



Understand how to add more meaning to your job.

By Cristian X. Cohen

Are you in a slump? For a baseball hitter, all it takes to get out of a slump is one solid crack of the bat or a successful bunt. *What matters is that the ball is in play.*

At work, you would love to always feel as good as when a baseball player gets out of a slump.

Feeling good at work is equivalent to job satisfaction.

Job satisfaction depends on your “emotions, motivation, and perceptions” for something that “contributes value to you” (“The Power of Small Wins” by T.M. Amabile & S.J.

Kramer, Harvard Business Review [HBR], May 2011).

You like your job because you feel it contributes something meaningful to others. Yet, you may not feel that your job is contributing to you; it is not as meaningful to you as you would like it to be.

What is happening?

Most likely your organization believes that engineers “do their best work under pressure and when externally motivated by deadlines and competition with peers” (“Inner Work Life” by T.M. Amabile & S.J. Kramer, May 2007 HBR).

Your work culture does not support and hinders your work; it is discouraging and undermines your efforts.

Work culture is disrupting your inner work life, which is “the mix of your emotions, motivation and perceptions over the course of a workday” (Amabile & Kramer, 2011). You can do something to feel better: *take control of your inner work life*.

You can do something to feel better: *take control of your inner work life*.

Control Your Inner Work Life

Manipulate your inner work life to be positive.

According to Amabile and Kramer (2011), inner work life is primarily influenced by achieving a goal, accomplishing a task, or solving a problem; even making good progress toward such goals, or even very mundane successes.

Knowledge work, which requires “creative productivity every day,” is different from physical work (Amabile & Kramer, 2011).

Engineering jobs, for the most part, require knowledge work. Regardless of work culture, engineers, can independently give a physical manifestation to knowledge work so that they can see progress during a workday (“Visual Management: A Physical Approach to Knowledge Work” by N. Repping, Skillsoft Ireland Limited, 2022).

Give your work a physical manifestation by writing down your activities; Externally organize daily tasks and goals.

When writing information down you are planning or making a roadmap for the day.

“[O]nce we commit to a specific plan of action to complete a task, we tend to think less about that task. ... Essentially, when we create a roadmap to help us reach a goal, we are more likely to attain it” (“Why We Continue to Rely on (and Love) To-Do Lists” by V. Sawhney, January 2022 HBR).

By writing down even mundane activities and having them marked off at the end of the day, you will feel productive. Thus, a tangible manifestation of your progress.

“Of all the things that can boost [your] emotions, motivation, and perceptions during a workday, the single most important is making progress” (Amabile & Kramer, 2011).

The key to a positive inner work-life is tracking your own progress during a workday.

Making progress is vital for a positive inner work life and for job satisfaction.

“And the more frequently people experience that sense of progress, the more likely they are to be creatively productive in the long run. ... everyday progress—even a small win—can make all the difference in how they

THE KEY TO A POSITIVE INNER WORK-LIFE IS TRACKING YOUR OWN PROGRESS DURING A WORKDAY.

feel and perform” (Amabile & Kramer, 2011).

Methods to organize your tasks and goals externally range from to-do lists, Post-its, daily journals, bullet points, personal diaries and a digital notebook.

“To-do lists [or any other method] serve as a reminder for what you need to accomplish. When we check things off, it’s proof that we were able to get stuff done and that makes us feel good” (Sawhney, 2022).

Feeling good translates into a positive inner work life.

Inner work life does not wait for tomorrow. It is in effect today. But it will affect tomorrow and beyond if it is not positive by the end of today (Amabile & Kramer, 2011).

START TODAY; FEEL GOOD.

Just focus on putting the ball in play like a baseball hitter that wants to get out of a slump.

Plan now: Write down your next goals, tasks and actions. Mark them off as you complete them. Do it daily.

Track Your Progress!

