you to realize your full potential? I believe many organizations lack the competence to develop or even *keep* good people. I've seen too many cases of individuals sent packing from organizations because they were more talented than their boss could stand, or because they did not always play by the company rules.

Also, prejudice and chauvinism still exist in the workplace. While we like to think women managers have achieved parity with men, this isn't

true. The glass (some say concrete) ceiling still exists in many places. So, if you're a minority, consider how this is affecting your advancement chances. Don't be bitter, but *do* get busy. It may be time to get out and find something better.

3. Feel plateaued or pigeon-holed in your job? Then look for ways to make your job a "learning-ground." Explore those informal, "out-of-the-box" ways we can keep growing professionally, even if we're suffering from a career slump, working for a tyrant, or "trapped" in a job that doesn't fully use our talents.

For example, find a way to increase responsibility at work (and in so doing, acquire some experience

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you've been longing to add to your resume). Or, eager to be published? Then, write an article for a professional journal. Time to polish your oratorical skills? Speak at a professional conference or serve on the speaker's committee for your local ASTD Chapter.

There are *always* ways to leverage your professional experience, even if that experience has been unpleasant. I know people who've written articles about sexual harassment based on their own negative experiences, then become stars on the speaking circuit because of it. Others have become consultants, specializing in areas they developed while employed by others.

4. To keep your career on track, review your goals every three months. Are you doing the kind of work you want, or not? If you're an instructional

designer and yearn to get in front of groups, go for it. Tired of doing stand-up training and eager to be an internal consultant? Then go find some clients.

5. Don't run for cover in any organization today; there's no place to hide. Besides, it's more fun to be out in the fray, dealing with the myriad issues that HRD professionals are being called upon to address. Be proactive, learn to adapt, customize, and think of everybody as a client.

6. Explore new job opportunities for which you're not fully competent right now, but which are challenging, fun, and make sense for career advancement. Most people perform best when presented with moderate levels of challenge. So strive to find work situations, new projects, and new colleagues who challenge you to grow, and force you out of your comfort zone.

7. Strive for balance. With all the change taking place in business today, most of us are under stress. Our culture doesn't reward people for living balanced lives, so you need consciously to strive for this to preserve your sanity and sense of humor.

8. Finally, develop a vision for your future and the drive to get there. Drop any lingering thoughts you may have that somebody else will take care of you throughout your career. It's up to you to chart your course. Decide what you want to be doing next year at this time, then two, five, and 10 years from now. Then go for it!

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