



## [DR. SHIRLEY'S CAREER CORNER]

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# Six high impact strategies for improving your work life

In the current economic downturn, those of us who are employed should consider ourselves fortunate, particularly when we watch the news or pick up the daily newspaper and read about the thousands of workers being laid off due to company closures, ongoing company mergers, acquisitions, bankruptcies and so on.

Now, I can hear some of you making statements such as: "Yeah, I have a job, but I haven't received a raise in two or more years." "I'm dissatisfied with what I'm doing." "I have to do the job of two people now because of company downsizing." "Promotions are frozen and training has come to a halt." "Why should I be grateful?"

Before you think another thought, go get yourself a pencil and piece of paper. Then, sit back down, take a few moments and complete a self-evaluation relative to your job situation in the workplace.

In completing this exercise, as far as your circumstances are concerned, don't worry about those you are unable to control or change. Concentrate on the areas over which you as an individual are in command and then answer the following questions "yes" or "no":

1. Consider your current skills. Are they better, faster, more reliable? Are you doing more in less time? Are you working smarter instead of harder? If not, you need to upgrade — refresh, reinforce and refine.

2. Have you learned any new skills lately? Examples include mastering a new procedure; learning how to operate a new piece of

technology or software; or learning new techniques that will enhance your skills, make your job more effective/efficient and make you more valuable to your current company or a new one.

3. Have you varied the pattern of a routine task in the past six months? Look for ways to simplify tasks so that you can devote more time to those responsibilities you really enjoy doing. (If there are no duties you enjoy, you are in deep trouble. Perhaps it's time to seek a new job.)

4. Have you made changes in your surroundings to perk yourself up? Modifications such as adding a new picture, plant, wall hanging, award plaque or desk ornament can add a completely new dimension to your work environment. Make a change!

5. Can your skills in communicating with people be improved? Are you doing your best to give and get cooperation and be more of a team player? Enhance your interpersonal skills and work to establish new levels of trust, respect and credibility.

6. What about your knowledge of the organization or industry in which you work? Learn more about how the business operates; how your particular position, department or agency functions; and what the latest trends are.

Now look at your answers. If you have answered "no" more times than "yes," no wonder you're dissatisfied; no wonder you're not appreciative of your situation.

Why not tap that powerful source of energy that's lying dormant

within you and set some goals? Develop a plan of action and go for it. If you don't try out some new ideas, you will never realize how good you are, how enjoyable your job can be and that a high level of job satisfaction is achievable. Expect more from yourself. You might be surprised at what and how much you can accomplish.

Be committed. Commitment gives you new power, for no matter what comes your way, you never turn your eye from the goal. Commitment guarantees victory. It's hard to keep committed people from achieving success. Place stumbling blocks in their way, and they take them for stepping-stones. If difficulties are thrust in front of them, they go around, under or through them.

So, when you're striving to create a better work environment in areas within your control, striving to achieve and maintain a satisfactory level of job fulfillment, develop a self-talk strategy and reflect on the words of poet Linda E. Knight: "Begin each day by focusing on all that is good/You'll be in a position to handle whatever comes along/ Take responsibility for your actions; never make excuses for not being the best you can be/If you should slip, be comforted by the thought that we all do at times/Determine your tomorrow by the choices you make today/And, above all, remember, it's all up to you!"

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