

How to Survive When You Hate Your Job

US News & World Report - July 8, 2009 - With 9.5 percent of American workers unemployed and on the job hunt, you know exactly how you should feel about the job you have: ridiculously fortunate. And you are.

But at the same time, maybe not because:

- You hate your job
- Every moment at the office is interminable
- Sunday nights, you practically cry yourself to sleep
- Happiness comes at 5:01 p.m. on Friday
- If you won the lottery, there's no doubt you would quit your job without a second, moralistic thought.

You're not alone. The majority of American workers say they plan to start looking for work when the economy recovers, according to a recent survey from Adecco and Harris Interactive. But the bottom line is that you probably still need your job. So, you need a strategy for surviving it.

Figure Out What's Changed

More than 20 percent of employees say this recession has lowered their job satisfaction, according to a survey by the Society for Human Resource Management. If you're really unhappy at work, stop and do a self-examination.

"Most people who hate their jobs have never asked themselves why they hate them," says Sylvia Lafair, author of "Don't Bring It to Work: Breaking the Family Patterns That Limit Success".

Although the recession may have increased your workload, erased company perks, or changed your job description, it's worth pinpointing the thing you hate, even if the economy is to blame.

If you don't know why you feel so miserable in your job, it's easy to get stuck in a cycle in which you continue to pursue jobs with the same problematic attributes.

Start A Research Project

Lafair offers a pithy goal for job-haters who are stuck because of high unemployment rates: "If you can't leave it, what can you learn from it?" Very often, people hate their work because of troubled relationships with coworkers or, what is more common, a supervisor.

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It's important to figure out what it is about your coworkers that's so frustrating and then work out new ways of responding to them. Treat it like a research project, Lafair suggests.

You'll find that a sense of experimentation can inject new energy into your daily routine. Many times, people find that what they disliked most about these relationships is their own unwillingness to speak up or to avoid certain conversations, Lafair says.

Start With Gratitude

A crucial step to curing your doldrums is a change in perspective, says Patrick Lencioni, author of "The Three Signs of a Miserable Job".

You should keep in mind, he notes, that just having a job is enough for some people. This doesn't mean you should be satisfied with the status quo, but you should recognize the value of your position.

Look Around The Office

If you hate your job, there's a good chance that other people around you do, too. Negativity breeds negativity. Despite what got the ball rolling in the first place, you can choose to be part of a move in the opposite direction.

"You can go to work and actually make someone else's job less miserable," Lencioni says. "Use your job to help others."

Although there may be other methods of reducing your unhappiness, say by improving your skills or shifting some of your workload to a coworker. However, money and staff are tight, and employees probably won't have too many levers to pull during this recession.

Help Colleagues With Three Things

Employees who are miserable in their jobs tend to be miserable because of three things, Lencioni says.

- 1) They feel anonymous
- 2) They feel irrelevant, as though their work doesn't matter
- 3) They don't know how to measure their success

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You can help a coworker feel less anonymous.

Relationships at work are so important that those who feel known by their coworkers have a hard time leaving their jobs even voluntarily.

Also, feedback is crucial! Working without a sense that your contribution matters to the company's objectives will put you on the road to misery. Find a way to help other people realize why their job matters.

If you're a manager, let your employees know how you measure their performance.

(End)