A person with long hair

Description automatically generated with low confidence

How to be Fulfilled in Your Career

May 9, 2021

Well hello friends. I hope you had an amazing week.

Today I want to talk to you about a trend that’s been growing steadily for the last several decades. And that is the degree to which we’re fulfilled at work.

Or to be more specific, the degree to which we’re UNfulfilled.

According to a Gallup poll conducted a few years ago, more than two thirds of workers say they’re NOT ENGAGED in their job.

Think about that for a minute. Only one in three of us say we’re ENGAGED in the work we do?

Wow.

No wonder so many of us LIVE for Friday nights and despise Sundays, right?

Honestly, that’s why I decided to release my new podcasts on Sunday. I want to give workers a little lift and some helpful perspective to add positive fuel to their workweek.

This is something that’s universal and there’s a lot to talk about here, so let’s dive in.

Back to the poll, I don’t think it’s an accident, that Gallup measured “engaged” vs. “fulfilled.”

“Engaged” is a MUCH lower bar than “fulfilled” but by anyone’s standards, 33% is a really low number.

And if they’d asked how many workers were “fulfilled” they might’ve come back with a number like 10%.

Maybe even less.

According to Webster’s dictionary, “engaged” means “involved in activity; occupied or busy.”

Whereas the definition of “fulfilled” is “feeling satisfied or happy because of fully developing one’s abilities or character.”

See the difference?

And the problem?

We’re not even hitting a good percentage of people who feel INVOLVED IN their job. Let alone feeling satisfied or happy.

Obviously, that’s a huge issue for companies, because it translates into lower productivity, lackluster business results, employee turnover.

And it’s also responsible for delivering the things so many of us complain about including bad bosses (who are probably ALSO not engaged or not engaged enough to bother to be inspiring or helpful).

It creates toxic cultures.

Hyper political colleagues.

And all the other stuff that drains us of our energy and satisfaction.

I GET IT. Trust me.

Anyone who’s been in their career for more than a handful of years has stories to tell. And I could share many. But I want to shift our focus from what’s wrong with the workplaces of today to what we can do about it.

And there’s plenty.

But first a word of caution.

When you find yourself in a situation where you feel “Unengaged” for a long period of time – when it’s about having more than just a bad or challenging week - it’s easy to assume you’re just in the wrong place.

That it’s all about the bad boss or the toxic culture or the hyper political colleagues. Or whatever.

Now I’m not telling you those things don’t exist.

They do. And I know how they can affect how you feel in your job and even how effectively you perform your job.

But here’s the problem with assuming that those things must be fixed BEFORE you can feel engaged or happy or fulfilled in your work.

**You’re NOT IN CONTROL of any of those things.**

This puts the power of your fulfillment or satisfaction in the hands of a bunch of other people who aren’t happy themselves.

Not a great recipe for change, right?

Sure, you could go out and find a NEW JOB – and there are many times when that IS the right answer. Like if you’re looking to grow or evolve or whatever.

But I’m here to tell you from experience that if you change jobs solely to escape the toxicity of the one you have for something you perceive to be better – a job you think might be a GREENER pasture – isn’t always the sure-fire fix we want it to be.

Sometimes it can improve things. At least for a while.

But often than not, when we change jobs for THAT reason – to escape - we’re just trading one set of issues in Company A for a new set of issues in Company B.

Because I can promise you there are NEW problems – potentially bigger and more frustrating ones – waiting for you at the new place.

As someone who has sometimes chased greener pastures, I do not recommend changing jobs because you are trying to escape.

Because the truth is when it comes to your work life, the only way to feel satisfied on a PERMANENT basis is when you take responsibility for creating it yourself.

Let’s go back to the definition of fulfilled that I shared earlier.

According to Websters, “fulfilled” means “feeling satisfied or happy because of fully developing one’s abilities or character.”

Let’s really examine the last half of that sentence for a moment.

“Because of fully developing one’s abilities or character.”

