



Reconnecting with Self and Outside Activities Add to Career Enjoyment, Happiness Levels

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This white paper examines the problem of career, compromise, and diminished expectations and the potentials of reconnecting to self and society in new ways for enhancing career and quality of life.

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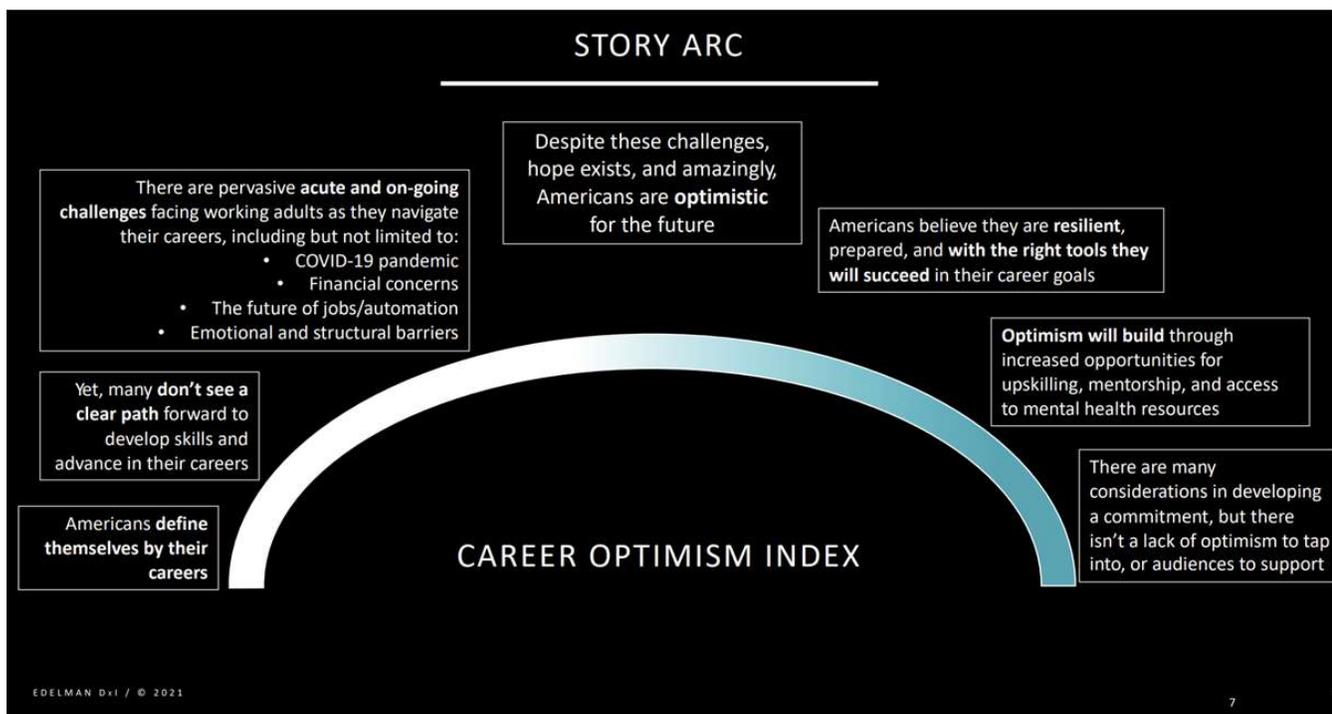
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1. Executive Summary

Many people involved in their career may describe it in different ways. Satisfaction with career may also relate strongly with one's perceived expectations of meaning associated with their career. The variants for how we come to understand how we feel about what we do are wide ranging. These are turbulent times.

The pandemic, civil unrest, and an economy splintered due to shelter in place and social distancing requirements have taken a heavy toll. But many college students feel they are stuck in the middle. They are weighing dreams of a satisfying career with a less than optimistic future. And while balance helps many to endure their unique journey every single day, so to can this balance and compromise set expectations of career aspirations to reasonable levels.

