

Reinvigorating Without Quitting

Sometimes, staying put is better than leaving. “Passion Catalyst” Curt Rosengren on how to refresh without hitting the road.

All too often when our careers have gotten into a rut – or worse yet, into a ditch – we see little more than the option of bailing out. After all, our thinking often goes, we can’t find what we want in this place.

But in reality, I’ve found that most people have more options than they think. We tend to look at jobs as cast in stone, when in truth they’re often quite malleable, especially over time. So, even if it’s not time to make a wholesale change, there is often a lot you can do to bring a spark back to your work – and to your life.

Here is my advice for making a change without making a change.

I. Take stock of yourself

In the Premiere Issue of *Worthwhile*, I outlined the process of finding the work you truly love (*Start Now! 6 Steps to Loving Your Career*). Even if you’re staying at your current organization, my advice is the same as I offered then: Start off with some deep self-exploration. Get to know what lights you up at a core level. Take a look at the things you love doing – work or play – and ask yourself, “Why do I love that?” Identify the underlying reasons things instill you with passion. Do you like problem-solving? Do you need variety? Do you feel most inspired when collaborating with a team? Do you love detail work? Keep those insights handy for Step III.

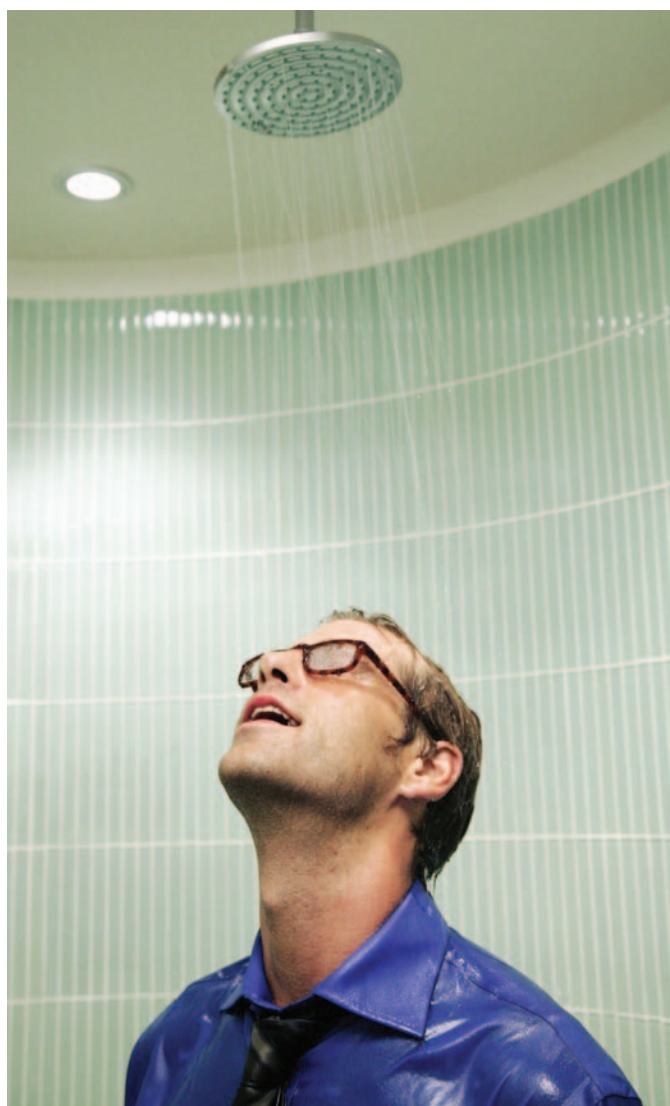
II. Take stock of your situations

Take a good hard look at your job. Break it down into what you like and what you dislike. When we’re unhappy with something, we tend to paint things with a broad negative brush. In reality, there are probably elements of both good and bad in your job.

