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## "Quotes"

*"A willing, cheerful worker, with his heart in his job, will turn out more work and more satisfactory work in 44 hours than an unwilling worker, dissatisfied with his conditions, will turn out in 54 hours."*

~ B. C. Forbes

*"'What are you doing?' a man asked of three laborers beside a building under construction. The first man replied, 'Stone-cuttin'.' The second smiled. 'Puttin' in time-until a better job comes along.' The third man waited a moment and then said simply, 'I'm building a cathedral!'"*

~ Unknown

*"The simple act of paying positive attention to people has a great deal to do with productivity."*

~ Thomas J. 'Tom' Peters

*"Make it thy business to know thyself, which is the most difficult lesson in the world. Yet from this lesson thou will learn to avoid the frog's foolish ambition of swelling to rival the bigness of the ox."*

~ Miguel de Cervantes

Dear Friend,

### Fear Factor

Scary movies are all the rage today. I'll admit; many moons ago as a teenager, I did watch a few, and I remember friends who were afraid to go to sleep or be alone or enter a darkened room. And, I laughed at them. Why (besides being heartless, that is)? I laughed because, for me, it was all make-believe. We were watching actors who were just playing a part. At the end of the day, these folks would remove the makeup, go home, return to life as usual, and...oh yeah, collect a hefty paycheck.

Now, when I look at many of our workplaces today, they give me the willies! That's because they really do have the living dead walking up and down the halls. You see, far too many people, far too many organizations, are just going through the motions. There are bodies present, but there's little satisfaction, little growth, little productivity, little pride. As a result, people aimlessly move from job-to-job, and companies apply band aid-after-band aid, without truly getting to the root of the issue. In fact, it was the growing occurrence of this real-life horror that prompted us to start Executive Advantage. We saw lifelessness too often in the workplace and wanted to help people turn things around -- organizationally and individually.

So, in this edition of *EA Insights* we look at the importance of creating careers and workplaces that are alive and vibrant. We hope you find this month's newsletter enlightening. And, don't miss the information at the end about how Executive Advantage can help you find solutions to move from just surviving to thriving.

All the best,

*June*

June Melvin Mickens  
Executive Advantage, LLC

## Thriving or Just Surviving?

June Melvin Mickens, J.D.  
Executive Advantage, LLC



According to a recent survey conducted by Healthy Companies International, only about a quarter of employed Americans reported finding happiness and fulfillment in their jobs. While the survey revealed that job satisfaction rose slightly (32%) at incomes of \$75,000 or more, among college graduates (41%), and for those considered at mid-career/ages 45-54 (30%), no matter how you cut it, more than half of the people

surveyed cited a large degree of discontent at work. That's sad!

For organization leaders, job dissatisfaction translates into absenteeism or its new counterpart, "presenteeism." It means low productivity, a negative impact on customers, stifled innovation, the need for more stringent virtual and live management structures, and much unrealized potential.

For individuals, displeasure at work means attitudes that fester -- poisoning first you and ultimately those around you. It plays itself out as dreading Monday mornings, clock-watching while at work, snapping at co-workers or customers, merely collecting a paycheck rather than enthusiastically taking part in an enterprise that positively impacts society, and biding your time until something better comes along instead of fully engaging.

### What's the fix?

In many respects, the reports of job dissatisfaction and its myriad symptoms are like the top of an iceberg. This is the part that's visible, and it's where people often target their fixes.

So, an owner or manager might tackle the "problem" by using a carrot -- a promise of financial reward, additional time off, a promotion, or a contest -- and individuals might respond for a time. But, what happens when the money's spent, the extra day off's been taken, or the contest's ended? How do you keep the momentum going? Alternately, the fix might involve a stick -- a threat connected to a raise or bonus, benefits reduction, demotion, or other disciplinary action. Again, though, the result typically is the same. Because nothing's been done to tackle the monster below the surface, the behavior change prompted by the carrot or the stick is likely to be inconsistent or short-lived.

Now, before you non-employers or non-managers begin gloating about the failings of American organization leaders, the results tend to be no better for our self-imposed carrots or sticks. Think about the promises you made to yourself when you took that new job or got that raise. Recall how you kicked yourself when you missed achievable targets and left money on the table, were put on a performance improvement plan, or saw someone who tried a bit harder promoted into the position for which you knew you were qualified. The changes you made -- caused by pride, pain, or fear -- probably lasted for a while, but they soon gave way to old habits and ways of behaving.

