

Why Work?

By Kathleen Durham

Today is Sunday. For many of you, tomorrow is a workday. “Groan.” When was the last time you heard someone say they were glad it was Sunday because they were looking forward to going back to work? Wednesdays (hump days) and Fridays (TGIF days) are usually the preferred days of the week for most employees. However, it is also true that some people just say that to fit in even though they really do want to come to work.

Of late, fewer people speak enthusiastically about their work. With the exception of Perry Sapp (I’ll tell you about him later) and others I know who love what they do, most people see work as drudgery, only to be put up with.

So why work? The answer to this question makes the difference in how people relate to work and the service they provide. It’s probably safe to say that people who work only for the money or only for results might not be inclined to give their all. Feeding ones family or paying the mortgage can be great personal motivators. They may not do much to motivate better performance at work.

Here’s what I want to know: Is there anybody out there who works for the sheer joy of the activity itself? Someone who feels the joy God planted in their hearts from serving others? Amazingly, right after I had written this article, Perry Sapp walked by. Perry works for the County in Central Services. Perry was whistling or singing, I can’t remember which, as he went about doing his work. I said, “Someone sure sounds happy.” He said, “I sure am.” When he came back, he stopped to tell me he was just a happy person. I asked him why. He said, “I love what I do. What Perry loves about his work is working around people and fixing things. Despite his tendonitis, he still loves what he does in building maintenance.

This is not to say money and benefits are not good reasons to work. I would wager however that people, who work only for the money or think of work as a means to an end, probably find their work to be boring, routine and depressing. When that happens, what’s missing is the focus on the value of the work contributed. Work suffers. Service suffers or it’s not as special as it could be. By value, I do not mean monetary value. Without stats to back me up, I believe that employees who see the value of what they do for the company, other people and themselves, are high performers and provide better service. They have a way about them that makes you want to be around them.

If you’re a manager or a team leader, you have the option of getting work done through people by demanding that they do it. Employees will do it, however resentfully. Yes, you could spend your time making sure employees do what you’ve decreed. Here’s something else you can do. Have your employees begin to engage in a self-dialogue of why they work. Encourage them to include you in their deliberations. This will create opportunity for you to build communication and relationship, and have the employee

understand the value they bring to the company, or could. For example, offer employees the chance to answer the following questions for themselves:

1. Why do I work?
2. How does my work add value?
3. Do I provide a service that benefits anyone? If yes, who benefits
4. Do I benefit from working? How?
5. Am I doing the work that's right for me?
6. Does this work use my skills and talents, as well as support my values.
7. Do I enjoy my work? If yes, what do I enjoy? If no, what don't I enjoy?

Is Perry Sapp an exception? I certainly hope there are many more Perrys out there who use their God given talents and know that finding value in what they do makes a big difference in how they feel about themselves and others. Let's hear it for the Perrys of the world.