Putting your finger on the good elements gives you the opportunity to build on them. As you identify the bad elements, you will find some you can change, and some you can’t. Breaking the situation down into the actual components takes you out of victim mode and gets you ready to do something about it.

III. Brainstorm ideas

Once you have done both Steps I and II, you can start brainstorming ideas for possible changes to make. Ask yourself:



- What do I enjoy about my current job? Where does my job align with what lights me up (from Step I)? How can I do more of that?
- Of the things I dislike, what can I change? What can't I change? What are some ideas for changing those things I can? Don't just lock yourself into a room and think; engage others

in your brainstorming. Ask friends, co-workers, even your boss if it's appropriate, to help you come up with ideas.

Don't be afraid to share the underlying characteristics you identified in Step I with your boss. Think of it as an instruction manual for what makes you tick, one that will make it that much easier for him or her to steer you in a direction that more fully leverages your potential (so everybody wins!).

IV. Question assumptions

We often make a multitude of assumptions without even realizing it. Look at your assumptions about what isn't possible and challenge them.

Start with the things you don't like but have decided you can't change. Ask yourself, is that really true? Sometimes we're simply conditioned to see things in a particular way and it becomes habit. Other times we simply need to look for creative solutions. Challenge yourself to come up with ways to change the things you don't think you can.

Maybe you love the big picture, but getting bogged down in the details drives you nuts. Could you swap some of those responsibilities with a co-worker who loves the detail work, but struggles with the big picture? Alternatively, could you team up with that person informally to support each other in the areas that each of you find challenging? Maybe you feel too isolated in your position, but are convinced that, "That's just the way this job is." What if you found a way to bring other people into the picture? That could mean finding ways to work together with people directly, or even simply being the catalyst for more social interaction among your co-workers.

As you examine possible changes, your internal censor and critic might jump in immediately and say, "That won't work. I can't do that. That's not realistic." Any time you hear that voice coming up, stop and ask, "Is that true? What are some ways I could make it happen?"

V. Take action and take control

Too many people wait passively for things to get better. Guess what? They stay stuck! The only person who is going to improve your situation is *you*. If you want to make a change, you've got to take control, and that means taking action. Start taking steps to make changes right away, even if they are only small ones. *Action creates opportunity*. Inaction only feeds your stuckness.

VI. Add variety to your life

Part of a feeling of being stuck and bored comes from experiencing the same ol'-same ol' day in and day out. Your brain can go into cruise control. Shake up your day a bit.

- Once a week, find a way to step out of your comfort zone. It will wake you up.

- Take on new responsibilities.
- Change your environment. Redecorate your office or cubicle.
- Seek a change of scenery. Work remotely for an afternoon. Take a long weekend for a mini-vacation. Stimulate your brain by breaking it out of its routine.
- Seek out new insights and new perspectives. Find a mentor. Take someone fascinating out to lunch.
- Eat lunch with new people.
- Learn something new (classes, training, etc.).
- Vary your work schedule.
- Introduce one new thing to your week each week.
- Seek out opportunities to meet new people. Join an organization or club that interests you.

VII. Find energy elsewhere

Pursue activities that are fun, meaningful and energizing outside of work. The energy you get from that will spill over into how you feel about life in general. No time? Make some. If you can jump-start activities that bring energy and meaning to your life, those will flow into your work. Conversely, if your well never has enough time to fill up while you're away from work, and drains while you're at work, it's only a matter of time before the bucket comes up dry.

VIII. Fuel yourself


Build habits into your life that will fuel a positive overall outlook.

- Exercise
- Eat right
- Drink lots of water
- Meditate
- Reduce/eliminate destructive habits (e.g., smoking, overeating, etc.)

IX. Change your mind-set

It may sound simplistic, but focusing on things each day to be positive about – a certain co-worker, the view from your office – can help turn around the attitude. Catch yourself when you're falling into the same worn groove of negativity. Choose to be happy.

Remember...

If you want to improve your situation, it won't happen on its own, and nobody is going to do it for you. It's all about making choices and taking action. 

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