
Nail It!

The Quest for Work That Matters

Patricia Rawson

Nail It! The Quest for Work That Matters

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“Where your talents and the needs of the world
cross, there lies your vocation.”

Aristotle

Chapter 1 – Work That Matters

**Where are your choices?
Who should read this manifesto?
The Journey
The truth about work that matters**

Chapter 1 - Introduction

Work that matters always has two key elements. You and the world. When you find the work that uses your gifts and talents, you will be engaged, feel alive and have a sense of purpose.

When you are doing work that matters, you contribute to the world. In a way, it doesn't matter what you do but it matters that it matters. To you.

Where are your choices?

As I am writing this, I am looking out the window watching the sky turn dark. This is my favourite time of the day, especially here where I see the top of the trees and expanse of sky. It is that vastness that draws me to dreaming about a bigger life.

Two months ago, I left my job of 10 years and the city where I lived for the last 20 years. The job that I left had many enticing components, and some not so great.

But what ultimately led to my decision was a deep desire to see the world in a different way. A deliberate choice.

Quitting a job may be considered an indulgence, foolhardy or fear-inducing. Or it may be considered courageous, proactive or bold. However it may seem to others, the choice was mine to make. As is yours.

You don't have to quit a job to find work that matters. The most important part is understanding that if you are unhappy, frustrated or not excited about your work, you do have choices. More than may first appear.

Who should read this manifesto?

Not everyone wants to find work that matters. Those who are content with their work, have found their dream job, or are quite happy with what they have chosen probably won't get anything out of this document. But it would fit if you:

- Are working in a job that just doesn't quite fit. There are elements that you like about the work that you do but you frequently go home at the end of the day and wonder if this is what life is all about.
- Know you definitely are in the wrong job. At the end of the workday, you leave exhausted and do not have the energy to do anything else. You feel that you can't quit because you need the income. You feel caught between responsibilities and the voice whispering inside of you that life could be so different.
- Don't have a job. You may have been laid off, asked to leave, or quit on your own. You are looking at your life and you know that it is time for a change. But what is it?
- Know that you are meant to do something more with your life. The nagging thoughts arise from time to time but you are so caught up in your life that there doesn't seem to be any time to really figure this out.

What this manifesto offers is a way to approach the challenge of finding work that matters.

Here you will explore questions that get you thinking about a bigger life, about being all that you can be, about the intersection of you and the world.

The Journey

Quests have several elements. The work of Joseph Campbell talks about the hero's journey, where one steps out of their ordinary life because of an urgent situation, faces obstacles and comes back with newfound wisdom.

Each one of us is on the hero's journey.

When work isn't working for you any longer and you are feeling confused and lost, the call is happening. What is being asked of you is to dig deeper, to go beyond what you have already experienced.

But what if you just want a job? What if you don't have or want a calling?

The Reluctant Hero may be more relatable.

In fiction and movies, the Reluctant Hero is an ordinary person who is pulled into extraordinary circumstances. Despite their doubts and sometimes selfishness, this hero rises up to the occasion. Think of Han Solo in Star Wars.

Before I made the big leap, I knew for a long time that I needed to make a change. There was plenty that was great about my life and my work. And yet.

A hero ventures forth from the world of common day into a region of supernatural wonder: fabulous forces are there encountered and a decisive victory is won: the hero comes back from this mysterious adventure with the power to bestow boons on his fellow man.

Joseph Campbell,
The Hero With a Thousand Faces

I just knew that I had a lot more to experience. I made the decision. As my foot suspended in mid-air over the precipice, I felt it all: fear, anticipation, excitement, bewilderment and plenty of doubts.

I understood that I was having the full human experience. This is what I was designed for.

And what I found out was that when I placed my foot down, I didn't fall.

When you are looking for work that is meaningful, work that truly matters, you are being presented with the call to a quest.

This is both an ordinary and extraordinary part of life.

The truth about work that matters

No one else can figure this out but you. This is the good news. Something that is this vitally important needs to have the right person in charge.

Finding work that is the right fit for you is about exploring what makes you tick. And no one knows this better than you.

This kind of exploration is challenging. If it was easy, you would have figured it out already.

But you don't have to do this alone. Having people on your team to support, encourage and believe in you not only makes the journey more fun, it also can get you moving when you feel stuck.

