

THE IMPORTANCE OF 'STAYING IN YOUR LANE'

By Rick Boxx

Speaking at our Summit, a conference sponsored by Unconventional Business Network, Terry Looper, author of Sacred Pace, made an interesting observation. He believes that everyone should strive to work in their areas of giftedness 80 percent of the time. We might term this “staying in your lane,” using the traffic metaphor of not frequently changing lanes while you are driving.

When we able to work in ways that make maximum use of our strengths, Looper said, we find greater joy and are more productive. He made an additional point about capitalizing on our giftedness that resonated with me. When we stray into areas in which we are not gifted – fail to stay in our lane – we deprive our team members of opportunities to utilize their own gifts and expertise. When we choose to do the work, our colleagues are best at doing, we deprive them of their joy.

What is so important about experiencing joy as we go about our work? Well, as one person has expressed it, “When you love what you do, you will never go to work another day in your life.” While our work has its inevitable elements of drudgery, tedium and difficulty, it does not have to be unpleasant.

An Old Testament book of the Bible explains this well: “A person can do nothing better than to eat and drink and find satisfaction in their own toil. This too, I see, is from the hand of God” (Ecclesiastes 2:24). In other words, since we spend much of our days and weeks working, we might as well expect to find fulfillment and joy in what we do.

One of the recurring topics in the Word of God is work – especially the Lord’s perspective on it – so we should pay attention to what we can learn from the Scriptures about work and our ability to enjoy it:

Work can bring desired rewards. One of the ironies of life is the people we see who would like to experience many of the good things that life has to offer, but for whatever reason think such rewards come without effort and determination. As the adage tells us, “Nothing ventured, nothing gained.” The Bible states it this way: “Lazy hands make a man poor, but diligent hands bring wealth”(Proverbs 10:4).

Work can bring us recognition. In a world in which so many people are satisfied with giving the bare minimum of expended time and effort, individuals who do their best and go beyond what is expected will be noticed. “Do you see a man skilled in his work? He will serve before kings; he will not serve before obscure men” (Proverbs 22:30).

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There is joy and gratification in teaming with others. Individual accomplishment can be gratifying, but there is something special about teaming up with other talented, gifted people to accomplish common goals and objectives. “Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their work. If one falls down, his friend can help him up. But pity the man who falls and has no one to help him up!... A cord of three strands is hard to break” (Ecclesiastes 4:9-12).

You would not walk into your workplace, pull out a gun and rob the company, would you? But in a sense, that is what we are doing when we venture beyond our areas of strength and giftedness and “trespass” on the skills and talents of others. Do not rob other members of your team of their joy. Stay in your lane – you might well discover that the whole (your combined effort) is greater than the sum of the parts.

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Reflection/Discussion Questions

1. How do you feel if you are driving and someone ahead refuses to stay in their own lane, weaving back and forth trying to inch ahead? Do you find that annoying that they would be so selfish and inconsiderate, not to mention potentially dangerous?
2. What is your reaction to the idea of “staying in your lane” in the workplace, recognizing the strengths and giftedness of your colleagues and peers and allowing them to maximize their contributions to the organization?
3. Can you think of examples of times when people you knew – perhaps even yourself – failed to heed this advice and interfered with the ability of others to perform their work to the best of their abilities? What was that like?
4. On the other hand, have there been times when you observed or personally participated in groups where people were obviously working in harmony and experiencing great joy and satisfaction in the process?

NOTE:

If you have a Bible and would like to read more, consider the following passages: Psalm 139:14; Proverbs 13:4, 16:26, 18:9; Ecclesiastes 5:18; Luke 10:1-2

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