

**Maximizing Results Through People**  
**A CEO to CEO Quarterly Newsletter**

**2/15/05**

**Jobs, Careers or Callings**

Dear Fellow CEO:

I recently read an abstract of an article relating to the importance of employee satisfaction. The author described three distinctly different ways an employee could look at work: as a job, a career, or as a calling. Here's broadly what he meant by each:

1. A job is where the employee is simply trading work for money. The employee doesn't look for work to enrich his life in qualitative ways.
2. A career is where the employee looks to trade work for advancement – organizationally, financially, or from a status perspective.
3. A calling is where the employee works for the fulfillment that the work itself brings to the individual.

His point was that each category yielded different productivity outputs from the person doing the work. Those who view their work as jobs simply do what's required. Those who see careers will work harder for advancement when and where there is an opportunity to achieve it; less so where there's not. Those who feel they have a calling, gain life satisfaction from their work, and hence, are far more productive than either of the other two categories of workers.

As I thought through our own organization and its history, it became clear how compelling this analysis was. Those who are able to view their work as a calling are significantly more productive and more likely to be successful in any job than others who view their jobs as work or careers.

At ADVISA today, I believe the majority, if not all of our people (including myself) view their work as a calling. Looking back through our history, that's not necessarily the case. We've had people that viewed their work at ADVISA as a job and others who viewed it as a career. The visible productivity difference is huge.

Penny, our current office manager, views her work as a calling. She comes in to work (almost) every day looking forward to the work she does and the satisfaction she receives from doing what she does so very well. One could not ask for more in terms of dedication, service (both internally and externally) or execution. We have had several office managers and Penny is the first who takes her work to the calling level. What are the salient differences?

Our first office manager viewed her job as a steppingstone / career. For her, it was a way to gain entry into the business to show what she could do in other areas. Her work was exactly what was needed at the time and was good enough to get the office up and running effectively. We all knew it was not a long term fit – this was a career move and not a career calling.

We had another who viewed her work as a job. She talked about it as such and while she was pleasant and tried her best within the parameters of doing a job, her performance was what you'd expect from someone coming to work to do a job – it was mediocre – never beyond the minimum.

We've had other office managers who viewed their work as a career. They were more interested in the position or prestige of the job than in the pure satisfaction it could provide. Ultimately, they were not fits.

All of the above were good people who, in my opinion, tried their best to be successful within their view of success. But the office manager job at ADVISA was not a calling for them. My guesstimate is that Penny is at least 40% more productive than any of her predecessors. Why is the work a calling for her and why wasn't it for the other people?

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I think there are three reasons.

First, her Predictive Index® profile is exactly right for her job. She is a Scholar (Highest D, High A, High C, Lowest B) profile and the job demands exactly that. Each of our other office managers had profiles similar to the scholar, but none of them were exactly right for the job. Penny is.

Second, we all work to see Penny is treated in the manner a Scholar wants to be treated. She's given a lot of work that has to be done accurately. She's given significant independence to get it done in ways she sees fit. We try to provide a family atmosphere. She is given a fair amount of latitude to engage her creative spirit. She receives consistent, regular positive feedback about the work she does right. We work to manage her to satisfy her personal needs.

Third, Penny has determined that she wants her work to be a calling. I couldn't make her do that. She is the only one who could and she did.

That personal determination is critical, but work coming together as a calling probably doesn't take place unless the first two requirements are also met. That is, a person can want their work to be their calling (and many probably start their jobs with this quest in mind), but if in the process of learning their job and acclimating to their new work culture they are placed into a job that is not suited to their personality or if they are not treated in a way that meets their needs, it is very unlikely that their work will in fact become their calling. It will become a career, or worse, a job.

I'd suggest you go through the same mental exercise I did considering your employees. Think about those employees who work closest with you. Who falls into which category? Are there any surprises? Do you have people doing work that you think to be mundane who, nonetheless, view their work as a calling? And, if so, what's the implication of that in terms of that individual's productivity? And, does their having a calling for their work impact the work of their peers and subordinates? Do you have people who work in senior management who view their work as careers? Or, even worse, do you have senior level managers that view their work as jobs? Can you create an environment where significantly more people view their work as a "Calling"?

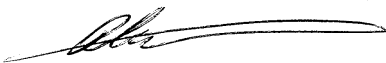
And finally, ask yourself, "Do I have a calling for my work? Or, do I view my work as a career? Or, even a job?" Unfortunately, I believe there are CEO's we work with who fall into all three categories.

If you're not "Called" to do your work, you have an obligation to try to change it. Because, where you are "Called", you will be more productive. And, the people around you will know it and see it and your calling will build a momentum that permeates your organization based on the reality that you love your work. Where you work at your business for the sheer joy of doing what you do, you will inspire your work force.

I think the same requirements exist for you to turn your work into a "Calling" as exist for your employees. You have to want to do what you do. You have to give yourself a job that satisfies your needs. You need to create a reward system around yourself that gives you what you need to achieve job satisfaction. As the CEO, you are both able and obligated to create that satisfaction for yourself. Just do it. You, your people and the results generated by your business will all be the better for your decision.

And after you are "Called", think about creating the situation where your people can be as well.

Thank you for reading.



Bob Wilson, President  
ADVISA