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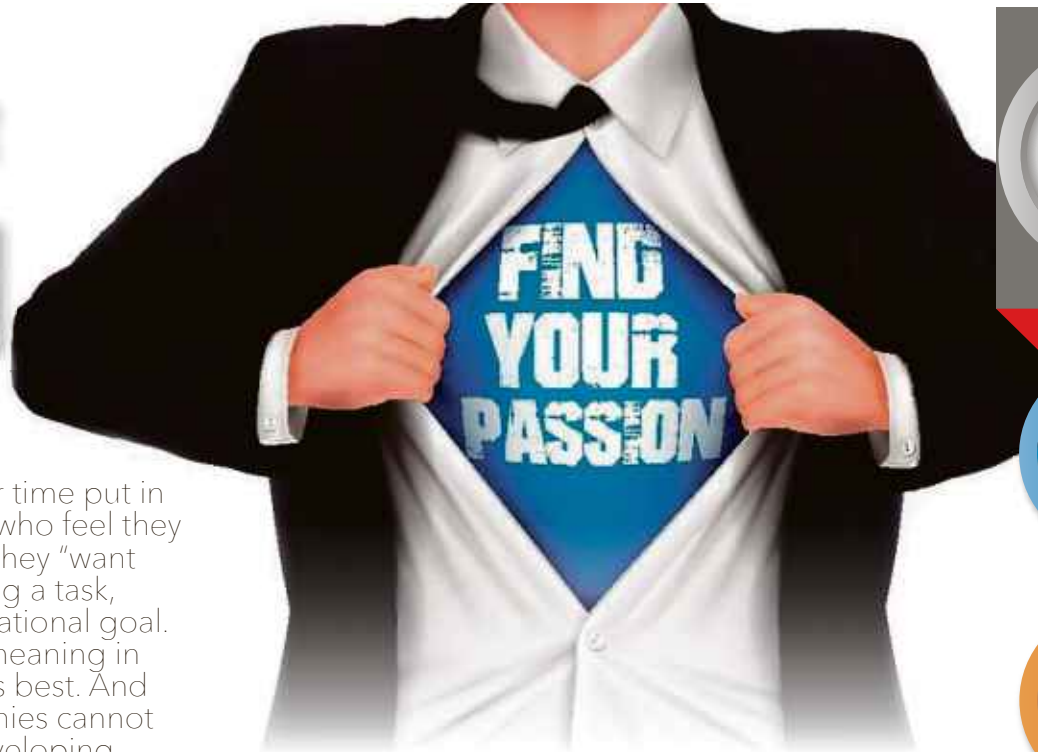
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WORK OF PASSION

By Dr Victor S.L. Tan



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TO many, work is a trade-off between their time put in and their salaries. There are more people who feel they "have to work" and than people who feel they "want to work." Work is more than just completing a task, serving a customer or meeting an organisational goal. The truth is that unless one finds greater meaning in work, one will not commit to achieve one's best. And without people putting their best, companies cannot become excellent. Here lies the key to developing competitive excellence in organisation - changing the way employees look at work. Organisations can become more productive and effective if leaders can get their staff look at work beyond making a living and search for its greater meaning.

Work As A Platform To Build Self Esteem

One of the reasons why artists such as a singer, painter or speaker often become good in what they do is because they treat work as a platform to build their self-esteem. For example, Taiwanese singer Lin Yun Chen, whose rendition of Whitney Houston's "I Will Always Love You" got him into singing live on U.S. talk show The Ellen DeGeneres Show as well as signing an album with Sony Music. An unpleasant past, where he was bullied as child for being overweight spurred him to seek an outlet to express himself through singing. "I used to have no confidence in my appearance, but now I think, that's me and I want to be myself".

Likewise, we should look at work beyond task but as an opportunity to redeem our shortfall. Another good example is speaker Nick Vujicic, who is born without arms and legs but yet can scuba dive, swim, surf, play golf and drive. He has become the most successful motivational speaker today. For Nick, public speaking becomes an outlet for him build his self-esteem by overcoming all odds. His important message: "No one should be discouraged by the difficulties one faces, no matter how big they appear".

Work As An Opportunity For Self Improvement

Of course, the work one does provides ample opportunity for one to become better each day. A salesman can boost selling skills with each customer. A financial controller can improve her skills in accounting and financial analysis. A manager can lead people and make company decisions. More importantly, everyone has the opportunity to improve and become better in every way:

- Communicate better with others
- Work with others through cooperation and teamwork
- Control one's temper to enable us to work with others
- Deal with conflict and resolve problems
- Understand others better

Martha Graham, the great dancer, said: "Great dancers are not great because of their technique, they are great because of their passion." Through their passion, they constantly improve themselves and then achieve excellence.

Work As A Way To Establish One's Credibility

Of course, work can become one's path to establish credibility. The work that one does develops a good track record of its own. People who work with you will know of your track record. You will win their respect and trust. And when you have trust, you can have great influence over people and hence, you will become an effective leader. The late Stephen Covey said: "Trust is the glue of life. It's the most essential ingredient in effective communication. It's the foundational principle that holds all relationships."

Work As A Therapy

Work can be therapy. If one can inculcate a positive attitude towards work in oneself, then one can see all the good that work can bring. For those who are passionate about their work, the fruits of their labour provide them satisfaction and fulfilment. For those who face a loss in relationship, for example, work can be a refuge to allow time for feelings to heal or for situations to improve.

American writer Joseph Campbell said: "Passion will move men beyond themselves, beyond their shortcomings, beyond their failures".

Allow me to share the lyrics of a song that I wrote many years back:

*Work of passion, love of life
Artist paints a masterpiece
Author writes a bestseller
Start your work with passion now*

*To win, put in your best
To reach goals, do no less
To win big, work with zest
Take this road to success.*

When we find our work of passion, we become energised, creative and productive. We can do all things and we come alive. In this process, we find meaning and we feel that life is worth living. Work can be so therapeutic that it improves our well-being and bring joy to our lives.

However, the meaning of work lies beyond the outcome of the task; it is who we become.



DR VICTOR S.L. TAN is the CEO of KL Strategic Change Consulting Group. He is an author of 10 management books. His mission is to energise people to find their passion in work and increase the productivity and performance in organisations. For more information, please contact him at victorsltan@klsc.com or at 012 3903168.