You Don't Have to Do as You're Told

Back in the glory days of baseball player Pete Rose, the Cincinnati Reds were on a chartered airplane that was flying in a thunderstorm. There was a great deal of turbulence and the passengers were scared.

It was at this moment that the all-time hits leader of baseball turned to a teammate and said: "If this thing goes down, I go out with a .300 average. What about you?"

What drives such intensity to perform? Pete Rose was a baseball player of questionable athletic ability. But he overcame those obstacles to earn the nickname "Charlie Hustle" because he was driven to succeed at something he simply loved to do.

For Rose, blood-and-guts desire was the difference between doing what he loved for a living or merely being a spectator to it. He just wanted it more than others with better talent who competed with him for a position. Everything else he needed to make it happen were mere details. He just decided he was going to do it. And he did.

What about you? Do you have a job you love? If you don't, why not? And if not now, when do you begin to find one?

Dodging Career Bullets

That's just what Steve Steinberg was asking himself.

Steve had just completed eight years of medical school. He was preparing for his first day of medical residency at a Salt Lake City hospital and could not find the heart to report to work. He didn't want to be a doctor. His medical degree was a passing interest that just snowballed out of control.

About three years in to med school he discovered computers. And on this day of wearing the white coat and stethoscope for the first time, he swallowed a bitter pill and told his wife he was not going to be a doctor. He wanted a career in computers.

Mrs. Steinberg was furious. To hear her tell the story, Steve would have to be his own doctor after she got through with him. They did not have the money for medical care otherwise. And they certainly didn't have the income to pay for his education in a field he had no intention of pursuing.

"But it wasn't a matter of all the time or money spent getting educated for it that bothered him." Angela Steinberg said. "It was the fact that for forty years he was going to have to get up in the morning to do a job that he hated."

Steve knew what he was in for. "I saw my Dad do that." Steve said. "He was a road foreman, working out on the highways and he hated every stinking minute of it. All that has gone through my head the last couple of years was the voice of my father telling me his life began the day he could retire from his job."

Steve is now studying for a two-year degree in computers. And Angela reports that his feet hit the ground running everyday because he just can't wait to get there.

Avoiding Misemployment

The trap of falling in to the wrong job is one that many get caught in.

"Eighty percent of the workforce in the U.S. is misemployed." says Dr. Herbert Greenberg of the Marketing and Research Group. "People often stumble into jobs because of a newspaper advertisement, a previous summer job, because a friend tells them it is a lucrative field, or
Many in the workforce often settle for the first opportunity that strikes their fancy simply because they lack any better ideas. Sometimes they do have a targeted job but get sidetracked off the path that leads to it by accepting positions “for the good of the company” or because of better money. Whatever the reason, good people many times work in jobs that just are not right for them.

The reasons for ending up in the wrong job are nowhere near as important to explore than the steps one must take to get out of it. And that’s where a new attitude about finding a job will make it easier to take the necessary steps.

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What this boils down to is the adoption of a different mindset when it comes to looking for a job. If you assume it cannot be done - then it probably will not happen. The change in mindset is that you alone are responsible for it happening - regardless of what anyone else might say or do about it.

And that’s an attitude that is lost on people who use conventional job searching techniques. They read an ad in the classifieds or a posting on an Internet job board and they send in a resume. Then they wait by the phone for someone to call.

When it does not ring, well, it’s not the job seeker’s fault. After all, they sent in the resume. The job seeker tried to get the job. But the responsible party didn’t keep up their end of the bargain. Repeat this cycle over and over for months on end and most job seekers turn into victims. Life, they think, is just so unfair - all because the phone never rings.

And that kind of thinking is where career tragedies are born.

Baseball fans would never have had the chance to see Pete Rose play if he approached getting his job that way. And that would have been terrible because as it turned out, in the end, Pete Rose was born to be a ballplayer. He got the job and excelled at it -- against all odds -- because he went about it differently than those he competed against.

Therefore, the first and most powerful law of the job search is that you don’t have to do what you’re told. There are no set rules in finding a job you love. But don’t just wait by the phone for it to happen.

What’s true in physics is true in seeking a job: you can act or be acted upon. Either way, there are always consequences. And the consequences - just like with Pete Rose and Steve Steinberg - should be ones that you can live with.