

# From JOB to JOY: How to Find JOY at Work, No Matter What Your Job Is

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The security guard welcomed me with a smile, offered the comfort of a seat and the convenience of a magazine while I settled yet again for a long wait at the government office. He did this every time. The TSA officer at the airport in the Virgin Islands thanked each passenger for his or her patience in the long airport security line and wished us safe travel. With a half-oval smile and eye contact. Every passenger.

These are just two of the most joyous employees I have ever met even though their jobs are amongst the most mundane.

The February 2012 issue of the Harvard Business Review reports that "happy employees have 31% higher productivity, their sales are 37% higher; their creativity is three times higher". Happiness is a huge value proposition to the organisation. But do you as an employee have to wait for the company to make you happy? Did that security guard and the TSA officer depend on anyone to make him or her experience joy in their work?

From JOB to JOY. It's only one letter, yet it's a huge chasm for many people. "Job" typically denotes drudgery, boredom, suffering, penury, lack of freedom, painful necessity and everything that's totally antithetical to joy. Moving from JOB to JOY just doesn't seem possible. Yet, as the security guard and the TSA officer demonstrated, it can be.

Retirement is one route of course. Stay in the job long enough, hang in there, and at some point, you will leave and be rewarded with joy. That's the theory. Yet many people who did not have joy in their jobs find that retirement is similarly joyless. Sometimes hold-onto-the-job-at-all-costs retirement planning is upsidely by a sudden separation such as redundancy, severance or dismissal. People who have been forcibly released from their job and who state years later that it was the best thing that ever happened to them fascinate me. I look at their smiling faces, 10 years younger, and have to agree. That wakeup call forced them to examine their life, its meaning and understand that "sans" job, they are still worthy, loved and valuable to themselves and the people who matter.

But you don't want to wait for retirement. You want joy now. You could change your job and move to a company that is more conducive to employee happiness. No guarantee of joy here as you have no control over how soon this ideal job/company will appear, where it will be located or whether it really is all it was made out to be in the job interview process. It's risky.

The good news is that you do not have to wait for retirement or a new job. Here are three ways that you can take control and bring joy to your current job situation right now:

1. Identify the value that your current job brings to you and be grateful for it. Collective groan - gratitude again? I have done it every day for the past 8 years and it really works! At least try it. Before you head out for work each morning, find one thing to be grateful for about your job. Read it aloud. Hear yourself speak those words of gratitude. Also think about the value you create for others at work. You may feel frustrated that you cannot get things done as you like. But you do help people, customers and fellow employees in ways that may seem insignificant to you, but could be very meaningful to the person being helped.
2. Detach emotionally from the job: It is not who you are, it is just something you do. Change how you speak. Instead of saying "I am Manager of ... at XX Company" try saying "My job at XX Company is manager of ....". With this semantic change you have moved from being the job to having the job. And by the way, stop complaining about the job!
3. Take care of the other areas of your life such as exercise, nutrition, rest, social connections, family, love. Your job is not the totality of your being. There are many other facets of your life in which you find joy. Notice that people who are not happy in their jobs, tend not to be happy in other areas of their lives? It's no accident.

From JOB to JOY means changing one letter: "Y". How interesting that "Y" stands for YOU (and perhaps "B" stands for BOSS?). When you bring YOU to your job, you have the power of choice. You may now choose to change your current job if you find that it is difficult for you to bloom in that particular environment. Or you may choose to remain. Whatever your decision, be joyful in it.