

# Top Ten Ways to Find Joy at Work

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I set out to write a David Letterman-style Top Ten list about finding joy in the workplace in tough times. But recent revelations about how Letterman found joy at work is not what I'm advocating. His extramarital affairs with subordinates were perverse, dishonest, conspiratorial, and exploitative power-mongering — harmful and possibly illegal. No joke. Jobs are not saved nor enhanced by turning workplaces into sleaze factories.

Exploiting others is definitely not on my list for getting more joy out of work. But enlisting others in a great cause tops it.

In researching my SuperCorp book, I saw joy during what I call "Rubik's Cubemoments," when everything clicks into place for an uplifting accomplishment. "Rubik's Cube moments" might come after pulling off a complicated food drive for the homeless; collaborating across functions for a creative presentation that wins a big client; flying technology experts to the rescue after a natural disaster to manage relief supplies; convincing bosses to try job-sharing instead of a layoff; or seeing a product prototype work for the first time. Creating collaborative innovation to save the business (and overcoming frustrating drudgery) was how managers Juliana Azevedo and Tarek Farahat found themselves holding hands with workers and customers at a P&G factory as a new product first came off the line — an iconic "Rubik's Cube" SuperCorp story.

Although some studies report growing employee cynicism, job satisfaction polls show high satisfaction rates for those still employed. Job security has been the most important factor in an 80% satisfied rate for the past two years, followed by compensation and benefits, in Society for Human Resource Management surveys.

Clearly, people report job satisfaction simply because they get a paycheck. But are they getting joy? OK, maybe work was never all that joyous, and that's why it's called "work." But the post-crash daily grind is grinding some people down to a pitiful pulp. Melodramatic, I know, but I've heard sad tales from people in numerous cities during my book tour. People in secure jobs they once liked report working harder with fewer resources just to hold their own, like treading water in an endless swim machine. If current economic trends continue, we might face not just a job-less recovery but a joy-less recovery.

Here are some clues about joy. On a recent Gallup Healthways survey of 100,000 Americans, business owners outrank 10 other occupations in overall well-being, despite working longer hours and earning slightly less, on average, than professionals and managers/executives, who rank second and third. The surprising fourth is farming, fishing, and forestry, despite the lowest income of any group. (Maybe not surprising, given how many leaders unwind by fishing or brush-cutting.) More confined service, clerical, transportation, and manufacturing workers are at the bottom, in the low 40s on Gallup's 100-point well-being index compared to over 70 for business owners.

Autonomy, influence, and a sense of meaning are associated with lower stress and fewer work-related illnesses, regardless of hours worked. Supervisors are better-off than the supervised, and entrepreneurs are the best-off of all.

**This suggests that exerting leadership is the surest route to joy (other than going fishing).** The key is setting the agenda and starting the pieces moving towards a purpose-driven goal. If 90% of success in life is just showing up, Monster.com founder Jeff Taylor advises that when you show up, you might as well run the meeting.

So here is my list of top ways to find joy at work.

**10. Identify long-term personal purpose.** Write a personal mission statement, to review often.

**9. Be an entrepreneur from anywhere.** Even if you don't start a business (now), imagine starting a project that will improve your current job, workplace, or community.

**8. Discuss the idea informally to find others feeling the same way.** Enlist them in the quest. Now they're counting on you not to let them down. Describe it as an experiment that will benefit others. Incorporate feedback so that others hear their ideas in yours.

**7. Get a Big Name to endorse giving it a try.**

**6. Negotiate out of demands that don't contribute to the goal.** Keep doing what you must to keep your job, but simplify.

**5. Find every supporter a task, however small.** Show that you're working for their goals, too.

**4. Widen the circle of the informed.** Involve people not usually included.

**3. Remain positive.** Smiling takes fewer muscles than frowning and is contagious. Ignore skeptics unless easily converted.

**2. As the bits of the cube start moving, keep communicating and coordinating.**

**1. Celebrate each "Rubik's Cube" moment of accomplishment.** Share the joy to multiply it.

More jobs with more joy – now that's an agenda the public should rally behind. Let's not wait for employers to make changes, necessary as those are. A few good "Rubik's Cube moments" can keep us going – and influence employers to see why joy matters.



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