

**OPINION**

## **Hate your job? You have three choices**

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**MERGE GUPTA-SUNDERJI**

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*Merge Gupta-Sunderji is a leadership speaker, consultant and the founder of leadership development consultancy Turning Managers Into Leaders.*

If you're spending eight hours a day (or more) in a job that you're not crazy about, then you have three options moving forward.

One, do nothing. And if that is a thoughtful deliberate choice, then fine. There are good (mostly financial) reasons to stay in a job you don't like. But if you've fallen into "doing nothing" simply by default, then it's time to stop whining at the water cooler (which accomplishes nothing useful) and to move on to another option.

Choice number two is to leave. If you aren't a good fit with the organization's culture, if you believe that you could contribute more and be fully recognized and valued for your efforts elsewhere, then leaving is a viable alternative. Be smart about it; don't quit right away until you find something else. But stop complaining and take action to make your situation better. Network, evaluate the job market, and put some thought into where you could be more successful. One word of warning though: That boss or colleague you are running away from is very likely going to be in the next organization you join, just disguised under a different name and look. So it might be worthwhile to consider alternative number three.

Your third choice is to find ways to engage right where you are – with your work, your colleagues, your boss, the organization – and stop waiting for someone else to make things better for you. There are things you can do to enjoy your work more, to feel like you are contributing, and to be acknowledged for your efforts.

**Understand what is expected of you.** This may sound really obvious, but do you know what your boss expects of you? Unfortunately, there is often an assumption (on the boss' part) that you can instinctively figure out what needs to be done. Which leads to mismatched expectations and job dissatisfaction. So ask. What are my key responsibilities? Are there deadlines?

Should I focus on a few single high-priority tasks or on following a series of tasks through from start to finish?

**(Respectfully) ask for what you need.** Once you know what is expected of you, you can determine what resources you need to get the job done. Perhaps you need additional online access to be effective. Or you need to drop something from your to-do list in order to accommodate a larger project. Or maybe there is a specific skill you'd like to develop. When you connect your "ask" to an expected outcome, you begin a dialogue that serves everyone well. And you take giant steps toward avoiding the frustration that comes with not getting what you need to get the job done.

**Seek out ways to showcase your strengths.** Even people who adore their jobs will tell you that there are certain aspects they could do without. The key to liking (loving) your job is for the good to outweigh the bad. So keep an eye out for things you'd enjoy being involved in (and that you're good at), and then step up to participate. A new committee, the United Way campaign, a specific task force – all could be opportunities for you to highlight your skills and make your job more interesting and satisfying. And as an added bonus, you'll increase your profile in a positive way.

**Offer to help.** One of the best ways to feel like you're making a difference is to be useful. So don't wait to be asked. If you see a co-worker struggling to juggle several priorities, extend a helping hand by offering to take something off his plate. If the boss seems to be running ragged, ask if you can take a couple of items off her to-do list. When you're pulling your weight as a member of the team, you will build rapport and relationships. Which leads right to the next idea.

**Make friends.** When we like the people we work with, we also tend to like our jobs. And no, it's not necessary to become "besties" with your co-workers. But what if you took the time to get to know one or two of them over coffee, or lunch? You might discover that you have common interests, or perhaps even a common enemy you can commiserate over. Workplaces are social environments, so be social. You might discover that you don't dislike your job

as much as you thought.

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MICHELE CADARIO AND JENNI BYRNE

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351 King Street East, Suite 1600, Toronto, ON Canada, M5A 0N1

Phillip Crawley, Publisher