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## **Learning to Love Your Job Again**

It's normal in every career to experience periods when you lose enthusiasm for your work. It's human nature, after all, to tire of routine, and even the most exciting jobs can have an element of predictability about them. But if you find yourself lacking motivation day after day and dreading going to work, you may have a severe case of professional malaise.

This ailment is often short-lived, a brief bout of dissatisfaction or frustration that dissipates with the passing of time or changes in your work life. In other cases, you may need to take the initiative to explore why you're in a career rut and how you can make your role more fulfilling.

Here are some tips to help you regain a positive outlook and achieve greater career satisfaction:

**Analyze what's working, what's not and why.** Think back to when you first started feeling discontented with your job. Was there any one incident or change in the office environment that sparked your attitude shift? Maybe you were given unanticipated responsibilities that were not a good match with your skills and interests. Or, perhaps you began reporting to a new supervisor. If you can identify the root cause of your dissatisfaction, you can begin to address the problem.

Of course you may not be able to change everything you don't like about your job. For example, you may simply have to learn how to work with a new supervisor whose approaches to the job differ from those of your former boss. If there are personality clashes you don't feel you can live with, you may have to start looking for a different position outside your firm. If, however, you have been given new responsibilities that you don't enjoy or that are simply unmanageable with your existing workload, you could approach your boss about hiring an assistant. Or if you find your job has simply become unchallenging and routine, determine how you might alter your job description to enable professional growth.

**Make your needs known.** Assuming you've become dissatisfied with your job, it's up to you to identify ways to make your role more fulfilling. Find an opportune time to approach your boss about your desire to improve your situation. Your suggestions might include proposals to expand your knowledge, skills and experience with an eye toward taking on new responsibilities.

Maybe you'd like to finally pursue the certified legal manager (CLM) designation, for instance, and want to enlist your manager's support in this endeavor. Or, you might mention a desire to represent the firm more outside the office by acting as its recruiting

liaison or heading up community outreach efforts. Most managers want staff members to follow their interests and maximize their potential, so you stand a good chance of finding support for your efforts to expand your role as long your supervisor understands how your proposals will enhance your contributions.

***Step out of your comfort zone.*** In addition to trying to expand your job description, you may be able to achieve more immediate career-invigorating results by seeking out high-profile projects that stretch your abilities. For instance, you might volunteer to overhaul a business process or conduct a study of benefits outsourcing options.

Although you might have concerns about your ability to take on new professional challenges, don't let your fears keep you from assuming increasingly important roles. Immense satisfaction and confidence can be gained by pushing yourself professionally – and succeeding.

***Raise your standards.*** If you've begun to feel like you could do your job while sleepwalking, you may have allowed yourself to sink into career complacency. To come out of this state, it can help to examine whether you're really making an effort to perform your duties to the best of your abilities or just going through the motions. Consider how you might be able to add value to every task you perform and every interaction you have with colleagues. If you're at a loss for ideas, ask others in the office for their suggestions. You might even conduct an anonymous survey to encourage candor. It's likely that your colleagues will identify numerous ways you could improve the work environment and make their jobs easier or more enjoyable.

You probably won't be able to implement every suggestion you receive, but this exercise should help you gain insights about how you can go beyond the minimum requirements of your job and exceed others' expectations. Even if you fall short of the higher bar you set for yourself, you will have identified an endless number of challenges you can tackle.

***Do your part to make work fun.*** The happiest professionals tend to have good relationships with colleagues. This doesn't mean that you have to be close friends with everyone in the office, but having some shared interests with others in the workplace can make for a more pleasant and welcoming atmosphere. If some of your coworkers are avid readers, for instance, you might consider starting a book club that meets occasionally during lunch. Or, if certain colleagues like to be among the first to try new restaurants, you could organize outings with them for lunch or dinner.

In your role as a legal administrator, you might also be in a position to spearhead more large-scale team-building activities outside the office. These events tend to promote cohesiveness by encouraging colleagues to get to know one another better.

***Keep your balance.*** Professionals often lose their enthusiasm for their jobs because they allow their work to become all-consuming. Keep in mind that no matter how committed you are to fulfilling your responsibilities, you can't afford to lose sight of your personal needs and priorities. Take time to recharge and reconnect with others outside of the

office and engage in relaxing activities. This is essential in helping you nurture your career and that of others you may manage.

Even when you take the initiative to guide your career in a more desirable direction, there will always be some aspects of your work that you can't influence. But one variable you can control is your personal motivation level and attitude toward work. By taking specific steps to enhance your day-to-day job experience, you should be able to maintain your professional enthusiasm and keep your career moving forward.