

Should you stay or should you go? Will changing jobs really make you happy?

Does your Monday morning alarm clock immediately fill your mind with dreadful thoughts of going to a job you hate? Do you wonder how much longer you can continue going to an unfulfilling job? Or maybe you feel it's not even up to you to decide. You might sense there is a changing coming, and it's not going to be good for you or your career.

You are not alone. In a massive study by Harris interactive and Franklin Covey, less than 10% of the people interviewed said they were totally energized and committed to company goals. Even more frustrating for many people was the time they spent on urgent but irrelevant tasks. Their work held little or no significance for them.

If that's what's happening to you, what do you do now?

That's the question Robert had on his mind when he came into my office last week. He had been referred to me by a former client who knew I was open to meeting and helping people in transition. Like many people at the beginning of a transition, Robert was confused.

He thought he was looking for a new job. But that's not what he needed...at least not right then. Not only was Robert confused about what he is looking for, he was also about to make a dumb career move. He was about to leave his current employer because he was unable to see any of the real possibilities that existed for him right there.

After I asked him what he saw as his next opportunity, he said, "Well, right now I don't know for sure, at least not specifically. Are you asking me what I'm passionate about? A good friend told me it was time to discover my passion and just go do it. But I'm not really passionate about anything, you know what I mean?"

I think I did understand what he meant. He was more committed to a safe and easy landing than taking the time and effort to create a career that would satisfy and fulfill him. That's why I said he's confused. Robert is not looking for a job. He's looking for himself - who he is and what he stands for.

Robert is 44 years old, in good health and has a life expectancy of at least 40 more years. Forty more years! He has enough time to fully enjoy one or two more careers. Now is not the time to settle. Now is the time to be accountable for what he wants. No one else can or should tell him what that is.

It only took a few questions to free his thinking. What do you enjoy doing? What is the most significant contribution to another person or organization you've made? What other accomplishments are you most proud of? What do you do really well...maybe as good as or even better than anyone else?

After another five questions or so, Robert got it. He saw that he was willing to fire himself (leave his job) because he thought no one in management cared about him. What suddenly became apparent to Robert was that he had not cared about himself.

It wasn't his boss or management that created the problem. He had not been accountable for his gifts; he had not acknowledged his accomplishments; and he had failed to see how helping other people solve technical problems energized and fulfilled him.

There was a huge opportunity for him to contribute in his current role waiting to be fulfilled. He just hadn't asked. It wasn't in his job description. He had been waiting for permission and direction. When he let that sink in, he was ready to take a stand.

In less than 10 minutes, we had outlined a proposal he could take back to his boss. It was exciting for both of us because it would be challenging, rewarding and even fun to take on...and it would make a giant contribution toward improving productivity at his firm.

Robert also saw that this kind of work would be valued by a number of other firms in the area. I told him that if his boss didn't take him up on his proposal, I would introduce him to at least three companies who would be interested in talking to him. I haven't heard back from Robert, and I don't think I will.

Robert learned a valuable lesson. *If you are feeling disengaged at work, then there are some very important questions to answer before you start looking elsewhere.*

The Crucial Question: Is it you or the job that is creating the problem?

I often ask my clients when they are frustrated to take a look at the problem as if they were the cause of it. While it's not necessarily true that they are

the problem, taking that position often opens up some very powerful insights. Being accountable and responsible for a problem creates more personal power and resolve than does blame. So think about it, is it you or the job?

Don't get me wrong. Management must do a better job of engaging people. More than 10 years ago the Gallop organization identified a crucial link between employee retention and their boss: people leave their managers, not their companies. Gallup also identified the factors that engaged people, and they found that the best managers focused on those factors.

They were basic things like having clear expectations; having the right resources and equipment; an opportunity to use one's strengths, skills and talents everyday; working for a boss who cares; and having one's opinions count.

But before you blame your boss, try finding how you might be the cause before you leave the company. Here are some questions to explore: How many requests have you made to have whatever is missing be supplied? How many people have you asked? Are they the right people? Are you waiting to be discovered? Or are you actively promoting your skills and proposing how you can make a difference. Again, how often and to whom? Do you have some shortcomings that you either haven't acknowledged or are denying? Do you actively seek feedback and look for ways to improve?

Could it be true that what separates the most successful people from others is the number of requests that successful people make during their lifetime? Do you have the courage to find out? Start asking today.

About the Author

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