Having a career counsellor on board can also point you in the right direction. One of the best ways that they can help is to ask the right questions.

The right questions aim straight to the core of who you are. You may not know the answer immediately but those questions resonate throughout your body and surface in unexpected ways.

In the third part of this manifesto, you will find the questions to explore work that matters.

I promise you that by asking yourself the Right Questions and then taking the right actions you will make one extraordinary choice after another, choices that will allow you to become the person you were intended to be.

Debbie Ford
The Right Questions

“Let go of certainty. The opposite isn't uncertainty. It's openness, curiosity and a willingness to embrace paradox, rather than choose up sides. The ultimate challenge is to accept ourselves exactly as we are, but never stop trying to learn and grow.”

Tony Schwartz, *What Really Matters*

Chapter 2 – Setting the Stage

Cultivating Curiosity
The Importance of Openness
Having Fun
Exploring Your Magnificence
Vitality – Being Fully Human

Chapter 2 – Setting the Stage

Like any quest, finding work you love takes you down paths you could never envision, offers you the chance to be all you can be, and requires you to pay attention in ways that may be new to you.

To get the most of the experience, embracing the attitudes discussed below will provide the best environment for making it happen.

Cultivating Curiosity

Remember when you were a child and observing the world? You were a sponge for learning, vastly curious about everything around you. You asked big questions like how the stars stayed in the sky and small questions like where the ants went in the wintertime.

It is that very spirit that you want to invoke in looking at career exploration. You want to ask those questions at the heart of who you are.

- ♦ What inspires me?
- ♦ What does not?
- ♦ What motivates me?
- ♦ Where have I really felt engaged in my life?
- ♦ Who am I?

Cultivating curiosity also means being able to keep the investigation active, really getting to what matters, at each step along the way.

And it is with an attitude of curiosity that you get to tap into the mystery, an important part of the journey. You just never know where the idea that ignites you will emerge.

The Importance of Openness

During this exploration, it is important to suspend any beliefs about how the work has to look. Allow yourself to be open to possibilities.

Humans are notorious for the limitations that we place on ourselves. By doing so, we inadvertently close the door to the very ideas that make our hearts sing. So, while doing this exploration, it is important to keep your mind wide open.

Be assured, if you have any concerns, there will be lots of opportunity to look at those other important life considerations

“I have no special talents. I am only passionately curious.”

Albert Einstein

Having Fun

When you think about the work that you want to do, there is a lot to consider. What you would like to get paid, where you will live, what education you need, where the best place is to get experience. Work is a serious and important matter. And so is play.

One of the biggest times of learning in your life was when you were a child. Most of what you learned was while you were having fun! People learn best when they are in an environment that is full of engagement, curiosity, and playfulness.

A spirit of fun in your life-work exploration is important for two reasons. The first is that any time you consider work you love, it will have a fun component and you need to be able to be in alignment with whatever that is. Secondly, you will learn more. More knowledge leads to better decisions.

Exploring Your Magnificence

Life Coach Debbie Ford uses the word magnificence to describe the part of self that needs a lot of space to grow and bloom. Unfortunately, we spent more time keeping ourselves small.

But what if you looked at it from Debbie Ford's point of view?

"I never did a day's work in my life, it was all fun."

Thomas Edison

What about being all that you can be? What about digging into those parts of yourself to find what is interesting, enlivening, and is waiting for you to tap into so you can bloom into your full magnificence?

You have heard it before. There is no one quite like you on this revolving planet. No one has the same combination of talents, way of looking at the world, interests, longings and personality.

Even if you can't see your magnificence at this moment, know that it is just waiting for you to unearth it.

"Don't ask what the world needs. Ask what makes you come alive and go do it. Because what the world really needs is more people who have come alive."

Howard Thurman

Vitality – Being Fully Human

To really understand what is the right work for you, you need to connect with what is inside of you.

What excites you? What energizes you? Like a dog who has found something intriguing, what makes you perk up your ears?

When you connect with these feelings, you get a sense of what is alive in you.

The sense of aliveness is expansive, engaging and energizing.

You can do this by reflecting on a time when you felt alive. What did that feel like? Where in your body do you feel that sense?

Being in touch with that feeling is a great touchstone to finding work that matters.

“We are wired to be brave; that’s why we never feel more alive than when we’re being courageous.”

