

The Worklife Journey: Journal

April, 2005; Vol. I, Issue VII (Trouble Viewing? [View Online](#)-----[Download Printable Version](#))

Re-discovering Meaning in Work

The rapidly changing job environment causes us to ask several key questions

1. What is my purpose?
2. How can I bring more meaning to my work?
3. Is this job what I am really meant to do?
4. Where is there a place for me and my true values?

Companies grapple with how to foster loyalty and commitment while a new generation of workers is expecting more from work than money. Personal balance, integration and harmony have become increasingly important to men and women of all ages.

The challenge of commitment and fulfillment at work is highly personal: it calls into focus one's inner sense of purpose, caring and vitality that makes work worthwhile. When a person hasn't found their sense of inner purpose, work can become routine, tiring, and boring. For some, this leads to irritability and difficult interpersonal relations. For others, it leads to burnout and depression. For a small few, there can be the instigation to quit, leave and over-react. Of course, this usually leads right back to where we start the cycle all over again.

Major current research from the [Gallup Organization](#) reveals that less than one third of the U.S. workforce feel truly engaged in their work. The other two-thirds are either just showing up or, worse, are actively disengaged. This is a measurement of vocational meaning that exists in the business workplace. A 2003 survey by the [Conference Board](#) reports that fewer than half of all Americans are satisfied with their jobs.

Meaning Improves Employee and Company Well-Being

For corporations--big or small--the degree that each worker finds meaning in work will be reflected in the quality of their commitment and excitement (or lack of it) that is present in the workforce. Ultimately, this translates into competitiveness and success for the business. Studies from [Hewitt Associates](#), [TNS Intersearch](#) and [Spherion](#) all provide startling evidence of the link between productivity and engagement.

So what can you do?

- Compile a list of activities, hobbies, and aspects of your current job that you enjoy. Career-assessment tools like the Birkman Method which we use in all of our coaching - aren't just for those who are trying to choose a career; they can help you tap into interests you may have forgotten about or that have developed over time.
- Once you have a list, identify ways to introduce some of these interests into your work life, whether it's by launching a new program or start by seeking volunteer opportunities or a part-time job just to see if you feel the same way in a new setting.
- You might also go on a job interview to test the waters; sometimes officially putting yourself in a job-search frame of mind can help you see your current situation in a new light.
- Often these exercises will lead you to "career serendipity"--falling into the right situation at the right time.
- The most important factor is that you take action. "Action will help you do much better thinking than you could ever hope to do sitting still and weighing all the



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As Director of Program Development for Worklife Performance Consulting, Laura has designed and delivered a number of personal development and performance enhancing seminars. Her extensive experience in the growing field of emotional intelligence has earned her a reputation for insight, creativity and inspiration.

Passion Power

What is it that gets me motivated with my work? How do I keep on going when challenges come my way? As I search for the answers, I don't have to go very far and the answer to these questions is certainly no surprise. The answer is PASSION! At times I want more than that answer. I look for steps and guideposts, encouragement and advice from the "experts" but the mix is in the Passion that gets stirred up inside me. It's my personal recipe for motivation and drive that has sustained me. Whatever I've accomplished it's occurred because of my passion and will to succeed.

Passion, however, is inspiring and others can sense when we're tuned in to our passion. It's when we feel enthusiastic that it infects others and they want to get on board. My personal Passion Quotient is PASS-I(T)-ON. My journey has provided me with several opportunities to PASS-I(T)-ON. During the rebellious years of the 60's I realized that my passion was to help people. My "rebel with a cause" days led me to be of service in the medical field. My passion inspired my interests. The PASS-I(T)-ON Quotient supported the development of my skills into areas where I

theoretical facts," advises Barbara Sher in *I Could Do Anything If I Only Knew What It Was* (DTP, 1995). "Even action in the wrong direction is informative."

- Don't overlook the fact that you may just need to take a real vacation. Check out John Izzo, author of *Second Innocence: Rediscovering Joy and Wonder* (Berrett-Koehler, 2004).

The Quest for Meaning

A cursory glance of the myriad volumes now populating the business section of Barnes and Noble is living proof of the growing interest and quest. The deeper question is, "What higher aspiration and purpose can you pursue with such passion that you can gain strength for the stress and persistence required for the attainment of worthwhile and meaningful work?"

It is clear that there is a definite thirst for deeper ways of working. In workshops and coaching sessions all over the country, we have talked to thousands of people that describe four basic areas of engagement:

1. **C ore self** , - the person finds a personal passion in work, in touch with core values and can actively bring these into daily work.
2. **C ontribution** , - the person becomes engaged in worthy goals or a greater cause for their daily efforts.
3. **C raft** , - the person develops an intense enjoyment in the on-going competent delivery of challenging work.
4. **C ommunity** , - the person finds that connection to others goes deeper than the job and brings out the best of each other.

Awakening Meaning - the WorkLife Theater

Shakespeare's famous comment "All the world's a stage and all the men and women players" is not only a poetic allusion but acts as a core directive for all of us to step up to the artistic performance of our work and life. Taking a performance based approach to the daily stage requires that we prepare as well as the greatest actors in both our inner self - our attitudes, dedication, commitment & focus - and our outer self - physical stamina, agility, voice & dress. There are 4 key questions I wrestle with every day and that I use to help prepare others for their performance:

- Who am I?
- What do I want?
- Where am I going?
- How do I get there?

I've never fully answered any of these questions but the ongoing struggle to clarify and focus myself through them has helped me to stay the course on bringing meaning to my work. My analogy has been the North Star. It is unchanging and resolute and provides me with the reference point I need in the stormiest times as well as the periods with the most favorable winds. Ultimately, you must listen to your heart: Those who find their true calling do so by following what inspires their passion.

I've also been in situations where I've received hours of training in order to become a "certified" expert and then realized that the interest wasn't there. The answer lies within - it's a recipe that flopped because of the improper ingredients. The PASS-I(T)-ON Quotient was missing.

Today my PASS-I(T)-ON Quotient remains the same as years ago - I love to help people to find their own passion quotient. The *Birkman Method* www.birkman.com has provided me with an excellent tool to help people stir up their passion. Through the "Areas of Interest" reports I can help people discover what they like to do, where they prefer to direct their energies as well as uncover their motivators in the work place.

Try defining a PASS-I(T)-ON Quotient for yourself at ([click](#)) and see how inspired others become just seeing the sparks fly around you. Have a great month, explore your *Birkman Method* mini-results at our online library ([click](#)) and see how your interests + your skills = your PASSION Quotient.

The "Best of" Worklife

Movie	Book	Website
What The Bleep Do We Know	Callings by Gregg Levoy	Job Hunter's Bible

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