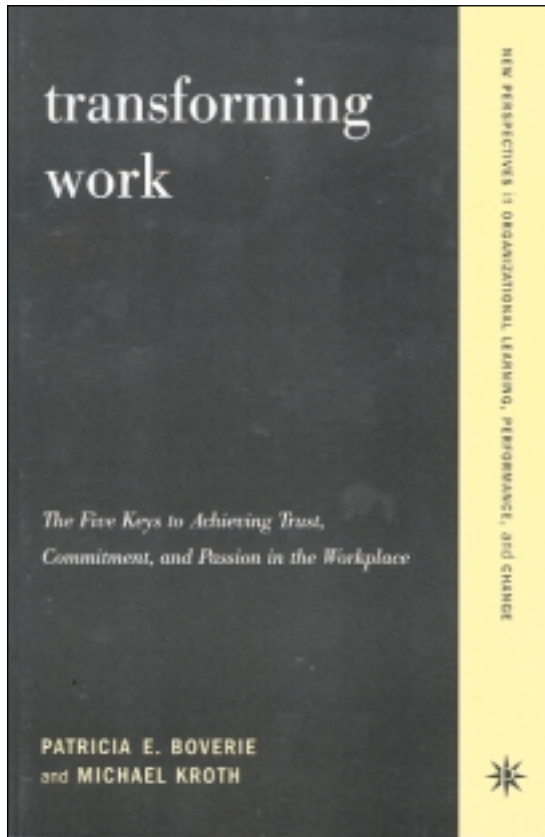


BOOKS



Transforming Work

By Patricia E. Boverie
and Michael Kroth
Reviewed by Karin B. Evans

When you hear the words *workplace* and *passion* together, what do you think of? Office romance? No, workplace passion is the concept explored by Patricia Boverie and Michael Kroth in their book, *Transforming Work: The Five Keys to Achieving Trust, Commitment, and Passion in the Workplace*.

The book investigates some of the questions that I've pondered in my work with organizations, as well as in exploration of myself and my relationships with family and friends:

- What brings true joy?
- Why are some people energized and excited by their work, while

others—often by the same job—seem so exhausted?

- What causes a once passionate worker to lose his or her drive?
- Does passion come from the work? From the work environment? Or a combination?
- How can leaders and managers develop a more energizing work environment and support employees so that they contribute more of who they really are to their jobs?

Drawing on an eclectic and substantial body of research from psychology, biology, literature, history, and organizational theory and supplementing that

ON THE NIGHT STAND

By Joe Willmore



I'm a person who loves to read several books—of different genres—at once. These are the titles beside my bed right now:

- *The Tipping Point* by Malcom Gladwell. An excellent look at change management and why some initiatives become popular while others are relegated to the dustbin of what might have been.

● *Good to Great* by Jim Collins. I loved the Collins and Jerry Porras book, *Built to Last*, and couldn't resist this one. ASTD Board members are reading this book to gain insight into strategic planning. So this isn't just a pleasure read, it's professional development as well.

● *A Darkness More Than Night* by Michael Connelly. If you've read any of Connelly's mysteries involving Harry Bosch or Terry McCaleb, you know why I'm reading this.

● *Managing Virtually* by Trina Hoefling. I work with virtual teams a lot, and Hoefling's book is probably the best available that covers the "soft stuff" (like culture and trust) involved in virtual work.

● *Monty Python's Complete Waste of Time User's Manual* by, well, the Python gang. What's a nightstand without at least one software installation manual? They're good at putting you to sleep and, besides, I want to be able to have the famous cheese shop sketch on my laptop.

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text with hundreds of qualitative employee interviews, Boverie and Kroth posit that passion isn't a mysterious concept; it's a predictable human response that you can understand, develop, and maintain in interpersonal relationships and the workplace. Paralleling the burning, magical feeling that comes with romantic passion is an employee's emotional response to compelling work. The authors argue, convincingly, that work can, and should, inspire passion.

To support their theory, the authors introduce the Passion Transformation Model, which outlines the critical factors for building and sustaining occupational intimacy, or the closeness passionate people feel with their work. The model describes an important balance between three intimacy-creating factors: a nurturing environment, meaningful work, and love for the work itself. Those factors, according to the authors, create connectivity and breed passion.

The model points out passion pitfalls, which are individual or organizational environmental factors that can diminish passion even in people who once found joy in their work. Those factors include having boring or meaningless work, working in an overly controlled setting or an environment that lacks honesty or

trust, feeling inadequate, and being manipulated. Employee stories and insights illustrate the debilitating power of those pitfalls.

To build occupational intimacy, the critical phases are discovery, designing, and developing.

Discovery. This phase reflects the "find your calling" wisdom found in popular self-help books. It explores the typical roadblocks to self-discovery for individuals and organizations, and provides a few visioning exercises to help people explore their sources of occupational joy and overcome their fear of risk-taking and other barriers.

Designing. Here you learn how to develop strategies to achieve the vision you created in the discovery phase. The authors ground their model in the now-familiar research of emotional intelligence, expectancy theory, and change management to demonstrate that tangible methods exist for people to reinvent their lives. They offer practical advice: "Underwrite your future job with your current job" for those seeking to find more passionate work, and "The more time we have available, the more control we have over our destiny" to describe the benefits of a deliberate approach.

Passion isn't a mysterious concept; it's a predictable human response that you can understand, develop, and maintain in interpersonal relationships and the workplace.

Joe Willmore is president of the Willmore Consulting Group, a performance consulting firm in Annandale, Virginia. He is a member of ASTD's Board of Directors and chair of ASTD's National Advisors for Chapters; willmore@juno.com.

Developing. Putting the plan into action consists of these key components: risking, learning, and building self-efficacy. For that phase, Boverie and Kroth use motivational and organizational learning theories to inspire readers to consider how they'll learn what they need to know and have the confidence to implement their plans. Transformation often begins with a disorienting dilemma—a life-changing event such as divorce or the birth of a child. The reflection and learning that come from those circumstances provide the opportunity for change. According to the authors, you can take a proactive, reflective approach to develop a new life, even if you haven't been startled into the act.

The title, *Transforming Work*, suggests

a double meaning. The book accomplishes two objectives: 1) outlining approaches and methods for transforming your career, job, and work environment so that they're more meaningful, passionate, and energizing and 2) exploring the psychological impact on people of working and working in a place that brings joy. In such cases, the work becomes a catalyst to creating a fulfilling, meaningful, and, yes, passionate life.

It's easy to think of passion as a quality that you're either born with, stumble upon, or are lucky to find. When people see me happy in my work and ask how I knew what I wanted to do, I'm embarrassed to say that I've frequently given the ambiguous response of someone who has just fallen in love: "I don't

know. You just know." *Transforming Work* offers an intelligent approach to seeking and implementing a plan to find the work you love.

Boverie and Kroth say that we "make the road by walking." *Transforming Work* makes that journey a bit easier.

Transforming Work: The Five Keys to Achieving Trust, Commitment, and Passion in the Workplace by Patricia E. Boverie and Michael Kroth. Cambridge, MA: Perseus Books, www.perseuspublishing.com, 208 pp. US\$30

Circle 290 on reader service card.

Karin B. Evans is director of workforce performance at Verizon; karin.b.evans@verizon.com.