

Finding what makes you tick at work

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Purpose

Sometimes a client needs some help working out what it is they do when they are at their best. This can also be referred to as being in flow. The benefits for understanding this are numerous and include making better job choices, understanding what motivates staff, knowing what situations someone needs to sell themselves in and knowing why a job isn't working. What is important with this exercise is that it focuses on when a person is at their best. There is no room for what does not work for them.

Description

In this exercise, what you are eliciting from the client are some examples of where they have achieved in life. You explore the details before identifying patterns and themes. It is important to note that this exercise is about identifying success stories, not where it could have gone better.

Process

Step 1 is to generate multiple situations over the individual's life that have been rewarding and where they have felt good. A good way of helping this along is by drawing a line across a piece of paper marked off to represent years of a person's life or decades – depending on age! Thinking about achievements in specific time periods often generates less obvious

ones. If there are periods of time where few achievements occur, that too is useful data later.

Step 2 is delving in a bit deeper to each achievement by finding out what happened:

- How did you get involved?
- What drew you to do this particular thing?
- As you went about [xxx], what did you do?
- How did you keep going?
- Who else was involved?
- What impact did you have on each other?
- What feedback did you get?
- How did you know it went well?
- What did you feel when it finished?
- Which bits do you retain/want to retain?
- What makes it an achievement in your eyes?

Step 3 is about looking for patterns and themes that keep occurring:

- What do you and your client notice?
- Which periods of time had more examples?
- What does this mean to you now?

Look out for whether certain types of people keep appearing. Maybe the individual is at their best under pressure or working to really tight deadlines. Perhaps working on their own is important to them, or being in a good strong team. What kinds of work is the individual doing when they are at their best? It could be that having a healthy balance between work and home is really important.

Step 4 uses the information to make plans for the future. The question to be answered is: So what? What can you do with this information? Knowing what the conditions are to be at one's best is critical. Then the secret is to work out how to create those conditions more often and so increase the chances of replicating when at one's best.

Pitfalls

It can take some people a while to think they have achieved anything. They don't have to be huge world-changing

events. Patterns and themes can come from lots of smaller examples.

Bibliography

Isbister, N. and Robinson, M. (1999) *Who do you Think you Are?*, London: HarperCollins.