An example of this story arc can be extracted from the University of Phoenix Career Optimism Index.



According to the University of Phoenix Career Optimism Index and outcomes furnished, “those in our nation’s capital are struggling the most with emotional barriers such as low self-confidence, low motivation, hopelessness, and mental health and they also feel that a lack of time/schedule flexibility is holding them back.” (Edelman, 2021, p. 9)

But what goes on during any given day on the job is not necessarily the last word on happiness and contentment. Reassessing your personality, vying for awards, and joining associations add to happiness levels no single job can necessarily offer, thus strengthening one’s career identity.

This white paper will cover the implications of impact variants and how they may serve as disruptors for achieving the essential “balance” needed in maintaining and enhancing work related quality of life. Understanding perspective alongside working disposition is critical in fostering one’s prospects for happiness as equated to career.

2. How this information should be used by leaders

The following information can be engaged by leaders who oversee and manage others as a preventative-programming measure to ensure the quality of work-life for their constituents.

This white paper should be used for:

- Knowledge management
- Preventative programming measures for leaders in industry

3. Introduction

These are turbulent times. The pandemic, civil unrest, and an economy splintered due to shelter in place and social distancing requirements have taken a heavy toll. No one wants to go to work and perform duties he or she doesn’t like to do. However, we all know that even the best jobs, (i.e. doctors, lawyers, police officers, and teachers, to name a few), have various administrative tasks that are truly less than desirable. Some have also discovered that working for one traditional employer for a lifetime may not be ideal for their career trajectory and happiness. Despite all of this, many of these individuals report feeling “optimistic” and “engaged” on the job because they understand how critical *balance* and *compromise* are particularly during these turbulent and pandemic times.

4. What have these workers learned?

Despite challenges incurred by many jobs, something interesting has set in with many of these same workers in coming to understand their roles. What many have discovered is the imperative for “balance” as key to a qualified emotional work-life. Even amongst those who will stay and leave a role, satisfaction can still be achieved through focused perspective of maintaining work-life balance.

They also understand that life is not a linear process, meaning that many evaluate what they like and do not like several times within their career and understand they may end up working for two or three employers simultaneously while still feeling a sense of pride because research shows one’s career reflects who they are intellectually and behaviorally.

What is important to remember is that what goes on during any given day on the job is not necessarily the last word on happiness and contentment. Reassessing your personality, vying for awards, and joining associations add to happiness levels no single job can necessarily offer, thus strengthening one’s career identity.

5. “Color Code” as a Useful Assessment for Career

No matter where you currently stand in the job market, employed, unemployed, feeling secure, insecure, or waiting to get into the workforce or continue with a better job, recent studies reveal Americans define themselves based on their career. And these feelings seem to carry across all income levels, high school or college educated, frontline workers, prospective students, the various generations (such as: Boomers, Gen X, Gen Z, Millennials), all races, nationalities, and genders. But it can be confusing to know one’s next move. There are a variety of tools to help people assess their personality in relation to their careers whether they are starting out, or whether they are in mid-career and ready for a change. Over the years one tool that many claim to adequately summarize their traits in relation to various work roles (such as leader, follower, subordinate, team member, and independent contributor) is the Color Code Personality Assessment.

For nearly twenty years, Color Code has offered a free assessment that helps to pinpoint one’s personality color and compares it to the categories of employment in a matter of minutes. You will need to furnish an email address and you must take the test briskly and provide true answers (not what you think that will make you look good). The questions are challenging. They sometimes ask you to choose between the lesser of two evils. No matter their complexity, the results can pinpoint your unique color and what it means in terms of your personality and the people you tend to attract or detract for that matter.

From assessed “red” who are driven by technology to assessed “blues” who strive for high integrity to assessed “whites” seeking acceptance and assessed “yellows” who enjoy social interactions, your color is compared to each category. After all, one cannot always choose who he or she works with let alone the role he or she will have on a team of strangers that must work in harmony with one another. So, the Color Code gives you a sense of where your personality stands and categorizes it to help determine your level of comfort, level of need, and what makes you tick.