This is not something you need to wait for others to help you do.

It’s nothing anyone can do FOR you.

This is something you can DECIDE to do. Everyday.

Fulfillment come from inside.

So how do you ‘fully develop your abilities?’

By deciding to believe that you alone create your career fulfillment. And that you can start doing that today, from wherever you are. In whatever situation you’re in.

It starts with having a thought like “I get to decide where I’m going and what I want.”

This is going to make you feel SUPER empowered.

Why? Because you’re not waiting on anyone else to do or change anything.

You can change how you FEEL inside your job this minute.

And from that empowered place, you would take some productive next steps. In instances like this where you’re trying to create your most fulfilled work life, I think there are three actions to focus on that make the biggest difference. They include:

1. **Defining your Mission**. This is something very few of us do. And it starts by knowing what you want. Defining YOUR personal mission and committing to living that and to pursuing that each day. It’s your choice. No one can do it for you. But most of us don’t take the time to do it. We just know what we DON’T want, not what we DO want. So, we drift through our work life, unhappy and maybe waiting for others to give us the right job or be the right leader for us. But imagine what happens when you KNOW what you want. And then commit to going after it. Big change, right?
2. **A 3–5-year goal horizon**. This keeps you from getting stagnant. It also stops you from making others responsible for whether you’re happy or satisfied. It puts YOU in the driver’s seat of choosing what you want and planning how you’ll get it. And it gives you a very helpful filter for the job you have because if it doesn’t align with your goals, or where you’re going, THEN you know it’s time to do something about it. To ask for more responsibilities, to change jobs or companies, go back to school or start a side hustle. All YOUR choice. No waiting for other to take responsibility for your career. This is something that should always be refreshed. Keep that brilliant light of new dreams on the horizon. It’ll keep you inspired and drawing towards it.
3. **Keep Learning**. With your goals, will come new skills you’ll need to develop. This lights your fire to learn. To take courses. To create opportunities to learn and grown. And when you’re learning and growing, guess what you’re NOT doing? You’re not noticing the things you don’t like about your job. You’re just focused on where you’re going and how best to get there.

And when you’re focusing on your mission, your goals for getting there and the acquiring of the skills to fuel that journey, you’re not ONLY going to fulfill your mission.

You’re going to create the very definition of fulfillment that Webster’s gave us. You’re going to FULLY DEVELOP YOUR ABILITIES AND CHARACTER.

So, the boss and the politics and the culture are still going to be there. And sure, you can change jobs and you might like it better or you might not.

But this approach does something for you that I call Selective Focus.

Selective Focus is a term used in photography where the picture focuses on the SUBJECT while rendering the rest of the image OUT OF FOCUS. It brings the attention of the viewer TO THE SUBJECT.

This approach does the same thing as it relates to your work environment.

When you decide that you can create your own career fulfillment.

That is going to make you feel SUPER empowered.

Which will lead you to take some VERY productive actions (like those I suggested above).

And when YOUR FOCUS is on what you want and on fully developing your own abilities, the toxic culture or hyper political colleagues or not so great boss suddenly shift from draining your life blood out of you to a minor annoyance.

What used to seem horrible becomes noise. Or a minor annoyance.

What I want you to see is that TRUE FULFILLMENT always comes from the inside.

Always.

No matter where you are in your journey or how long you’ve been stuck or languishing, you can create the fulfilling career you want. And you can start today.

This is what we work on in Next Level. My virtual coaching program.

And in June we’re going to be kicking off by working on – you guessed it – defining your mission.

To get on the waiting list, go to [www.thepurposefulcareer.com/nextlevel](http://www.thepurposefulcareer.com/nextlevel). That way I can send you more information when doors open…which is soon.

Until then, know that you don’t have to accept being one of the two thirds that are not engaged.

You can set the bar high and go for a fulfilling career.

And you can make that happen yourself.

Until next time, make it a great week my friends.