



Gleanings

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In This Issue

- Finding Passion at Work
- Individual Destiny

Wisdom

**If you take too long
deciding what to do with
your life, you'll find out
you've done it.**

George Bernard Shaw

(Source: Inspire List 3-17-04)

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Finding Passion at Work

Recently, Ray Crist announced his retirement. What makes this note worthy is Ray's age - 102. Ray was quoted saying that he never thought of his work as a job. (Source - *Experience Works, Senior Workplace Solutions*)

How many people can make the statement that their work is not just a job? In my experience, few people could honestly make this statement. Most of us view our work as simply a way to make money to support our lifestyles.

I routinely ask clients how many of their workers function at a high level. That is, how many are really efficient and productive? Typically the response is ~10%. While my informal survey is hardly scientific, it does provide anecdotal support to my hypothesis - most of us work at a low level of productivity because we have little passion for our work.

Some would argue that discipline and personal pride drives people to continue working in an area where they find little satisfaction. There is some truth to this, but working at a job in which a person has no passion takes considerable emotional energy. The harder one tries to work, the more emotional energy is required. Furthermore, dispassionate people don't go the extra mile.

Is it surprising that the work of many people is mediocre? How can anyone produce excellent products or services without the drive to do so? Passion is the ingredient that makes work a joy; passion gives life meaning and purpose. Passion drives us to perform incredible feats against all odds.

Ray Crist had passion. He worked 80 years, not because he had to, but because he wanted to work. He isn't alone. In a CNBC interview this past December, Peter Drucker, now in his 90s, commented that if he stopped working he would die.

One of the obsessions in America today is retirement. People are anxious to retire, usually as soon as possible. Wouldn't it be better to emulate Ray Crist? Why not find work that ignites a passion in your heart? Some claim it is too hard to find such work. Is it? Have you tried? Or are you in such bondage of mind that you cannot allow yourself the thought that you might actually enjoy your work?

Ask yourself this question: do you want to buy a product or service from someone with no passion to produce that product or service? For example, do you want to have heart surgery by a surgeon who dislikes what he does and only does it to make money? Or do you want a surgeon who has a burning passion for medicine and helping people in need? A surgeon with passion would perform surgery on you carefully and wisely. He or she would be sure to stay up on the latest medical advances and gladly make personal sacrifices to see that you receive the very best care.

Why do so few people enjoy passion for their work? I submit that the reason is largely the belief that work has no significance beyond making money. Most people do not believe that their work is anything more than a means to produce income; hence, they don't try to find work they really enjoy.

What if both employees and employers were to adopt a philosophy that everyone's work is significant; therefore, every job should be filled by someone with passion to do that job. Now this would be a switch. Management would be easier. Problems would be solved more quickly. Complaints would be reduced. Absenteeism would decline. Productivity and quality would increase. Customers would be more satisfied. Cash flow would improve and profits would increase. So what is wrong with this picture?



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The problem is that few people really believe that finding enjoyable work is possible; hence, they don't try. Most employers assume that aligning workers with jobs for which they have passion is too hard; furthermore, it takes too much time and besides, they are consumed with the daily tasks of operating a business. So we continue running our organizations with workers who lack passion and therefore deliver mediocre products and services.

I encourage you to think outside the box. Believe that it is possible to build an organization with people who have passion to do their work. Yes, the journey may be long and arduous; but the result is worth it. Great organizations are built on the foundation of great people. Great people are those who can't wait to get to work in the mornings, who don't have to be externally motivated, and who are very productive because they love what they do. The world has yet to see an organization that is built on people of passion. It would be an amazing sight.

Individual Destiny

In the January 10, 2004 edition of *World*, Susan Olasky interviewed agnostic scholar Charles Murray who wrote the book *Human Accomplishment*. In his book, Murray sought to answer the following question: "Why outstanding accomplishments are not evenly distributed among various cultures?" Of course, the question assumes that outstanding accomplishments are not evenly distributed.

Murray's conclusions are interesting. He asserts that the key to outstanding accomplishment is the sense of individual purpose or destiny. He argues that cultures that embrace the value of individual purpose, such as Protestant Christianity, are the ones that produce outstanding achievement. In fact, Murray's thesis is that Protestant Christianity is the worldview that underlies most human accomplishment.

To test his hypothesis, consider the GDP per capita per year in various cultures listed in the table below.

Country	Worldview	Per Capita Income/Year	Source
United States	Protestant Christianity	\$37,500	Wall Street Journal 3/03
Spain	Catholic	\$17,500	World Magazine, 3/29/03, pg 20ff
Arab Nations	Muslim	\$1,900	
India	Hindu	\$480	"Sizzling Economy Revitalizes India" by A. Waldman, New York Times, 10/20/03

These per capita statistics are most revealing. The difference between the United States, where Protestant Christianity shapes the worldview of the culture, and the other countries is amazing. Granted, this data is not exhaustive; but it is still startling. It certainly seems to support Murray's hypothesis. Worldviews that value individual destiny and significance provide a sense of purpose to individuals. When people with a sense of purpose live in a culture that allows the freedom to pursue individual destiny, human achievement occurs.

Those of us who live in the United States are indeed very blessed. There is little to stop us from pursuing our dreams and passions. This sentiment is captured in a statement by Alfred Souza:

For a long time it had seemed to me that life was about to begin... But there was always some obstacle in the way, something to be gotten through first, some unfinished business, time still to be served, a debt to be paid. Then life would begin. At last it dawned on me that these obstacles were my life.

Great accomplishments happen when people believe that there is a reason for their being, choose to pursue that reason, and live in a culture that allows people to pursue that reason. If you live in a culture that is shaped by Protestant Christianity, don't block yourself. Search out the purpose for your life, and do it with all that is in you. If you have the opportunity, don't miss it.