

Why do you do the work you do?

<http://billcaskey.com/why-do-you-do-the-work-you-do/>

In my training and coaching practice, I have frequent occasions to question new clients as they're on-boarded into my program.



A question that I always ask – and am never quite satisfied with the answer – is “**Why do you do what you do?**”

Usually, I get answers like:

- “I want to build my assets for ‘retirement.’”
- “My family is important and I want to provide for them.”
- “My father taught me to work hard so that’s what I do.”
- “I’m afraid to be unemployed.”
- “I needed a job and they needed a person.”

Sorry, not good answers.

Think through this with me. You put in 40-60 hours/week. That’s 2500-3000 hours/year. Doesn’t it make sense that the work itself is meaningful to you?

At a time when over 55% of our workers are only ‘slightly engaged’ or ‘not engaged’ with their work, it seems to be a useful exercise to link what the work really means to you. If you’re a leader of people, make sure you know exactly why your talent does this work.

Yes, you may have to probe, pry or prompt a little. But when you get there, you will watch a connection being made. And that connection serves to inspire that person to

bringing a slightly better game to work each day. It's what we call "working on purpose" and it will radically shift performance of your team.

[tweetthis]When you help someone connect 'what' they do with 'why' they do it, watch them become inspired.[/tweetthis]

Other questions that might jostle some things loose in your brain:

- What gives you the most satisfaction/pleasure in what you do?
- When do you lose track of time when you do what you do?
- What part of your job would you do even if there was no pay?

Those questions should be part of your library to help you connect your business role and your life's work.

Are You Unhappy at Work? Here's Why – and What to Do About It

The first step to happiness is understanding why you're unhappy. Here are some common reasons for unhappiness at work, and what to do to fix them.

Unhappiness at work is a common problem. All of us have felt unhappy at one point or another in our jobs, and a surprising number of us are chronically unhappy in our current positions--more than half, in fact. Unhappiness makes us less productive, less healthy, and miserable in general. So if so many people are unhappy at work, why aren't they doing anything about it?

There are two main reasons why the unhappy workers of America continue slaving away at their miserable jobs. The first is that they don't understand why they're unhappy--they can't pinpoint the reason, so they think it's illogical to feel unhappy or think there's no way to get rid of those negative feelings. The second is that they don't know what to do--they know what's wrong, but don't think it can be changed or see no viable option to pursue.

Top Reasons for Unhappiness

I'll address the first reason first. To help you understand why you're feeling unhappy, I've come up with this brief list of some of the top reasons why people are unhappy in their jobs:

- **Pay.** You feel like you're working harder than you're getting paid for. When you suspect there's a dissonance between the amount of effort you're putting in and the amount of reward you're receiving, it's natural to feel like your job is a waste of time or that you'd be happier elsewhere.
- **Stability.** You notice behaviors, patterns, and decisions that lead you to believe your job is unstable. You might worry about being laid off or fired, or you might worry that

the entire company is going under. Either way, your job feels unreliable, and it causes excessive stress in your life.

- **Future.** You're okay with your position today, but there isn't much room for advancement. Raise requests are almost always turned down, and there's no room for promotions. If you feel like you aren't growing or working toward something, it's natural to feel unhappy.
- **Other people.** You don't like the people you work with, or you simply aren't working with enough people that you admire, get along with, or respect. The social aspect of work makes a big impact.
- **Demands.** You're tired of the high-pressure environment. You're expected to do too much in too little time, and you never get to focus on the quality work you'd like to be doing or create a healthy work-life balance.
- **Flexibility.** You can't take off early to pick up your child for school, and you can't turn down any assignments that fall outside your range of expertise. The less flexible your job is, the unhappier you'll become.
- **The work itself.** You simply don't like your industry, or at least you don't like the position you're in within your industry.

Do any of these apply to you? If so, which are the most egregious offenders? Try to isolate each of these factors and identify their root causes. If nothing else, it will help you better understand the roots of your unhappiness.

What to Do If You Are Unhappy

Once you understand why you're unhappy, you can start taking meaningful action to improve your circumstances.

Know the difference between acute and chronic unhappiness

First, recognize that there's a difference between moments of unhappiness and ongoing unhappiness. Are you truly unhappy in your work, or are you just having a bad week? Be honest with yourself and try to look at the circumstances objectively. If this is only a temporary period, it's probably best to adopt some new stress-relief techniques and power through it.

Try to make positive changes

If you know that your unhappiness isn't likely to go away on its own, your next step is to make positive changes in your environment. Change whatever you can on your own, and have frank, open discussions with your supervisors and bosses about changing the other things. If they value and respect you, they'll want to work out a compromise with you on what they can. For example, if you have persistent disagreements with someone on your team, try working out a resolution or finding another member to replace him/her. If you're worried about your future, talk about what opportunities lie ahead of you with your boss.

Gauge your relative happiness level

No job is perfect. Don't compare your happiness level to what it would be in an idealized "perfect" work environment. Instead, compare your happiness level to what it would be at a similar, but different job. Is your unhappiness going to follow you in any job, or is it specifically tied to unchangeable circumstances in this one?

Find a new job

If you feel confident that your unhappiness is chronic and tied to this particular job, and if none of your attempts at making positive changes are succeeding, you only have one option: find a new job. It can be intimidating at first, but no job is worth your perpetual unhappiness.

If you're truly unhappy at work, there's no reason to allow that unhappiness to continue. It's entirely within your power to make positive changes in your own life, even if that means leaving this job for another opportunity. Just know that every job is going to come with unhappy moments and unpleasant circumstances--the key is finding work rewarding enough to make up for it.

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