Brené Brown

“To the extent that your work takes into account the needs of the world, it will be meaningful, to the extent that through it you express your unique talents, it will be joyful.”

Laurence Boldt

Finding the Work You Love

Chapter 3 – The Questions

What are Strengths – Really?

Being Your Best

Being True to Yourself

The Pursuit of Meaning

Being Joyful

Chapter 3 – The Questions

At the core of any quest is a question. Who am I? What am I doing here? Or another question very personal to your circumstance.

In the Quest for Work That Matters, these 5 questions will guide you towards what will work for you.

What are Strengths – Really?

At job interviews, you are often asked about your strengths. For many, this is a hard question.

What I appreciated when I was introduced to the work of Marcus Buckingham was his approach to what a strength is.

In your resume, you may have a listing of what you are good at, with an assumption that these are your strengths. But what if, as Marcus Buckingham points out, you are good at something but you hate doing it?

This is an intriguing question. Is there something in your life that you can do well but you just would rather not?

I have had a work history as a financial manager but when I am paying attention to those number details, balancing debits and credits, I am tired in the middle of the day, thinking of chocolate and coffee.

What do we call that? A weakness.

The definition of a weakness according to Marcus Buckingham is anything that you do that leaves you feeling weak. Drained.

It is important to know what your weaknesses are, especially since you need to manage them. But the key part of strengths exploration is to get a good idea of what your strengths are.

And the definition of a strength is anything that leaves you feeling strong. Energized.

This is cool because there is only one person who can identify your strengths and that is you.

Because your gauge is inside of you and attached to your feelings, other people just do not have that insight.

Question #1: What is the work where I can use my strengths?

Being Your Best

There is a direct connection between working with your strengths and being excellent at what you do.

When you are engaged with your work, you are motivated to learn more, to develop the skills that make you stronger, and to spend the quality time you need to be good at what you do.

Question #2: What is the work that draws out my best?

Being True to Yourself

Laurence G. Boldt offers a definition of integrity as being true to oneself. To do the work that you love, there needs to be an alignment with what is inside of you. And to do that you need to listen.

This is not an easy task. There is much in our culture that is based on a certain set of ideals such as making enough money to buy a house as soon as possible, accepting job offers based primarily on salary, and basing decisions on prestige or doing what others suggest.

The tradeoffs can lead to workplace misery.

How do you do listen to yourself with so many voices clamouring to get your attention? The primary way is to

find quiet spaces. Often, being in nature allows you to hear yourself better.

What is important is that you listen to your body. Your body gives you all of the answers that you need.

When you have a feeling of yes in your body, you feel expansive.

When you have a feeling of no, somewhere you feel a contraction.

Question #3: When I listen to that voice inside of me, what vision do I have of my life?

The Pursuit of Meaning

What motivates you to do the work that you do?

When I was talking to the Human Resources person at one of my former positions, she told me that 90% of the reason people work is because of salary. Indeed, I hear people saying that the first thing they are going to do when they win the lottery is quit their jobs.

But what is more interesting than why people work is why they quit.

What I have seen from observing people who leave their positions is that a high percentage of the decisions were not related at all to the money.

How they were treated, priority changes because of family, a change of organization direction, and personal growth work are all top reasons why people want to move on from the work they are doing.

Looking at the reasons people seek new opportunities, you can see that motivation is highly personal, dependent on where you are in our life and what you want. Motivation is internally driven.

The same is true of meaningfulness. And in fact, meaningfulness is often at the root of motivation.

Meaningfulness is connected to your values, the importance of how you want to lead your life. And though making money is a value, it often is not the top value.

Meaningfulness has another component.

Most of the work that you do is in relation to other people, society and the planet.

For some, this means that you may be working directly with homeless people and for others it means that you are leading a corporation.

The common thread is that you are seeing yourself as making a difference.

People who experience the highest amount of job satisfaction feel like they are contributing to an issue bigger than themselves. They may want to make a difference but their desire is to contribute in meaningful ways.

Question #4: What is my greatest contribution to others?

Being Joyful

Experiencing joy in your work involves two questions:

- ♦ What do you love to do?
- ♦ Are you happy with who you are?

What do you love to do?

This is a hard question. I have seen a range of answers from, “I don’t know” to “How can I make money at this?”

What makes the question difficult is that there is an expectation that one amazing idea is going to bring it all together. And you just have to find it.

That feels like pressure.