6. Awards and Job Satisfaction = Getting Involved

Regardless of your color, know that it is just a snapshot in time. It may hold true year after year, or it may change as you grow and blossom. But flexibility appears to help many feel more confident knowing that they can strive to draw from multiple sources of income or find satisfaction in other areas that run congruently to their profession outside of work. For example, a creative individual can apply to the call for public creative contests that may include notoriety or accolades in their field regardless of their current employment position. Such awards may offer monetary incentives, or other award mechanisms that can provide job satisfaction when one’s current job status cannot provide such accolades. According to Edelman, flexibility appears to help many feel more confident knowing that they can strive to draw from multiple sources of income or find satisfaction in other areas that run congruently to their profession outside of work.

Are you a photographer, writer, videographer? Then search the Web using terms like writing, contests, poetry, contests, video contests. Try including the year so you can vie for contests who might be open currently. If you should apply and win at any level, that is a feather in your career cap, particularly if the output is professional or runs along the discipline in one's profession. The result can be quite a resume builder since the listing of the winners are often shown on websites for months or years, and/or winners are sent commendations and certificates validating their entries.

The good news is that you do not need anyone's permission to apply. You do not need your supervisor's permission (unless there is a conflict of interest), your parent's permission, nor a teacher's permission. The only permission you need is your own to search, enter, and try. Many times these contests do not receive enough entries. If this should happen, you might win more by default. No matter how you place, the goal is to build a resume accolade that can set you apart from the competition. Even if you do not wish to build your resume this all goes back to balance and rewards. Rewards you can develop even if you are not able to get them from your current employer, a reflection of who you are and what you do.

7. Professional Associations and Enhancing Well-Being

As we have discovered, maintaining happiness levels is not just related to one's job but also what one does outside of work. A great area to continue networking and building other success stories is through association affiliations. There are literally hundreds of professional career oriented associations out there, these are examples of high profile associations more amenable to those in education or those who are looking to bolster their leadership skills. Each of these has the potential to boost happiness levels based on participation and the track record of those who have contributed to local chapters, in presentations or in other activities that help communities, for example:

- The Association for the Advancement of Computers in Education (AACE),
- the American Marketing Association,
- Online Learning Consortium (OLC), and
- the International Leadership Association (ILA).

Most associations need affiliates to serve in many capacities, including chairing conference presentations or serving on their boards. While some of these board positions are elected, some are not. Many other associations exist that are practitioner focused.

Practitioner focused associations include hundreds of groups whose subject matter expertise lend itself to for-profit and non-profit endeavors. Groups with excellent track records that are related to many of University of Phoenix degree offerings and that have an excellent networking opportunities include the American Management Association, American Business Association, and the American Marketing Association. Serving on their boards, committees, and sub committees allows you to shape policy and develop new discipline standards or measurements while propelling your brand as a leader in the field.

8. Conclusions

In sum, being happy is also about being productive and assessing what you like to do, and knowing that one company is not necessarily going to lead to complete on the job happiness. Indeed, what one does outside of work can significantly lead to a better job identity and provide avenues for visibility and networking opportunities never imagined.

It's time to look at job happiness a new way. It's time to keep moving forward no matter the obstacles (such as the pandemic, the economy, and your current employment situation). It's time to reassess who you are and how you can obtain the types of accolades that reflect your career contributions, and to continue networking to yield more opportunities and job satisfaction than you can ever imagine. Keep moving forward!

10. About the author

Dr. Erik Bean is an Associate Chair for the College of Doctoral Studies Center for Leadership Studies and Organizational Research. He is also a teacher in Detroit and owner of a non-profit business. Erik serves both industry and academia. He is an engagement expert and a recognized thought leader in strategic customer experience communication. Recent peer reviewed publications include Autoethnography of the cultural competence exhibited at an African American weekly newspaper organization in *Issues in Informing Science and Information Technology* and A review of typography to improve your e-learning in the *Journal of Online Learning Research and Practice*.

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