



SAME, SAME BUT AMAZING

CAN EVERY DAY AT WORK BE LIKE YOUR FIRST?

BE A LEADER



By KAREN NEOH

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HERE we are! For some, the new year revelry may still be going strong, but let's face it. We are firmly and happily in 2015!

After the grim challenges that our nation and countless others have endured in 2014, many people have really been looking forward to a new year and a new beginning.

Each of us may have a different outlook for 2015 as day one, back to work, looms perilously close.

In my years of work, I have held three jobs where I was raring to return to work every Monday morning.

Interestingly, each of those jobs was for a social enterprise, or a non-governmental organisation running social enterprises.

So here are the findings of the social experiment that has run for almost two decades, with a subject of one (the writer) but with the benefit of thousands of interactions with friends, family and foe throughout.

My econometrics professor might frown on the statistical significance, but rest assured, the following points are also based on copious reading on the topic:

How every day at work can be like your first!

1 KNOWING WHAT MATTERS

We often hear advice that our choice of job should be with an organisation with a mission that mirrors our own personal goals.

Equally, we hear naysayers quip that this is somewhat impossible.

I do believe that there is a good

match between individual and organisation somewhere out there, and that we should all strive to find it for a win-win outcome.

In reality, things may get in the way, and with the call for flexibility in organisations to adapt to changing environments, even the dream job you celebrated with glee may change over time.

Having said all that, I believe we should all be aware of our strengths and abilities, and our non-negotiables with regard to the place we work. And to act when we realise that the balance is off.

2 THAT SPRING IN YOUR STEP!

Everything has fallen in place! You have found your dream job.

But even as you skip along to work Monday morning, negative thoughts creep in, chipping away at your effervescence (Yes! Bubbly like that vitamin C). "Who said what about my project? Why didn't we get funds to expand that great initiative?"

In times like these, I admit I struggle to keep the negativity at bay.

I then remind myself that if the organisation is still on track with the mission I believe in, then decisions have been made possibly with information unknown to me.

In my past life of using health economics to help inform decisions at the national health system level, it was clear that making the right decision based on the right evidence was still difficult when many stakeholders with varying needs were involved.

Knowing that your company is still navigating its way to achieve what you believe in does wonders! (go to point 4 for more step-springing hints!)

3 SKILLS, NOT HEART ALONE

Passion, perseverance and the power to inspire others – the value of which even the best economists would struggle to quantify (and yet immediately we all think of Bhutan's famed Gross National Happiness Index).

While critical, both you and your organisation need to look beyond the passion you have for work and invest in developing your technical skills.

Whenever I am faced with an eager sales assistant with no clue of what he/she is trying to sell, I silently rage against the manager who allowed that situation to be.

On a related note, if you find yourself falling asleep thinking about work and waking up still thinking about work (I have done this), you may have wandered off track with a job that is likely overwhelming your ability to lead a healthy life (go back to point 1 and assess your balance!).

4 FRIENDS

For the longest time, people have told me that it is impossible to find friends at work. Even my dearly departed father.

He was not one to play politics, and so inevitably, suffered from others doing just that.

But when he announced his retirement, everyone came out of the woodworks – from all levels of the organisation – to wish him well.

Today I realise how significant those actions and words were – because by then, none of them stood to gain from it.

And Pa, I am afraid you did have many friends at work as many of them paid their last respects to you

more than 10 years after you retired. So! It is possible to make real friends at work!

And if we, like others, have found work that is meaningful to us, how can we not find friends among those sharing similar goals and values?

I am inherently shy and find making new friends sometimes pretty nerve-wracking, but I do have great friends from each job I have held.

It certainly helps maintain that spring in your step, knowing you have people who are marching along the same path.

5 'WITHOUT JOB?'

Finally, a word from our sponsors. And with that, I mean the many people who play a role in molding who we are and supporting us in finding and keeping that dream job.

This is a career guide – so naturally we focus on the many topics related to being employed, finding fulfilling careers as well as finding the right people to work with.

I would like to recognise the people who are sometimes considered to be in the periphery, but who really are the centre of our lives.

The people who raised, educated, mentored, inspired, and cared for us – the same ones who will be there years after we hand in our parking tags, lose access to our email accounts (which we pore over hours and hours every day), and pack the goofy knick-knacks our desks have accumulated (if you take heed of point 4, the goofy knick-knack box could really be a BIG one!).

Do think about your entourage, and if it so moves you, run up and give them a hug of appreciation as we all put our best foot (feet?) forward, skipping into 2015!

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Karen cherishes being part of a vibrant organisation that really believes everyone has the potential to do great things, and which invests in people every day. She wishes our readers a wonderful year ahead. Do check out www.leaderonomics.com for more leadership content