

## **“Panning for Gold – Finding Work that Matters!”**

Our company has been with several clients on a weekly basis, companies of all sizes and from many different industries. What has become very apparent is that a lot of people are suffering from ‘initiative burnout’ as a result of mergers, acquisitions and culture changes. To further complicate the issues, there is a lot of disconnected training efforts being initiated that creates confusion.

A well-known artist named Annie Lee has a figurine, called ‘Blue Monday’. This figurine shows a woman sitting on the edge of her bed, hunched over, weary before her day even starts. What’s your Monday morning like? Are you excited, jazzed and enthralled with what the day can bring? Or are you like the Blue Monday figurine on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday? Your work life doesn’t have to be like this.

When we speak with people in organizations, they tell us that they really want to make a difference, they want to do work that is meaningful and work that add value. People in the workforce are starved to find meaningful work. People need work that gets them energized and excited to go to work everyday. What are people looking for? In a recent conversation with someone about their work, it was noted that he became excited when he started talking about the projects he was working on. The projects gave him a creative outlet, the work was intense, the interaction with people of diversity, and most of all he had freedom of expression. Despite the fact that there were many things he couldn’t resolve in his work, the opportunities presented to him kept him excited. The work mattered to him!

There are many projects that we could work on; the key is finding the right one. We think of this as panning for gold. We spend too much time working on the “**stuff**” that doesn’t matter and fail to spend enough time panning through our work to pull out those gems, those gold nugget projects that will make a difference. When we can identify those golden nuggets and focus our attention and energy there, then we start to find excitement, joy and become energized in our work.

Stop being robotic, doing the same old stuff, because you haven’t taken the time to think about and look at the work you’re doing in a new light. Robert Cooper who wrote the *The Other 90% said*;

**“ Nothing brings out hidden qualities like passion does....many of us have lost touch with the zeal that can bring out our best.”**

Think back to some of the old western movies, once news got out that there was a vein of gold identified, people from all walks of life left their old jobs in anticipation of the gold that they would be able to find. Most folks worked out of the streams that ran from the mountains (where the gold was found). With their metal pan (with a sieve in the bottom), they scooped up water and gravel from the bottom of the stream and sifted out the water and looked through what was left to find gold nuggets. In many cases the sun shined on the gold and made it glitter helping the prospector to find the

gold. That's how to bring the passion back into your work life, find the projects that are the golden nuggets that will attract others to it. Become the gold vein for others.

Here's how to bring the passion and zeal back into your work:

1. Pan: Make a list of all the projects that you are working on. Look at them from a new perspective. We are trying to find the golden nuggets! Rate these projects based on its impact to the organization. Ask yourself, does this project matter, does it make a difference, and is it going to add value? Is this project aligned to one of the key goals and objectives of the organization? Keep panning until you sift up the projects that really matter.
2. Re-frame: Re-frame the project, in other words, connect with other people inside and outside your organization and discuss how you can make the golden projects even better. As Doug Hall from Eureka Ranch would say; "make this project dramatically difference." Go for the gold, you want these projects to be memorable and leave a legacy.
3. Sell: The easiest way to get excited about a project is to sell it to someone else. That forces us to think about what is important about the project and why the project matters. Sit down and develop a compelling 3-minute pitch, which highlights the benefits of the project and why you're in love with it. If you can't get excited about, neither will anyone else. Practice the pitch with a friend, then

share the pitch with someone who understands nothing about the project, so you can determine how clear your pitch is. Refine your pitch, then print it out, in color, and put it in a visible place to remind you of why this project matters.

4. Celebrate: As you move along in life, find little wins to celebrate along the way. Take time to notice what your peers and co-workers are doing and make it a point to acknowledge their achievements. When we do something good for someone else, not only do we feel better, but also we have made the day of someone else. Adding joy to someone else's life, will add joy to yours.

Work doesn't have to be mundane and boring. We just have to take the time to look at where and how we are spending our time. Are we working on the golden nuggets, or are we working on golden flecks, the little stuff. The stuff that has little value. The projects we work on can have a big impact on our attitudes. Pan to find the golden nuggets, get excited about work again, celebrate and enjoy life.

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