

Making the most of your abilities

We all have talents, abilities, and desires -- but only some of us are using them.

Are you making the most of what you've got?

Let's start with some questions -- and hopefully some answers:

1. Are you working at something fulfilling?

I usually joke that the definition of "work" is "something they've got to pay to make you do." For most of us, that's exactly what our work boils down to: we do it, because someone pays us for it. We may not particularly like it -- in fact a good percentage of the world's people hates every part of their job -- but we do it, nevertheless.

We have, in fact, sold our soul for the pittance we receive in our paychecks, while sacrificing our desires in the effort.

"The biggest mistake people make in life is not trying to make a living at doing what they most enjoy."--Malcomb Forbes

All over the world, there are frustrated people working in jobs that they hate. If you only work 40 hours a week, 50 weeks a year, that makes 2000 hours worth of hate, each year -- and many work 60 or 80 hour weeks. If you work 60 hours a week doing a job you hate, you're up to 3000 hours. Briefly put, you're working over 4 solid months of 24-hour days, at a job you detest.

Obviously, if we're in that position, we need to either change our job, or change our attitude about the job.

Right now isn't the best time to start looking for a new position, but you could start doing a little bit at a time, during nights and weekends -- then when you're ready, you can make the break and go full-time.

If you're going to have to work, you might as well do something you like.

Among the odd things that I read, I read a mailing list populated by people who climb and erect communications towers -- cell towers, microwave towers, etc. They have a dangerous business -- and yet many of the people who contribute to

the list love their job, 2000 feet (sometimes higher, most of the time lower) up in the sky.

It's important to do something you like to do in your life. If you can't do it full time, then at least do it part time.

What do you like to do? Are you any good at it? If not, could you develop a skill in it? Is there a way to package your skills, so it can bring in some money? Is there a way you can market your abilities better?

2. Do you have a program of continuing learning?

I smiled when I read the comic strip "On the Fastrack" this evening. One character in the strip was going back to school, embarking on a career of continuing learning, because her boss listed her as a "diminishing asset."

In many companies, the personnel department is known as "human resources." That's despite the fact that most CEOs look on their employees as liabilities, not resources. You need to make certain that whatever you decide to do with your life, you continue to learn.

If you work eight hours a day, and then sleep another eight, that still leaves you with eight hours for other stuff. Obviously, as the work goes up and the sleep goes down, this equation changes -- if you work 20-hour days, the remaining four hours won't give you much chance for study -- or sleep.

It's important that each of us have a continuing program of learning and personal growth -- with time set aside specifically for that purpose. Even a little time set aside for learning is better than none at all.

3. Do you sell yourself well?

No doubt you're used to selling a product or a service -- but do you sell yourself as well as you sell a product?

Most of us never try to sell ourselves -- and we suffer as a result. Not only does self-marketing increase our perceived value in the eyes of our "customers," but it helps put us in a position where we learn to see ourselves as others see us. When we self-market, we learn to emphasize our strengths -- and we soon learn to build up those strengths as a result.

We all know the person who never self-markets, and as a result, whose contribution to an organization is discounted, year after year. The less an organization knows about what you do, the more you're thought of as a commodity, easily replaced, easily fired. The more you differentiate your skills and abilities, the more you are thought of as a valuable member of the team.

4. Do you put your heart into it?

I can't imagine a person becoming a success who doesn't give this game of life everything he's got. -- Walter Cronkite

There is no man living that cannot do more than he thinks he can. -- Henry Ford

Many of us come close to achieving success, but then stop just short of our goal. If we were winning a footrace, we'd be unlikely to stop just five feet short of the finish line -- but many of us just don't go the distance where our personal career goals are involved.

If you're not willing to put your heart into what you're doing, it's a sure sign you're doing the wrong thing -- or doing it the wrong way.

5. Do you respect your contribution?

Too many of us denigrate our abilities, and our contributions to life. I do it myself -- I found myself responding to a compliment today with my mother-in-law's line: "Well, you're welcome for what you got."

If you don't respect your contribution, and assign it the value it deserves, it's likely that others will soon follow your lead.

There you go -- five questions to help us on our way. If you can answer each question positively, then you're well on your way to using the most of your abilities. If you're like most of us, you've got a few areas where a little bit of work would help out.

Copyright, 2002, by Daryl R. Gibson and Salesstar.com. All rights reserved. Permission is hereby granted to re-distribute this document as long as it remains intact with this copyright and all other lines remain intact. Join us at <http://www.salesstar.com>.