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TO many, work is merely a trade-off of their time put in to get a pay cheque. There are more people who feel they "have to work" than people who feel they "want to work." Work is more than just completing a task, serving a customer or meeting an organisation goal. The truth is that unless one finds greater meaning in work, one will not commit to achieve one's best. And without people putting in their best, companies cannot become excellent.

Here lies the key to developing competitive excellence in organisation – changing the way employees look at work. Organisations can become more productive and effective if the leaders can get their staff to look at work beyond merely making a living and to search for its greater meaning.

WORK AS A PLATFORM TO BUILD SELF ESTEEM

One of the reasons why artists like singers, painters or speakers often become exceptionally good in what they do is because they treat work as a platform to build their self-esteem. For example, Taiwanese singer, Lin Yun Chen's whose rendition of Whitney Houston's 'I Will Always Love You' got him into singing live on US talk show 'The Ellen DeGeneres Show', as well as signed an album with Sony Music. An unpleasant past where he was bullied as a child for being overweight spurred him to seek an outlet to, express himself through singing. "I used to have absolutely no confidence in my appearance, but now I think, that's me and I want to be myself." Likewise, we should look at work beyond task but as an opportunity to redeem our shortfall. Another good example is speaker, Nick Vujicic, who was born without arms and legs but yet can scuba dive, swim, surf, play golf and drive. He has become the most successful motivation speaker inspiring millions today. For Vujicic, public speaking became an outlet for him to build his self-esteem by overcoming all odds. His important message: 'No one should be discouraged by the difficulties one faces no matter how big they appear.'

WORK AS AN OPPORTUNITY FOR SELF IMPROVEMENT

Of course, the work one does provides ample opportunity for one to become better each day. A salesman has the opportunity to enhance his selling skills with each different customer. A financial controller has a chance to improve her skills in accounting and financial analysis. A manager has the opportunity to lead people and make important company decisions.

More importantly, everyone has the opportunity to improve and become better in every way:

- Communicate better with others
 - Work with others through cooperation and teamwork
 - Control one's temper to enable us to work amicably with others
 - Deal with conflict and resolve problems
 - Understand others better
- Martha Graham, the great dancer said it well, 'Great dancers are not great because of their technique. They are great because of their passion.' Through their passion, they constantly improve themselves and achieve excellence in their field.

WORK AS A WAY TO ESTABLISH ONE'S CREDIBILITY

Of course, work can become one's path to establish credibility. The work that one does help develop a good track record of its own. Overtime people who work with you will know of your good track record. You will win their respect and trust. And when you have trust, you can have great influence over people and, hence, you will become an effective leader. The late Stephen Covey said it well, 'Trust is the glue of life. It's the most essential ingredient in effective communication. It's the foundational principle that holds all relationships.'

WORK AS A THERAPY

Work can be a good therapy. If one can inculcate a positive attitude towards work, then one can see all the good that work can bring. For those who have a passion in their work, the fruits of their labour provide them satisfaction and fulfilment. For those facing a loss in relationship for example, work can be a temporary refuge to allow time for feelings to heal or for situations to improve.

The great American writer Joseph Campbell puts it succinctly, "Passion will move men beyond themselves, beyond their shortcomings, beyond their failures".

Allow me to share the lyrics of a song which I wrote many years back:

*Work of passion, love of life
Artist paints a masterpiece
Author writes a bestseller
Start your work with passion now*

*To win, put in your best
To reach goals, do no less
To win big, work with zest
Take this road to success.*

WORK OF PASSION

Truly, when we find our work of passion, we become energized, creative and productive. We seem to be able to do all things and we come alive. In this process, we find meaning and we feel that life is truly worth living. Work can be so therapeutic that it improves our overall well-being and bring joy to our lives.

However, the ultimate meaning of work lies beyond the outcome of the task, it is who we become.



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