

When work is what we actually need—a dream of not working turns sour

Jane and Steve

Jane and Steve had had one ambition in their lives. This was to generate enough capital to be able to move to France, buy an old wreck of a building, do it up and then live there enjoying the good things of life, 'retire' from the world of work at 40 years old. The good things were enjoying the peace and tranquillity of the countryside, walking the dogs, gardening, be involved in village life, almost anything other than work.

From a mixture of hard work, good investments and ability they achieved their goal. The move was made. The wreck acquired and converted. The new way of life began.

Unfortunately, the new life was not to last for long. Jane, in particular, was bored. It was what she had wanted but surely life held more than this? Steve

seemed happier but then there was always something for him to do improving the wreck. The marriage collapsed with the inevitable pain all round.

Subsequently, Jane returned to France to live and work. There had been enough capital for a couple living together but not for two living separately. Steve returned to England and trained for a new career.

From our perspective what was going on here?

It would seem that Jane and Steve had confused work with drudge. That is, work is the means by which we get the 'good things in life'. However, as it turned out, the good things in life were not enough to sustain them. They were not getting the energy they needed from this life of leisure. They both returned to the world of work.

This month's newsletter focuses on Seeing Our Role at Work, the second step in Personal Job Alignment. There's an exercise to work through. Try it.

Call for interviewees
I would like to record some interviews with people about their experiences of life at work. If you'd be prepared to help, please contact me. All in confidence.

Seeing Our Role at Work

The second stage in working towards Personal Job Alignment is to see our role at work and how we can get synthesis and alignment between what we have discovered about what is important to us in our work lives, what gives us energy. I think that many people don't think about how they might approach their work differently, or perhaps don't believe it is possible. Try the exercise on the following pages

February Monthly Meeting: 7 February 2007

The next monthly meeting is on Wednesday 7 February at the Harewood Arms, Nr Leeds. Details are on the web site.

This month we'll talk about Stage Three of the Personal Job Alignment process—Seeing Our Organizations. The culture of the organizations we work in are a system of expectations about how we behave. We'll look at how this affects getting Personal Job Alignment.

Research supports Personal Job Alignment

"Research proves that, overall, people with intrinsic motives and goals [doing things for the pleasure of doing them] tend to be emotionally better off..." Oliver James author of *Affluenza* in an article in The Daily Telegraph.

Seeing and connecting with such motives is the first step in Personal Job Alignment. What we need to do in addition is to see how we can do more of this intrinsically motivated work in our work lives.

Remember: The important story is that each of us has our own work to do to make sense of our lives at work and that stress free work can be the outcome.

An exercise to help us SEE OUR ROLE at work

Having completed the 'seeing ourselves at work' exercise, you should now be clearer about how or where you get your energy at work, what it is that can make work fun.

Having started to get a grip on what is important to us we can now move on to 'see' how we approach our work, that is, how we go about getting things done.

The focus here is not on being clear about what is to be achieved at work. With personal appraisal and personal objectives this should be clear enough. We are more concerned with the *approach* to work and its responsibilities.

'Seeing' here is about how you add your unique contribution—your added value to achievement at work. It's about understanding the potential for you to be yourself at work.

Intuitively we all know when we are at one with ourselves at work. Reflect back to the exercise in the previous chapter. You'll see that when you are doing what you have written down as giving you energy, you and the work become one, it's you being you, you in harmony with the world of work.

"I enjoy what I do and succeed most when I'm getting a mixed group to work together against the odds."

The task is to think through how this insight can be brought to bear to change life at work so that most of work is a harmonious experience.

As before, do this with a close colleague or partner. It will help bring out the insights upon which you can act.

