



Never Work Again!

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“I would rather die of passion than of boredom.” – Emile Zola

Introduction

Sitting around a dining room table last Christmas, family members talked about how long they all had to their retirement. Some were young, in their 30's, while some had just a couple of years remaining to that magic retirement date. They all held immense contempt for their jobs and chosen careers. One family member programmed a countdown clock that would give him, to the precise second, the time he had left to his retirement date.

Later that evening, I contemplated the discussion I had witnessed. It was clear to me that these family members were not enjoying the journey they were on. They were held hostage by their careers, most likely due to financial considerations. All of them looked forward to that magic date of retirement, believing that they would find utopia when that day finally arrived. I felt sorry for them that they all had to spend virtually 8 hours per day, 250 days per year, in a job they detested. I would feel sick to my stomach when Sunday evening eventually came around, knowing that the very next morning marked another long week of misery, boredom, and aggravation.

Personally, I was also in this position. It wasn't until I reached my early 40's when I realized that I was defining success all wrong. I was a Corporate Officer for a multi-billion-dollar corporation and had significant professional accomplishments. I drove a new, shiny BMW as a company car, an unbelievable salary and bonus plan, lucrative stock options, retirement and pension plans, and professional fame on a global basis. However, I, too, was counting my days to retirement. The bottom line was that everyone who viewed me from the outside considered me a huge success. Unfortunately, I did not share their opinion.

The Formula for Never Having to Work Again

I discovered four steps that will lead you to a happy, meaningful, and fruitful life. We are all faced with a life of pain, suffering, grief, and loss. That's the human condition in which we cannot escape. It is up to us to find happiness. However, there is no need to compound our human suffering we will most likely encounter if we follow the following four steps:

1. Find Your Passion

What is your passion? What do you wish you could be doing most of the time? What brings you satisfaction and happiness? Whatever the answer, if it is easy, it will not be meaningful. I believe that the human spirit needs challenge and a bit of conflict and adversity to make a difference.

Maybe you want to help the poor, work for the cause of diversity, race relations, Veteran causes, or a cure for some dreaded disease. My passion is that I want to help people through my God-given gift of teaching others. God has also given me the opportunity to gain incredible business experience, in the corporate and entrepreneurial arenas. I also have a passion for Lean Management and Veteran causes. So, I have aligned my vocation and volunteer work by coaching, teaching, and mentoring others in these areas. I have also done a considerable amount of career counseling with others who can learn from my experience, and yes, my mistakes.

So, now that you have identified your passion, now what???

2. Match Your Vocation with Your Passion

Perhaps you have trained as an accountant, computer programmer, teacher, nurse, or other professions. However, this profession does not remotely address your passion. You have now risen on the respective pay scale, and you feel that you are trapped financially. There is no real answer to this except to evaluate your priorities and revisit how exactly you define success. When I decided to leave corporate life, I left millions of dollars of unvested stock options behind. I sometimes wonder what they would be worth today, but then I slap myself and realize what is really important in my life. I came into this world with nothing, and I will leave it in the same fashion. So, I have decided it is essential to have a meaningful journey and not be too concerned with the destination.

Does this mean that you will have to abandon your career in which you have years of training and experience? Maybe, maybe not. The first question is to figure out how you can align your talents and education with your passion. The answer might surprise you. I have a niece who left a career as a professional public relations executive to devote her time to her passion, curing heart disease. She figured out how to use her professional experience and education to fulfill the American Heart Association's mission and was named as President to their Board of Directors in her home state. She has found a way to leverage her professional experience with her passion.

What I have suggested is not easy and may not be possible for some. However, it is important to take control of your destiny rather than being a victim of circumstances in which you find yourself.

Just a side note: I have found that true happiness is found in helping others. So, calibrating your passion in this regard will result in a higher probability of joy and fulfillment. When searching for your passion, you might ask: ***“What does the world need?”***

3. **Assure Your Financial Requirements**

OK, now that I told you that money should be a secondary concern, I am not naïve enough to think that money should not be an important consideration. Financial burdens are a significant cause of unhappiness and are one of the top reasons for stressed relationships and divorce. I am suggesting that you take a hard look at your life and that of your family and assure you that you have a good understanding of your current and future financial needs. Money does play a role in living a fulfilling life.

However, I can suggest one lesson I have learned: You will not be fulfilled if money is your only motivation. I know many ultra-rich people whose lives are an unmitigated disaster. I would not trade places with them for any amount of money. Making a lot of money and happiness are not mutually exclusive. However, money by itself will not bring you joy unless aligned with your true passion.

4. **Achieve Family Harmony with Your Passion and Vocation**

Once you address the above three steps, how does all of this align with your family situation? If your choices are not in harmony with your family, it will not work. For example, let's say one finds a role as a consultant in a field he's passionate about which meets his

financial requirements. However, his vocation takes him away from home 75% of the time, which causes major issues with his family life. He will need to reevaluate his plan.

Summary

My wife and I like to travel, and many times we take trips with friends or relatives. I am always asked: "Mark, can't you forget about your work for a couple of weeks? Why did you bring your computer on vacation with you?" Their perception of me is that I am a workaholic. That is so far from the truth. These people are in jobs in which they detest, and like the family members previously mentioned, they can't wait to retire.

If I were to leave my work home, so to speak, it would be like leaving one of my vital organs home. My work is my passion, and it is a part of me. It's in my DNA. When on vacation, I do not abuse my time with my family. I might check emails for 30 minutes in the morning or have an occasional conference call. However, my friends and relatives cannot understand this, and I make no attempt to explain it to them. They do not realize that I do not feel as if I am working. I thoroughly enjoy what I do, and my vocation fulfills my passion. I am fortunate in this regard.

What I have suggested is not easy and may not be possible for some. You will never fully optimize all four steps, as there is no perfect scenario. However, it is important to take control of your destiny rather than being a victim of circumstances in which you find yourself. If you can successfully achieve these four steps, you might find a way to ***never work again!***