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## Work is a Social Event



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*What a terrible pity that employees who gripe about their work and, therefore, place a low value on the job experience – other than a means to put bread on the table – have missed the real point. Most people fail to realize the psychological importance of work to their lives and well-being because of work’s social aspect. If more individuals did, many people’s attitudes might change for the better.*

### Like a bad marriage?

Perhaps a parallel is the chap who bitches about his marriage, but once the partner disappears from his life (separation or death) he feels an immediate emptiness and terrible loneliness. He doesn’t realize something is good in his life until it’s gone.

Likewise, once that boring job disappears from the person’s life (a layoff, say), the individual feels an immediate emptiness and uselessness. Anyone who is unemployed, (while, of course they miss the money) miss being useful, miss being wanted, and miss feeling a part of work society. Rarely does anyone announce with pride “I’m unemployed”. In fact, they often use a euphemism, “I’m between assignments” to disguise the empty sense of their unemployed status.

### A bad job

In the case of a bad job fit, I repeat my messages contained over many CCCC newsletters, that the individual owes it to him or herself and to the company, to devote a full effort to look for a more rewarding work challenge. In this article, I am talking about people who value their jobs highly enough to remain on the job but continue to publicly express a dislike for aspects of it.

### Higher level personnel

Typically, senior management and mid-level managers get sufficient satisfaction from their work – from the power that they have, and the control over their own direction that they enjoy – to feel good about themselves. Yes, feel good about themselves – as that is where the psychological direction at work begins for us all. Satisfied, responsible, people usually don’t go around bitching.

### The target audience

My target audience for this note are those who are gainfully employed, are satisfied enough with their work not to be looking elsewhere, but somehow feel the need to let others know of displeasures, almost regularly. (In a previous newsletter, we offered solution for the group of constant complainers. That solution was to be proactive about taking advantage of, and responsibility for, using the many listening mechanisms within the firm.) As far as work responsibility is concerned, we ask: Are you helping row the boat or are you just drifting along for the ride?

I have met individuals with 20 years’ tenure at a company, who still offer negative comments at any opportunity. First, I suggest, again, if you are truly unhappy, you owe it to yourself and your employer to find another position more suitable to you. This is very possible, even if you don’t think so. For a wonderful return on your investment you can go to a employment ‘fixer’ such as Career Constructors International (CCI) in Ottawa.

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## What employment offers you

Being employed provides money. But it gives much more than that. It offers you:

- A chance to connect with people every working day
- A chance to talk, regularly, with people whom you esteem
- A chance to learn more about your trade and advance along that line
- A sense of daily pride in what you achieve yourself each day
- A sense of belonging to a team
- The good feeling of having a certain amount of control over your destiny
- The reward that comes from your superior or peers telling you how valuable you are
- A sense of prestige when those below you show admiration for you and your knowledge
- A chance to feel that you (through your company) are providing a worthwhile service to the community
- A chance to feel that you are growing from the day-to-day experiences at work
- Something to talk about, proudly, with your friends outside of the work environment
- A chance to feel good about yourself.

Even if you don't agree that your work provides you all these benefits, I am sure you will find that your own job environment provides some of them.

### Give it a thought

Rarely do most of us think about the 12 points above. But they stabilize our lives – and when they are gone, we miss them. Those 12 items are very important to our well-being. So, my message for some people is for them to think about these things. My plea is for people to stop complaining to fellow workers as if they were living in Hell, when they are not. Everyone should take a few minutes to reflect on the psychological value they derive from the meaningful work (and, I repeat, if your work is not meaningful, find another job).

To summarize: The greatest benefit we have from our work is the continuous human contact – the social connection of work. Why not enjoy and appreciate it?

Bill

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