3 Steps to Enjoying Your Work

by Ann Ronan, PhD.

If you live an average life span and work full-time you will have spent 90,000 hours at work. More than one third of your waking adult life! Do you long to spend those days doing work that is satisfying? Would you like to experience long stretches of time “in the flow”, when you lose track of time because you’re so engaged in what you’re doing?

The first key to finding this type of work is: Know Thyself. If you acknowledge what makes you unique, your special skills, and your deep interests you can find or create work you can love. So how to do this? Here’s five clues. Use this worksheet, write in your journal, or whip up a new computer page and answer the following questions:

What activity was I doing the last time I "lost track” of time?

What issues or causes are deeply important to me?

Which 3 or 4 special skills do I love using in my work?

What unique knowledge do I bring to the workplace?
How is my style different from those around me?

The second step is to take this information and choose about four unique strengths that really jump out at you - this is your special “brand.”

1.
2.
3.
4.

List how these strengths benefit others: your customers, colleagues or clients. Or how could it benefit them in the future?

1.
2.
3.
4.

Third, put your strengths to work! If you are seeking a new position, you are now armed with good information to add to your resume. You’ll be able to sparkle in an interview because you know what you’re bringing to the position they’re trying to fill.

If you work with others in an organization, seek out opportunities to use your talents. Let people around you know that you’d love to use your knowledge and skills to help them. Take a chance at stretching beyond your job description or specific department. If you hear of an upcoming project that requires your strengths, offer your services immediately. Or if you see a colleague struggling with a task that would be easy for you, gently offer assistance. Build on your successes by leveraging them to the next project or new customer.
If you’re in a supervisory or management position, how about having this conversation with your work group? Bring them together and ask them:

? What knowledge do you have that isn’t being used here?
? Are there skills you’d like to use that aren’t being recognized?
? What are your interests? What do you really care about? Can we bring some of this into your current work?

You may find that people are a bit taken aback when asked these questions. There’s a good chance that no one has ever taken this kind of interest in them before. You may have to open up and reveal your answers first. Well go ahead, be brave and start this dialogue with yourself and with others to create a more meaningful workplace.