



What do you do if you are employed but not loving it?

By Marie Peeler

Unemployment is still a hot topic even while the unemployment rate in Massachusetts continues to fall from its 2009 high.

But what if you are among those who are fortunate enough to have a job, but not fortunate enough to love it? Maybe you fell into a field that now fails to inspire you, or perhaps you like what you do, but not where you do it.

People toil every day in careers that fail to feed their souls. It's understandable. The recent economic climate hasn't exactly been conducive to risk-taking with one's livelihood.

But you can remain gainfully employed while seeking your dream job. (And you should keep the job that you have because, while it's not fair, it's true that already having a job makes you more attractive as a job seeker.)

Whether you are ready to make a move right now, or simply want to start evaluating your options, assessing your values and building your network are the two most important things that you can do to position yourself to find your next opportunity.

Assess your values

Do some honest soul-searching and decide what really matters to you today. It's easy to put your life goals on autopilot but they may be different now than they were when you started your current job. Years ago when I was contemplating a major career change, I was offered a position for a lot more money than I was currently making, to do essentially what I was already doing, only on a bigger scale. I was

tempted, until my husband pointed out that he'd observed that, while there were a number of things that no longer satisfied me about my job, money was not one those things. Chasing the dollar once served my values, but my values had changed.

Build your network

Start building your network now. People make the mistake of waiting until they need their network to build it. Your next opportunity will most likely come from your network, that community of people who know you, or know of you, and are favorably predisposed to like you. So start building it and nurturing it now.

Today, your network exists both in-person and online, and both communities are important. Much of your network is in place already: your kid's little league parents, people who attend your church, your book club members, and your fellow alumni are all part of your network. Being active and involved in your community is a great way to grow your network.

Another approach to building your network is more targeted. Seek those organizations that put you in contact with people to whom you might be valuable and who, in turn, might be valuable to you. Professional organizations, chambers of commerce, and even benevolent organizations are full of people who would like to expand their networks and help you expand yours.

Don't ignore your online community. While most leaders and professionals have joined the online professional community, LinkedIn, many don't bother to build their profiles, add connections, or contribute to the community. LinkedIn is a goldmine when you are prospecting for most anything professional – but it only works if you have enough direct connections to leverage the platform.

Whether online or in person, actively look for opportunities to be a connector of people. Freely introduce people who could mutually benefit one another. Respond enthusiastically to requests for help. Concern yourself as much, if not more, with giving as with getting.

As the job market continues to evolve more favorably toward those looking for a precise kind of job, as opposed to just any job, preparing yourself to advance – by assessing your values and building your network – will provide the foundation from which to move closer to, or even into, your dream job. **CPB**

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