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Professional Recruiters

Roger's Tip of the Month

"Dream Job" Spirit

While I believe in wearing shined shoes, I usually don't have time in airports to stop at a shoeshine stand. Recently, while in the Seattle airport, a shoeshine person blurted a comment to me as I hurriedly walked by, "Sir, you paid a lot of money for those Allen Edmonds. Don't you think you should invest 10 minutes to make yourself look better and make them last longer?"

While I was surprised that he yelled out to me, I was even more surprised that he nailed the brand name of my shoes from 20 feet away. And, he was right, it was a smart investment of time and money to spend 10 minutes in his chair. While he shined my shoes, we talked and I was amazed at his knowledge of shoes, his passion for taking good care of them, and the excitement he showed for his craft (and his art). He had a gift of turning an ordinary job into an extraordinary one. He treated his work at that shoe shine stand like a dream job and reaped the rewards that came from this type of attitude: productivity, happiness, meaning, success, etc.

We have all seen the results of this kind of passion — the waitress who makes every customer in her restaurant feel like the royal family; a flight attendant who enthusiastically brings humor and fun to flying commercial; the peanut vendor at a local stadium that makes baseball concession both a tradition and art.

So what does this have to do with the Tip for this month? My point is that there is no such thing as a boring job. Jobs don't make people bored at work; people make themselves bored at work. If this shoeshine person can fall in love with his job every day and share this passion with customers, just think about what you can do with your job.

Many military officers leave the service and start new business careers with this same type of passion and excitement. The "newness" of their new careers makes them happy and motivated. The problem sets in about 24 months into their new careers when the "newness" wears off and infusing spirit into their jobs becomes a daily challenge. Alumni will usually call me saying that the job is not what they thought it was going to be, that it is no longer intellectually challenging, that they are not learning as much as they were in when they started, etc. Here's the worst thing about this situation — they usually think the problem is EXTERNAL to themselves (i.e., with their job or their career path or their industry, etc.). Nothing could be further from the truth. The problem is INTERNAL and will recur regardless of what job they are in. Here is the reason.

While in the military, officers don't need to worry about jobs getting stale because most JMOs change jobs every 12-18 months (24 months is considered a "long" time in a job). This is not the case in corporate America where most leaders stay in the same job for 3-4 years (even at VP and General Manager levels). To achieve success in business, JMOs must develop the ability to proactively find ways to infuse passion and spirit into your work OVER time. Many alumni ignore this and instead leave their job for a "new" opportunity. Too often, their unconscious pattern resurfaces about 24 months into their new job, when they again become restless, uninspired, and lacking of career passion. It's just a matter of time before this pattern strikes again.

Again, anyone can be passionate for the first year (the honeymoon period) of a job, but it takes INITIATIVE to keep passion in your work. Make a conscious choice to infuse "dream job" spirit into your work EVERY day. Be optimistic, get out of your own way, find fun new things to learn about your job and industry, kill a sacred cow or

two, take night classes, learn a foreign language, and lighten up. Remember, careers are not sprints; instead, they are longer races where patience and sustained passion are not only keys to success, but also keys to happiness.

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