



The Power of People

Finding the Work Inside You

There are so many books, webinars, and experts today talking about finding your “purpose.” The word has become cliché, but the thirst we have to find it is no doubt a reflection of the dissatisfaction we feel in our lives and that includes our careers. Perhaps there is no immediate answer, and this can leave us feeling frustrated in our quest to find “it.” In terms of career, my experience and perspective have shown me that we are seeking what I call “the work inside you.”

Are You Really Trapped?

As people, we are constantly evolving, and it is natural that the way we engage in the workplace and how we bring that part of ourselves to the world will also change over time. I have helped many clients of all ages and in vastly different fields of work make a course correction in their work lives.

One obstacle that sticks out is the false perception of being trapped, locked into a current career situation. If someone has been working in oil and gas accounting for 20 years, their peers and friends will often advise them that there is no way they can change careers now. For the younger generation, their parents often give the traditional advice - go to college and get an “XYZ” degree so you’ll make money.

Personally, I don’t buy into these perceptions as I have made significant course corrections in my own career. As a small-town girl from Ohio, I moved halfway across the country to the big city of Houston; and at the ripe young age of 19, I found a job. I did not discover a career goal until my mid-20s when I decided to go back to college. I obtained a degree in economics and had a successful career as a consultant with an internationally recognized accounting firm. However, I discovered that I didn’t enjoy that type of work and made a transition into an internal business process consulting role. It was at that point that I discovered my passion and transitioned into the human resources field. After a successful run as an HR leader in a variety of organizations, at 47, I started my own business because it was more compelling to me to create streams of income. As an independent consultant, I could bring my HR skills to more than one organization and I could expand my work with individuals as a business and career coach.

What I bring to the workplace may be similar, but I evolved as I grew older, and how I engaged in my career needed to change too. The reality is you simply can’t afford to listen to the naysayers if you want to be happy. You must ask yourself and decide what’s true for you. So, who are you?

You Are Your Brand – Or Are You?

The brand is where it is at today. Everyone and everything is a brand – companies, products, celebrities, and you – you are a brand! It is common to realize that your external brand is not in sync with your internal brand. On the outside, we want to check the boxes – college degree, check



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– internship, check – work experience, check. And then we get the job, the career, and the lifestyle that goes with it. You have to eat and pay the bills after all.

But there is much more to you than your external brand or online presence. We've all probably known someone who looks great "on paper," but not so much in reality. The issue is that many are trying to "fit in" to meet a job description as well as feel part of a workplace community.

The inescapable fact is that you are also a human being with an internal brand. And that is what makes you "stand out" as your unique self. When your internal brand is not aligned with your external one, I'm willing to bet you are settling, stressing, and not giving the best of yourself to your career or the world. You may not realize it, but in hiding your "unique" self to "fit" a job description, you may in fact, not reveal the very thing that would differentiate you as the number one job candidate.

Synching Your Brand (How to "Fit In" and "Stand Out")

So, it is a paradox – how can you "fit in" and "stand out" at the same time? The primary problem is a lot of us don't know who we really are and what we really want, much less have any idea of what the work is inside of us. We're too busy working and living life to find out. The first step in finding the work within is to realize something is not right. You must authentically look inside to discover who you are and what is important to you, and then determine how to build your life and occupational goals around those truths.

What kind of environment and culture do you do your best work in? Do you want to work in a conservative, large, quiet corporation or are you more comfortable in a small growing technology company where there is no dress code, and you can spend time together in the game room at lunch? You may be an accountant, but what industry motivates and inspires you? Or are you an entrepreneur trapped in a corporate job? You may be someone who flourishes in a work-from-home job and its flexibility.

Often the answers to these questions are a process of discovery and the path may be winding. Sometimes you even have to try the shoes on to see if they fit. But having the courage and curiosity to open up to what moves you and what you are meant to do is step one in resolving the disconnect in your external and internal brands. Synching your brand is the only way your essence will come out and enable you to bring your whole self to the job. And guess what - it will make you "stand out" as the best accountant, lawyer, traffic director, chef, teacher, or techie and "fit in" with a community where you can fulfill the basic human need to belong.

A career shift might be as simple as changing industries or as major as changing your field of expertise. I worked with a client who gave up a long-term career in the petrochemical industry to explore other options. He completed culinary school and is happily working in the field. On the outside, it appeared he was giving up everything he worked for. But the truth is that everything he worked for had brought him to the moment of change. You can be you and it's okay! The available



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options are only as limited as your mindset. You can choose to be locked up, inauthentic, and less effective than you could be otherwise, or to leverage all that you are and unleash the work that is inside of you. It's a choice, and the choice is yours.

The Business Case for Finding The Work Inside You

If you believe the work inside you is simply some motivational feel-good concept, you are not understanding how enjoying what you do is beneficial to business. From the perspective of a business owner, I don't want you working for me if you're not excited about what you are doing. If you're in the wrong job, you are not just hurting yourself, but also impacting the productivity and profitability of a company. As a consultant, I am hired to help businesses find talent, engage their workforce, retain the best workers, and "manage out" those who are not performing at high levels. In today's competitive world, it is best for you and your employer to enjoy what you do, be fully engaged in your work, and love the company for which you are working. That's a win-win.

Six Questions to Ask Yourself about Your Work-Life

1. Are you thriving or just surviving at work? Are you inspired by what you do?
2. Do you have an awareness of the difference between your external image and internal brand? Are you being authentic?
3. Do you stand out from the crowd? Are you noticed and rewarded for your unique talents?
4. Do you like your job, but you're not sure "what's next" for you in your career?
5. Do you know how to recognize a dead-end job before you get into it?
6. Do you want to leverage your education and experience to create a future of *your* choice?

Whether you are interested in a career shift or strategies for moving ahead in your current environment, I can help you create and chart a plan for a successful transition into your desired career situation. I also provide career workshops for a more group-focused experience and am available for speaking engagements on a variety of career topics. Contact me at kcrawford@PeoplePossibilities.com to learn how People Possibilities can assist you.