

THE NUANCES OF WORK

How Subtleties Drive Success

Work must have life in it—vitality. —CLIFF HAKIM

VALUES

Your answers to the following questions will reveal a good deal about the way that you like to do business—and where you're likely to get your greatest sense of satisfaction in your daily work.

Do you prefer to order an item on-line where you can get a discount during your transaction and know you've gotten the best price?

Or

Do you value going into a shop, browsing, talking with a salesperson about your needs, and selecting an item that appeals primarily to your mood and personality?

Would you prefer a performance review based mostly on the degree to which you met established financial goals?

Or

Would you prefer a performance review that incorporates how you have treated others as well as the degree to which you met established financial goals?

“When I started my job six years ago, with a printer, I would have checked off the second choice in each set,” says Juliette, a seasoned manager. “Today, my answer remains the same. But our company culture has gravitated toward transactional, internet-based selling. And because I thrive on face-to-face relationships, I feel increasingly discouraged and out of place. Yes, human interaction diminished. My joy comes in sitting down with stakeholders and establishing trust—that takes time and consistency—and from that point, I know how to solve their problems and meet my company's financial goals. Now relationship is losing ground to expediency—some might claim innovation—and the race is to beef up the bottom line. A friend in health care has mentioned a similar dilemma. She talks about ‘cyberhealth,’ tech devices and smartphone applications for expediting patient data. There is less personal contact as they become the norm.”

Juliette sought my counsel to examine her options before her unhappiness influenced her ability to perform.

Another client, Benito, was concerned about losing steam for his work. I asked him to tell me about his enthusiasms, outside of work.

“When I was in the Europe, I led some of my

friends on a motorcycle trip from Northern Italy across France and into Spain. We had mechanical breakdowns, lost our way, and at one point ran into a political protest. We dealt with the obstacles, motored on, and today still gather to talk about our trip.”

When I asked, “What primary value does your story illuminate?” Benito said, “Adventure.” This is the element he now found missing in his workplace.

As the global economy waffled and took a nosedive, his multi-national employer stopped innovating and advancing into new territory. Instead the president and the board focused on preserving capital. Benito tried forcing himself into an operations box but felt his spirit wither daily.

Juliette and Benito each knew that trying to change their company or their boss was futile. So I asked them both to define their value so that a perspective customer or employer would see their worth.

Juliette’s core value was relationship, and she articulated these saleable capabilities, including her proven track record in:

- (a) Uncovering and prioritizing the customer’s genuine needs and concerns
- (b) Bridging communication between the customer and home office, focusing on details and delivering quality every time
- (c) Sustaining customer relationships and amassing multiple orders from the same clients stretching over a period of ten years

Benito analyzed his core value, adventure, and articulated these saleable capabilities, including his proven track record in:

- (a) Defining new markets and preparing for new products for introduction
- (b) Creating an infrastructure to support product launch and growth
- (c) Understanding cultural nuances, planning and team building, and helping others reach goals

Recognizing and acting on your core values creates a foundation for your vitality at work. To progress in this direction ask:

- When have I been happiest in my work? What core value was I relying on?
- When have I been least happy in my work? What core value was missing?
- In tangible terms, how might I express my core values to others? (Look at Juliette’s and Benito’s examples.)
- What step might I take now to move closer to a fuller expression of my core values? How would my employer benefit?

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