

Introduction

The mass of men lead lives of quiet desperation.

—Henry David Thoreau

Through our years of helping leaders and professionals develop, we have repeatedly confirmed the following fact: Most adults feel they are in the midst of a mediocre career in their organization. We find that disturbing. As adults, we spend the biggest part of our lives working in organizations, so a mediocre career often translates into a mediocre life, an existence that is just okay with some ups and some downs. And unfortunately, those who want a better-than-mediocre career and life are often frustrated as they work hard and follow the common career advice but still experience little career mobility and a chronic sense of dissatisfaction. When their efforts don't bear fruit they give up hoping and trying, and start treating their job as a "nine-to-five necessity." And maybe they start looking for another "better" job in another "better" organization.

In looking for greener pastures to build a career, you are probably assuming that the problems with your current career are caused by your circumstances—the bad leadership, problems, and lack of opportunities in your current organization. Based on this assumption, you invest the time to find and move into another organization, often expending significant effort and even money in learning to navigate your new company, reestablish your credibility and networks, and move your loved ones to unfamiliar geographies. And along with the numerous tangible and intangible costs of moving

to a new company comes risk! Most of the time the greener pastures you left for are not so green after all. In fact, a few months into the new job and company you will probably find that the career issues you were leaving in your previous company will start reemerging. This is because in your zest to improve your career you focused your efforts on changing where you work instead of staying and aligning with the truths of career success.

The career-related patterns and issues in which you constantly find yourself are not a result of the problems in your company. They are largely a result of the way you think and act. Trying to improve your career success by simply finding a new place to work is like trying to run faster by finding a new track to run on. Your career success will come from adopting the beliefs and behaviors that drive career success in every organization you choose to be in.

If you keep doing what you've been doing, you will keep getting what you've got. The same career beliefs and behaviors will get you the same results in every organization in which you choose to work. Achieving career success begins with a clear understanding that you don't need to, and probably shouldn't, leave your current organization. Instead of wasting your time finding and transitioning into a new role, invest that time in adopting the principles and practices of what we call "career wealth." *Make It Work* is dedicated to helping you find passion and success within your organization. So don't return the headhunter calls, stop updating your resume, and invest this time in learning and navigating the path to career wealth in your current organization. This path starts with your heart.

Your Heart + Your Organization = Your Success

As authors, we view the subject of careers and career transformation both personally and professionally. Personally in that like you we have at times struggled to find career fulfillment and financial reward within the companies where we have worked. And professionally in that our personal career transformation has put us in leadership roles building people and talent systems in organiza-

tions. Over the past two years we have spent thousands of hours using our unique perch in organizations to test and refine the principles of career transformation and success. The principles we have developed are universal and powerful. And they find their source in the same place—the heart. Quite simply, your career fulfillment is not to be found in the latest career success books, tapes, or “systems.” Instead, the answer is in you, or more specifically in what you love. We want you to be aware of this fact: The people who achieve sustained fulfillment in their career are those who have made a choice to do what they love.

W. H. Murray, in *The Story of Everest* (1953), says, “Concerning all acts of initiative and creation, there is one elementary truth—that the moment one definitely commits oneself, then providence moves too.” When you make that deep, heartfelt commitment, it generates opportunities through both predictable and unpredictable—even amazing—ways. Although simple and intuitive, this act of effectively bringing what you love into your work and life is not always easy and, in fact, is quite rare.

Looking for Love in All the Wrong Places

Broadly speaking, we all want the same thing: a great job doing what we love to do and being supported, that is, recognized and rewarded for it. So, if we all want it, why is it so elusive? Why do most of us find career success at times but often feel we have to make trade-offs, even give up some of what we want and love to do to survive and get ahead in our organization? Why do we feel we have to leave our organization as if we were trapped? It points to a pervasive sense of career unrest that is largely the result of two consistent facts:

- 1. The companies and organizations we work in are not in the business of considering and aligning with our loves and passions.** Instead, they often separate us from what we love and even need, causing us to conform to what people in the organization want from us. This happens subtly. When we’re in an organization,

as in any social situation, our inherent response is to do what is necessary to fit in and get along with others, especially those in authority. In doing so, we often give up what we love and need and become a slave to this impersonal thing called “the company.”

