



Loving What You Do

I've heard it said that finding a job you are passionate about will bring success, but what if you are passionate about racing sail boats and you work in management? How will you achieve success?

By Tricia Reardon

It's not easy for everyone to determine what it is that they are passionate about and sometimes what you are passionate about won't earn you a living. So how do we learn to love what we do as a job and become passionate about it?

In a recent article, Cal Newport, author and Assistant Professor of Computer Science at Georgetown University, was asked this question and his response was quite interesting. He considers that rather than work out what you are passionate about as a job, it is more productive to understand the traits you prefer in a job and seek those out, then build skill around them. For example, if you enjoy being creative, then building in creativity to your role will go a long way towards achieving job satisfaction, as long as you work diligently on the full skill set for that role.

Certainly when undertaking career counseling, we spend quite a bit of time teasing out from people their key drivers, cultural fit and how they like to be managed, as well as what tasks they enjoy. When choosing a career path or changing jobs, it's always smart to know what it is that truly motivates you and what gives you that 'buzz' in your day to day work life, even if you aren't sure what the actual job function might be for which you hold a passion.

If we take the initial analogy of being passionate about sailing versus actually working in management, perhaps we can break down some of the aspects of sailing that makes you passionate about it e.g. is it the tactical aspects, the freedom, the team spirit or the competition? Are any of these same traits in your job as a manager?

Even if you find the same traits, you still need to be skilled at what you do. You may love racing sail boats, but it requires skill to be successful. Likewise, if you have the same traits in your management role, you still need to be skilled as a manager. This part takes work, but it is rewarding if you achieve the outcome of satisfying the traits you enjoy.

Defining success is also an interesting task. It means different things to different people – achieving happiness may mean success for one person, whereas achieving wealth and status may mean success to another. What success looks like to you needs to be factored into the mix.

Being in a role where you are true to yourself because you understand the traits that bring you job satisfaction, being disciplined in developing your skills in that role, and finally, knowing what success looks like for you, will take you a long way towards really loving what you do.