Write down your most pressing objectives at work (as given to you or agreed with you or, if it's the case, what you are left to get on with)



Without reflecting too much, now write down how you will go about achieving these objectives, in what ever way makes sense to you



Now, put a tick [yes] or a cross [no] next to each of the above, indicating whether you will find the tasks energising or fun

If you've ticked them all – well done! You seem to be in harmony with your work role.
Move to the next stage of Personal Job Alignment in the next chapter

If you have not ticked them all try the following

For those with ticks, is there a correlation between the way you are approaching the tasks and what you have identified as your energisers? If not, is this new information to add to the previous exercise? Is there more you find energising at work than you had realised?

For those with crosses try the following for each one

Visualise yourself achieving each objective in a way that you find energising. Forget about what you have written down already about how you will achieve the objective. Think about how you could use your energisers to contribute to getting the objective achieved. At this point don't worry about whether your boss would let you do it this way. (This may be a real issue but we'll deal with it later.)

"Actually I'd always seen this bit of my job as a real drudge. I hadn't thought that getting a group together to get it done was relevant or possible. It's turned a drudge into fun—and not just for me.

Now try out what you have found.

For most people this will be the second important step in Personal Job Alignment. It should show how you can approach much if not all that you have to do at work in a way that uses your unique contribution, what energises you.

If you cannot see a way in which you can change the approach to work in such a way as to make maximum use of your energisers

- Is it because your boss or the way the company works won't let you?
 - If so, **move on to the next chapter**
- Is it because it's just really not possible?

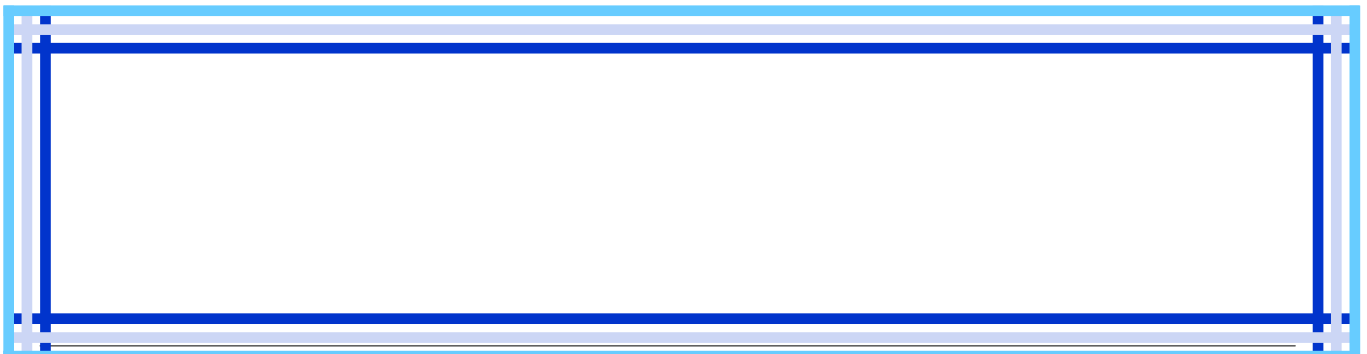
Well, this may turn out to be the case. We've seen with Kathryn's story (see January Newsletter) that when you do see what energises you at work, this can lead to us looking to work for a different company or different place.

Before you decide that you can't get Personal Job Alignment in your current role, try the following:

This one is probably best done on your own.

Visualise yourself at the end of a week having done nothing other than the work that energises you.

Describe it and write down that description here



IAN'S MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

Now look at what you have written. How could what you have described be brought about where you are now? What would have to change? Write these things down here:



Remember we are seeking a step change in the level of harmony we have with our lives at work, not perfection. The pursuit of the perfect job is like the pursuit for the perfect anything, a pursuit that will almost always end in failure.

If the first two steps do lead you to see that you need to change jobs then read the [chapter on finding a new job](#), where you will also read about how to learn from Kathryn's story and disengage or at least stop over attaching yourself to your current job.

To read future chapters carry on reading the Newsletter!

Ian Johnston
4 Buttercup Close
Harrogate HG3 2WU

T: 01423 508781
M: 0777 560 2475
E: ian@thinking-it-through.com

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