2. Much of the widely accepted career advice is false and even toxic. By following the conventional precepts, people are actually ensuring that they won’t achieve sustained career fulfillment and wealth. In the context of history, modern organizations are relatively new—you are probably no more than three generations removed from ancestors who either worked on a small farm or had a career within a smaller family-owned business. Perhaps because of this we are still in the corporate dark ages, collectively struggling to understand how organizations really work and how more people can find success and fulfillment within them.

As authors—and now as coauthors—we have looked at careers and career wealth with a critical eye. We have seen what works and what does not work. We have identified the misunders tood, even counterintuitive, principles that drive real career success. The principles that help people effectively bring their loves to work are the guideposts for those few people in organizations who continually realize sustained career success and fulfillment. Because many of these principles directly contradict conventional wisdom about careers, they go unnoticed by the vast majority of people. Instead, tens of millions continue the career/company grind, never fully realizing love, passion, and fulfillment, and they don’t know what to do about it.

For coauthor Joe Frodsham, the static nature of common career thinking came into clearer focus earlier in his career. While leading a group of professionals within a large multinational technology company, he met with a program coordinator on his staff to discuss her performance and development plan for the coming year. As a normal part of this conversation, they discussed her longer-term career aspirations, during which time she shared her career anguish. She did not feel challenged by her work but felt she had no chance to move up in the company because she had not earned a college degree; and as a single mother, she felt she did not have the time or resources to pursue that course.

When Joe asked her what kind of work she enjoyed and what she would like to study, she seemed unsure. After further discussion, it became apparent that her basic belief was that career satisfaction would come almost solely from being promoted. The substance and nature of her work didn't matter; it was the title and money that would signify to her and others that she had arrived and was fulfilled. In further conversations with members of his staff, Joe found that they were in about the same place—wanting and waiting for promotions to achieve career fulfillment. This was the attraction—the promise of promotion—for which they were willing to move to new organizations and even geographies.

This experience inspired both of us to take an intensive look at the relationship between doing what we love and achieving career wealth. Over the past two years we have both spent thousands of hours answering questions such as

- Is it possible to do what we love and still get ahead in an organization?
- What can we learn from the relatively few who consistently achieve career wealth?
- Why are job fulfillment and success within an organization so elusive?

For the knowledge and wisdom gained through this research, we thank the program coordinator who began this quest. And if we could have that same career discussion again, we would tell her the answer to her career anguish does not lie in a college degree or an elevated title or a higher salary. Those are not bad things, but her ability to achieve the symbols of success would increase exponentially when she first dedicated herself to doing what she loves. The rest of the practices of career wealth can be learned and coached.

As we have assisted those willing to transform their careers, we have solidified our principles. We have also had the time of our lives as we have been doing what we love. Indeed, uncovering these career principles and truths and helping people transform their career within their organization is our love and passion. And it is with this passion that we share *Make It Work* with you.

Stay in Your Organization and Succeed

The first chapter introduces the fundamental role of love and passion in realizing sustained success in your organization and in your life. You will assess your current level of career success by completing a short self-assessment called the Career Wealth Indicator. This self-awareness exercise will help provide the basis from which you will begin to build your career. We then begin to establish the fundamental beliefs that set the basis for all successful careers by exposing the pervasive career myths that limit your career opportunities. We focus on helping you to understand and adopt the critical career truths that will put you on the higher path to career wealth. Throughout the rest of the book, you will then move sequentially through the career-building process.

Part 1, “Your Career Foundation,” will lead you through the four steps for establishing your career foundation. At the core of the four-step process is your heart—encompassing the things you actually need in your work to find passion and wealth in your company and career. In this process, you will uncover your unique passions and the needs they fulfill for you, and you will identify and declare the career direction you will take in your organization. The career foundation steps involve significant introspection through the use of Discovery Exercises. Once you have completed them you will have the awareness, energy, and direction needed to effectively shape your career in your organization regardless of your reputation, history, or circumstances.

Part 2, “Your Career Navigation,” will help you to adopt six practices for effectively working in an organization. As with the process for establishing your career foundation, each of the six powerful practices is supported by a Discovery Exercise. Learning the six practices will enable you to shape your perfect role and have your organization support and reward you for doing so. Ultimately, you will realize career success while adding substantially more value to your organization.

Make It Work has been designed to help you transform your career within the organization you have chosen. So get ready for your own transformation. It’s absolutely worth the effort.

Let’s get started!