

WHOSE JOB IS MOST IMPORTANT?

By Robert J. Tamasy

If someone asked you whose job is most important where you work, what would you say?

Would it be the CEO, chairman, or owner of the company? When evaluating jobs in terms of importance, we typically look at position on the corporate ladder, such as the top executive. Other factors can include compensation and productivity level. If a person is paid a lot, he or she must be worth it, right? And the top salesperson in any business would rank high. Without someone generating sales to keep business coming in and products or services going out, the company would eventually have to close its doors.

But there is another way of assessing one's importance in the workplace. I was reminded of this during a conversation with a manager at a company I've been working with over the last several months. The plant, which manufactures products outsourced by Fortune 500 companies, depends upon the consistent, quality work of many key people at various steps in the manufacturing process.

For instance, the procurement department must ensure that materials are available when needed to make a specific product. If the materials are not on hand, the production line cannot run. So people in procurement are very important. The manufacturing department also ranks high in importance – how can you sell a product you have not made? The maintenance department is poised to make critical repairs to machinery when necessary, so its work is of high importance as well.

Then there is the accounting department, which sends invoices, collects payments and pays suppliers. People in the payroll and human resources departments play crucial roles in terms of ensuring employees are paid promptly and receive benefits to which they are entitled, hiring new staff members when needed, and handling the process when employees retire or must be terminated.

So at that company – as with all organizations where we work – the most important job, or most important person, varies according to what must be done at the moment. Even the custodial staff can be considered most important when it comes to maintaining hygienic and well-supplied restrooms, disposing of trash and keeping floors vacuumed and cleaned. This helps us to realize two important principles:

Do not overestimate or underestimate your own importance. Even if you rank near the top of your company's organizational chart, your effectiveness and productivity are integrally related to the work performed by others. And if you hold a lower-level role in your organization, you are still important. Even the best, most experienced speaker must rely on someone else to make sure the microphone is ready and the sound system is functioning properly. *"Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the faith God has distributed to each of you"* (Romans 12:3).

Do not underestimate the importance of others. There is a temptation to disregard individuals of lower standing within a company, but every job is crucial to its success. Each person should be appreciated for what they do and their role in the overall corporate effort. *"Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility, consider others better than yourselves"* (Philippians 2:3).

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Reflection/Discussion Questions

1. When you first read the question, "Whose job is most important where you work?" what was your answer? Why?
2. How would you assess the importance of your own job?
3. What are your thoughts about the idea that every job – and every person performing that job – is important, and depending on the need of the moment, that particular job can actually be the most important within an organization?
4. Has this discussion caused you to reconsider how you regard the various jobs that are undertaken at your company – and the people that perform them? Is your response to "Whose job is most important where you work?" any different now? Explain your answer.

If you would like to look at or discuss other portions of the Bible that relate to this topic, consider the following brief sampling of passages:

Proverbs 12:9, 16:5,18, 18:12, 21:4, 22:4; Matthew 5:3-5; Philippians 2:4; 1 Peter 5:5-6;