“All of us want to do well. But if we do not do good, too, then doing well will never be enough.”

Anna Quindlen

I don’t ask it anymore. There are plenty of other questions that lead to finding the work you love.

An important activity around finding what you love to do is doing what you love. When you are involved in what you love, you are creating an environment that invites the perfect job into your life. Consider it practice.

Are you happy with who you are?

The second part of finding joy in your work is understanding that some of your blocks to joy are connected to how you feel about yourself.

Beliefs were formed long ago as you were interpreting the world. And they raise their heads now as you go through your day-to-day life.

One of the ways you get to see this is when life is going good. You will find yourself not following through or you abandon your dreams or the myriad of ways that you sabotage yourself.

Gay Hendricks calls this the Upper Limit Problem.

What it boils down to is the sense that you are not good enough.

Brené Brown has also done some important work viewing core beliefs, vulnerability and shame. Her definition of shame is *“the intensely painful feeling or experience of believing that we are flawed and therefore unworthy of love and belonging.”*

How do you work with deep core issues? Part of it is awareness. And the other is to reach out for help. There are amazing supports and resources. Check out the last section of this book.

Question #5: What excites you?

The promise of a flower lives within every seed, and within each of us lies the ability to lead an extraordinary life. But just as a seed needs sun and water in order to bloom into a flower, we too need nourishment and support if we are to blossom into our full magnificence.

Debbie Ford, *The Right Questions*

Chapter 4 – Your Awesome Self

Chapter 4 – Your Awesome Self

With this manifesto, you have the foundation for the quest for work that matters.

Employment counsellors are notorious for metaphors. And here is one of mine.

Like the building of a house, what you do when you dig the hole and pour in the cement is the groundwork for everything that comes later.

You will do yourself a favour if you begin the exploration by looking inside. By getting a good picture of who you are, your gifts and talents, what you have to offer the world.

From that central place, you will build the life you want, find the work that deeply satisfies you and be all that you can be.

You don't have to do this alone. When you think of building a house, the strength is really in the team where each does their own part.

Find the people who believe in you. Find your helpers, consultants, advisors, and most importantly, your listeners.

And don't forget to sign yourself up. Root for yourself.

More than anyone else, you need to be able to see those special talents of yours. And there is your starting place.

From there you will grow and expand into the person you were always meant to be.

Acknowledgements

I am grateful to everyone who attended the career exploration workshops I facilitated over the years. I am honoured to have witnessed the depth of sharing, insights, engagement and humour.

I am grateful to the colleagues, co-workers, and leaders who inspired me through the good work they do.

For the great thinkers and idea people that I encountered through books, internet and articles, I am grateful for their enthusiasm and belief in doing the work we love.

To my family and friends, I am forever grateful for your belief in me.

Feedback

I would love to hear from you!

I am always intrigued by people who are doing the work they love and the journey that took them there.

If you haven't found that work yet, I would love to hear from you too!

You are also welcome to send any comments about ideas in this manifesto.

You can find me here:

patricia@findingworkthatmatters.com

Also, check out my website:

www.findingworkthatmatters.com

Resources

The Little Book of Contentment
by Leo Babauta

Finding Your Own North Star: Claiming the Life You Were Meant to Live
by Martha Beck

Steering by Starlight
by Martha Beck

How to Find the Work You Love
by Laurence G. Boldt

The Gifts of Imperfection: Let Go of Who You Think You're Supposed to Be and Embrace Who You Are
by Brené Brown

Go Put Your Strengths to Work: 6 Powerful Steps to Achieve Outstanding Performance
by Marcus Buckingham

Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience
by Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi

The Right Questions: Ten Essential Questions to Guide You to an Extraordinary Life
by Debbie Ford

The Dark Side of the Light Chasers: Reclaiming Your Power, Creativity, Brilliance and Dreams
by Debbie Ford

The Big Leap: Conquer Your Hidden Fear and Take Life to the Next Level
by Gay Hendricks

Feel the Fear and Do It Anyway
by Susan Jeffers

Nonviolent Communication: A Language of Life
by Marshall Rosenberg

Live the Life You Love
by Barbara Sher

I Could Do Anything If I Knew What It Was: How to Discover What You Really Want and How to Get It
by Barbara Sher

It's Only Too Late If You Don't Start Now: How to Create Your Second Life at Any Age
by Barbara Sher