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Finding the Career Holy Grail: Meaningful and Fulfilling Work

Introducing Eileen Chadnick



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How does your work fit in with your overall sense of career and life fulfillment? Have you found that seemingly perfect answer to your work life where everything seems just right? Then just when you think you've got things sorted out so nicely, does something eventually change?

Ahhh yes, work in the new millennium. If you're like most people, career satisfaction has an ebb and flow to it. Work – and life – can be complex and fluid. Things change. You change. Shifting gears is now an ongoing reality for all of us in the workforce. Sometimes the change is externally driven like an organizational restructure, new responsibilities, increased demands, pressures, etc. Other times it's internal. Our priorities shift. Our personal lives change. Even our dreams evolve. You get the point.

But with all the change one thing remains constant. People inherently are meaning making and meaning seeking. Aside from our economic needs, we inherently want to work in a way that is meaningful, engaging and aligned with who we are and what we do well. Sounds like a lofty goal? Maybe but certainly worthy! Because when we do connect more authentically to our work not only are we happier but we contribute better and can make more of a difference in our worlds. In other words we perform better!

Who wouldn't want that? Happy and performing well on the job. It's win-win all around.

The key to accomplishing this is getting – and staying -- real clear on what meaningful work looks like to you. This is not a simple task. Nor are the answers quick. It's also not necessarily about changing jobs. Sometimes meaningful work opportunities are right where you already are and all it takes to find them begins with some tweaking and shifting in your own perspective.

Some starting questions for reflection: What is it to truly be jazzed up about your work life? What drew you to this profession? What parts do you love and what do you put up with? Are you aware of your strengths and gifts? How are

you using them in your work? How does your work life fit in with your personal life goals? What is non-negotiable for you to be satisfied with your career and daily work life? What core values drive your passion? What gets in the way? Where are the 'shoulds' in your career pursuits, and where are the real, authentic intrinsic choices? How are you growing? How are you different today than you were a year ago?

A lot of questions! And some of them too big for quick, easy answers. Pick a few that inspire and start with those. Stay with them for a while to help you start to tap into your unique and authentic vision of what's important to you in your life and the context of work.

Are you sleepwalking through your career? Too many people simply fall into their work life – without the kind of self-awareness that can steer them towards work that compels, inspires and helps them grow. Too often, people look externally for all the answers, and forget the most valuable compass. Themselves – from the inside out.

Our best work (and lives) happen when we take that inside-out approach and get real with who we are, what our potential is and what we want. Connecting to your personally relevant intrinsic drivers can be powerful!

That's the spirit of what I'll bring to this column as I step in as the new Coach in "Coaches Corner".

I am absolutely inspired by the question of what it means to be truly engaged in your life and your work. I've personally lived in this question throughout my entire 20 year career to date which has been blessed with so many fulfilling chapters – as well as my fair share of challenging moments.

I've lived, breathed and worked transition and change in my 15+ years in the PR/communications field. I've moved from Montreal to Toronto; worked agency side then corporate; dealt with a complex transition from a banking consortium to an association; then from traditional employment to becoming a self-employed entrepreneur. And in the last three years, have stepped into the fairly new world of coaching, a young profession that is still defining itself and its evolving daily!

Like you, I've learned a lot in my journey. And as a life long learner, I've got lots more lessons still in play.

I'll be bringing my coaching hat to this column as well as perspective gained from my experiences in the world of professional communications. And I invite you to let me know what issues and questions you grapple with, wonder about, and are inspired by as you work on and towards your best work/life.

In the meantime, here are a few tips to get you started:

1. **Be in the conversation by starting with yourself.** Often people look outside of themselves for their career and life answers... Start with yourself. Make time for reflection and begin the process from the inside out!
2. **Stay in the questions.** There's an Akan proverb that says "The one who asks questions doesn't lose his way." Similarly Einstein said "The important thing is not to stop questioning." As we grow some of our answers may evolve. What is important for us? Who are we becoming? How do we want to express ourselves in our work? These questions asked over our career (and lives) may prompt different answers at different times. Give yourself permission to be in the questions and accept and notice when the answers are changing. Only then can you take truly meaningful action towards goals that will really reflect who you are and what you want.
3. **Enlist support from someone you can trust.** Whether it's a coach, mentor or trusted friend, find someone who can listen to you objectively and help you explore the important conversations. Ideally, this individual should be someone who isn't attached to any particular answers or agenda. But rather, is committed to helping you find your own meaningful responses.
4. **Be careful of the 'grass is greener on the other side' trap.** Fulfillment opportunities can sometimes be found right where you already are. Before jumping ship, make sure you have fully explored your options (and perspective) of where you are. Otherwise you might be missing some great opportunities.
5. **Be courageous and authentic.** Conversations around fulfillment require authentic conversations. Getting real with yourself. That takes courage. The pay off, though, is worth it!

Eileen Chadnick, ACPC, ABC is principal of Big Cheese Coaching and Chadnick Communications. She is a certified coach who trained at the Adler School of Coaching and serves on the board of the International Coaching Federation GTA Chapter. She coaches leaders on a variety of career and life issues – helping them define and achieve their vision of what it is to live and work their big life.

With more than 15 years as a professional communicator, Eileen also provides public relations and communications counsel and services to select clients. Visit her on the web at www.BigCheese-Coaching.com and she can be reached at (416) 631-7437