If you think about it, the key to generating more than just temporary satisfaction or short-term change rests with getting down to what's below the surface. It's crucial to pay attention to the issues that are not readily visible.

At the core is understanding that there are intangible rewards that hold personal importance for each of us. For one, it may be prestige. For another, it's a sense of security. One might find value in creating and another in public recognition for his or her efforts. Though we are motivated in diverse ways, it's those intangibles that inspire each of us to go beyond survival mode, and it's when we see our personal intangibles being met repeatedly that we feel satisfied and perceive ourselves as finally thriving.

**So, practically, how do you reach more of your desired results?**

One thing is clear. You'll never see sustained improvement -- in satisfaction, in productivity, in anything -- by doing exactly what you're doing now.

Truly achieving long-lasting results requires positive behavior change, which means (returning to the iceberg analogy) acknowledging that there is a mass below the surface and that it needs to be demolished before movement is possible. Tackling that root cause for yourself and/or your organization requires establishing clear goals. Adding skills or knowledge -- training -- in order to reach the desired level often is necessary. However, most of us could write volumes about how training in and of itself doesn't bring about lasting change. Instead, it's essential to combine training with attitude adjustment; that is, honestly identifying, and then taking steps to shift, those attitudes that are inconsistent with your sought-after results.

So, dissatisfied professional, do you know what's really at the heart of the matter for you? Do you know how you're wired? Where are your strengths? What's a challenge for you? What causes you enthusiasm professionally? Having a handle on this is critical to making solid career decisions and to approaching your work in a way that proves to be profitable for you and for your employer.

And, business leader, today's workforce is far less influenced by fear or incentives than prior generations were. So, do you know what drives each member of your team? Are you using that knowledge to build a work environment that encourages the creation of both organizational and personal goals and that fosters positive, solution-based attitudes toward their achievement? Does that dedication extend throughout the entire management team, or does it rest only with a few? To avoid being a haven for the discontent, and living with the resulting fallout, it's important to understand where your organization falls in this regard and to make adjustments, where necessary.

To close, are you thriving or just surviving? Both options are within reach. The choice is yours.

*"If you're not enjoying your work, you should either change your attitude or change your job."*

~ Leo Tolstoy

*"There is no substitute for accurate knowledge. Know yourself, know your business, know your men."*

~ Randall Jacobs

*"If you can't get enthusiastic about your work, it's time to get alarmed -- something is wrong. Compete with yourself; set your teeth and dive into the job of breaking your own record. No one keeps up his or her enthusiasm automatically. Enthusiasm must be nourished with new actions, new aspirations, new efforts, new vision. It is your own fault if your enthusiasm is gone; you have failed to feed it. If you want to turn hours into minutes, renew your enthusiasm."*

~ Unknown

*"Success or failure in business is caused more by mental attitude than by mental capacities."*

~ Walter Dill Scott

*"People are the key to any company's success -- humanization is still part of the bottom line."*

~ Dan Brent Burt

*"When you find a job you love, you'll never have to work a day in your life."*

~ Unknown

**Executive Advantage  
Offering Solutions for Productivity and Profit**

Are you or is your company just surviving? Wouldn't you prefer to be thriving? Let **Executive Advantage** help you reach your goals.

We're available to assist **organizations** to:

- set and implement strategy
- identify and overcome staff misalignment
- build capacity in individual managers or management teams
- uncover and rectify process or quality issues hindering productivity or profit.

And, we help **individuals** to:

- understand their unique make-up regarding decision-making, motivation, and behavior
- define and carry out personal and professional goals
- strengthen performance in areas, such as leadership, supervision, sales, customer service, and time management.

Improved outcomes are just a step away. Contact **Executive Advantage** today **online** or at (301) 280-5950.



**About Executive Advantage**

At **Executive Advantage**, we are committed to providing results-based business and management consulting, leadership development, and coaching support. We partner with business leaders to build healthy, well-functioning organizations, where goals are met and people thrive. We also partner with individuals to create professional (and personal) lives with clearer direction, improved results, and greater balance.

To learn more about **Executive Advantage**, contact us **online** or at **(301) 280-5950**.

