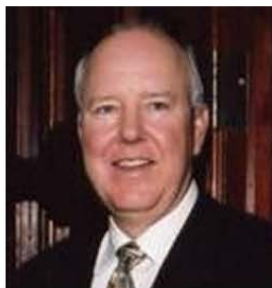


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Gleanings

by Gerald R. Chester, Ph.D.

Passionless Work, Anyone?



A group of district managers met at a corporate retreat center with their regional manager to make plans for the upcoming year. As an ice breaker, the regional manager asked everyone to share what they would do if money was not an issue and they could do anything they wanted. Not one manager stated that he or she would do his or her current job. The regional manager smiled, showing no concern. He commented that they were all working for the same thing—money; hence, passion for their work had nothing to do with their job choices.

It is not surprising to observe such attitudes in our materialistic society. My observation over the past three decades in business is that most people work because of money. The regional manager was clearly working for money and expected nothing more from his subordinates. In fact, he was pleased that the district managers shared his money-driven motivation.

So what is the implication of working primarily for money, rather than out of our passion? Money is a thankless taskmaster. There never seems to be enough. The “need” lures us into working long hours—neglecting our families and sacrificing our health. Getting out of bed in the morning and going to work is torture. It gives us a false sense of security and generally leads to a disillusioned life. A money-driven person has a negative countenance. Shortcuts and shortchanging are standard operating practices; going the extra mile is arduous. Working primarily for money leads to mediocrity. The reality is that at the end of your life it doesn’t matter how much money you have, because money does not impress God and offers no help on judgment day. Note what Solomon said: “Wealth is worthless in the day of wrath...” (Proverbs 11:4 NIV).

On the other hand, passion for work offers great benefits. It makes work interesting, even fascinating. It drives us to explore and experiment. It motivates us to get out of bed with a spring in our step and joy in our heart. Passion gives us a reason to persevere, to solve problems, and to overcome obstacles. A person filled with a passion for his or her work has a bright, positive, and cheerful countenance. The disciplined life needed to facilitate work seems easy for a person driven by an insatiable love for his or her work. Going the extra mile is effortless. Money becomes a by-product of doing what he or she would gladly do for free. Passion facilitates excellence and excellence is God’s standard. The apostle Paul said: “Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men” (Colossians 3:23 NIV).

Everyone wants to do business with someone who is passionate about what he or she does. No one wants to deal with someone who is primarily driven by money. Passion for one’s calling leads to pleasant and satisfying business experiences, while people driven by money produce a trail of dissatisfied and unhappy customers.

Despite this reality, some business pundits don’t see the value in having passion for one’s work. The February 2006 issue of the Harvard Business Review (HBR) reported on the salient conclusions from a conference held this past summer in Geneva, Switzerland (“The HBR List—Breakthrough Ideas for 2006”). The purpose of the gathering of allegedly brilliant business leaders was to assimilate important ideas for 2006. One of the ideas promulgated was that work does not have to be fulfilling or a vehicle to realize one’s potential; rather, it is sufficient that work is worthwhile. The HBR article opined that employees may be dissatisfied if they have been taught to expect too much from their jobs.

If this is the best thinking of the business elite, it is no wonder that so many people—such as the regional manager above—are working for money, not out of passion for their work. They have no sense of divine calling. There is little purpose or significance associated with their work except for earning money. What a dismal and despairing view of work! (In reading the HBR article, I noted that the proponent of this idea is a cofounder of a company called Despair, Inc., and wrote a book titled *The Art of Demotivation*. I wonder if he has a passion for his work?)

Personally, I prefer the philosophy articulated by Jonathan Schwartz, president and chief operating officer of Sun Microsystems, Inc., (Paul B. Brown, *FastCompany*, Issue 97, August 2005, p. 96) who said: “When you do what you love, you can’t lose.”

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