

Media Article



Vocational Guidance Services

Work is love made visible – ‘The Prophet’- Kahlil Gibran

When re-reading *The Prophet* on the weekend, I found real insight into work and the importance of work in our lives. As Kahlil Gibran’s book says:

“You work that you may keep pace with the earth and the soul of the earth. For to be idle is to become a stranger unto the seasons.” This, I now realize, aside from financial insecurity, is one of the main reasons why candidates I meet who are out of work become anxious and depressed. Our work defines us.

Many times, I have seen excellent candidates who are made redundant, whose CVs impress me, whose references talk highly of their confident natures and yet when I interview them they are so nervous they cannot be heard across the room, dare not make eye contact and never smile. This becomes a vicious circle because who would want to recruit such a candidate? It is as if, because they are out of work, their personality has been stripped away as well.

Yet, we must keep in mind this fact: to succeed we need to take risks, and yet taking risks sometimes means meeting dead ends along our career paths. Most top executives have faced setbacks along their way. Most have been fired, been made redundant, had companies fold, faced mergers, job insecurity, and yet still strived to move forward.

Furthermore, we should keep in mind that at times those changes force us to re-evaluate, and are thus blessings in disguise. For many, these hard times mean that we do some serious rethinking about our careers and priorities, and as such the hard times are often looked back upon as positive turning points.

More importantly, successful managers have often evaluated where they are in their careers and decided to make themselves redundant. This bridge is often crossed when the manager realizes that they hate their present position, or hate the hostile environment they work in or foresee that the field or company they work for are running into trouble.

As Gibran says- “To love life through labour is to be intimate with life’s inmost secret”. The reverse is true- to hate your work is surely to bring constant misery upon yourselves, and can culminate in physical symptoms including high blood pressure, sleepless nights and general depression. This stress will accumulate until breaking point when your work standards will also suffer....meaning you are likely to be asked to leave, anyway! Do you see the vicious circle?

But for many who are in a job in today’s uncertain environment, it feels like the height of selfishness and greed to want to be happy and look for another career! But such candidates should not feel guilty, in fact, if you ask around –“are you happy in your job?”- it is surprising to see how many people would say ‘not really’ or ‘no’. They are just too petrified to try to make a change, yet how many of us really want to stay exactly where we are, doing the same thing every day, day in, day out, until we die?

Hating what you do can also be a result of external pressures as well- an unsupportive team at work who seem to be gleefully waiting for you to trip up, an insensitive boss who acts in inappropriate ways or the total lack of opportunities to grow. In many cases of work misery, the boss is the problem, but their attitude cannot be expected to improve as their anger originates from factors beyond their work lives. People put up with insults, psychological or even (in extreme cases) physical trauma in their work environments, yet life is too precious to waste a single moment of in such an atmosphere!

Going back to *The Prophet*, Gibran also asks “And what is it to work with love? It is to weave the cloth with threads drawn from your heart, even as if your beloved were to wear that cloth”. How can you expect to do that if you work in a negative force field?

It is also wise to analyze how well your chosen profession or company is doing. Not all companies are doing well enough to sustain your career goals. There are also some careers or industries that are suffering, so if you are in one such position, would it not be wise to think about your options?

One final insight from The Prophet: " Work is love made visible. And if you cannot work with love but only with distaste, it is better that you should leave your work".

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