

Getting MORE Satisfaction From Your Work

Working in schools can be stressful!

These articles are intended to help the great people who work in schools.

Key points

The factors that lead to job satisfaction are separate and distinct from those that lead to job dissatisfaction

Many staff in schools are not dissatisfied but they would like MORE job satisfaction

Our self-talk and attitude are important factors in our sense of satisfaction

Disciplining yourself to do what you know is right and important, although difficult, is the highroad to pride, self-esteem and personal satisfaction.

Margaret Thatcher

Working in schools can be demanding. More is expected of us than ever before and we are often expected to do MORE, with LESS. Increases in accountability, the accelerating pace of change, high expectations from busy working parents and the challenges of working with people all add to life in a busy school.

It is therefore not surprising that staff morale can suffer. This leads to a lower sense of job satisfaction. However, according to Herzberg, "the factors that lead to producing job satisfaction (and motivation) are separate and distinct from the factors that lead to job dissatisfaction." *Harvard Business Review, Sept 2007*

According to Herzberg the opposite of job satisfaction is NOT job dissatisfaction but, rather, NO job satisfaction. This resonates as one of the main challenges for staff in schools. For many staff it is not that they are dissatisfied, they would like to be MORE satisfied.

Whilst it may seem a play on words, focusing on increasing the factors that give us satisfaction, can address our dissatisfaction. Alternatively if we are feeling really dissatisfied we can either address the factors that are leading to us feeling dissatisfied or start making an exit plan to pursue satisfaction in another pursuit.

"The growth or motivator factors that are intrinsic to the job are: achievement, recognition for achievement, the work itself, responsibility and growth or advancement." *Herzberg, Harvard Business Review, Sept 2007*

Research on staff happiness identified the following factors as key drivers of staff morale. Most people want to feel...

- **My work is important**
- **I make a difference**
- **I'm good at what I do**
- **What I do is appreciated**

These areas are important for increasing satisfaction. The first three factors are internal to our control and relate to our mind-set. Therefore our self-talk and attitude are essential. We need to focus on the importance of our work in schools. Our work in schools is important and we DO make a difference (even when at some times we don't feel like it!) We have the opportunity to impact on families and ultimately change lives. It is essential that we keep this bigger picture in mind.

Being good at what you do is also essential to achieving satisfaction. 99% of staff who work in schools want to do a great job. Whilst at times we can be our own harshest critic, it is essential that we continuously refine our practices and look for opportunities to be even more effective and efficient.

The final factor of feeling appreciated is a challenge for people who work in schools. Whilst cards, notes and gifts at this time of the year are great, a little appreciation along the way can be timely and should be savoured.

Most staff who work in schools receive very little feedback. Whilst changing this culture to provide feedback may be threatening to some, it also provides a focused time where the great things that staff ARE doing can be noticed and APPRECIATED.

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