



Maintaining Your Passion: How to love your job as much as you did the day you married it

By Dana Kader Robb

*"You've lost that loving feeling...
and it's gone, gone, gone...
and you can't go on..."*

Does that song remind you of the scene with Tom Cruise and Kelly McGillis in *Top Gun* or does it just make you think about your job? If it's the latter, I think we may have a point of concern.

There are people who find a career by accident. They sort of fall into something and just keep doing it because the money is decent or the benefits aren't bad or they can't be bothered to find a new job. We're not talking about those people. We're talking about people with passion for their work.

Remember that feeling when you first discovered what you wanted to "do"? You were sure you could make a difference and that you'd love going to work every day. Just like a new romance, the passion for one's work is usually at its strongest at the beginning. And, again noting the similarities, the majority of us fall into a sort of comfortable sameness after a while. It's not a bad thing, mind you, if you know that your work is still a good fit. You just wonder how to bring back the original excitement.

Here are some tips on finding – or even better, not losing – that loving feeling.

Acknowledge the interruptions.

I believe that it is almost impossible to

be passionate about more than one thing at a time. For example, I know women who ran successful, growing companies or non-profits and then got pregnant. Suddenly, the 24/7 commitment of motherhood ran head-on into the all-consuming nature of business ownership. Some found a way to balance work with raising children and others decided to follow their newfound passion, selling or closing their companies. If there is something new that has your attention, ask yourself if it's going to completely change your focus or if you can just adjust and balance.

Seek out other passionate people. Author Tom Peters says, "You have to find somebody exciting to play with. It's not a matter of working it up the chain of command and going according to the rules; it's finding a fellow freak. Finding somebody who can get as passionate about your screwy idea as you are about your screwy idea. That's what you need. It starts out with that first recruit."

Do what you did well. Early on, you probably went after projects that made you feel effective and excited. Those early experiences can provide clues about the type of effort you find fulfilling. Then find a way – invent one, if you have to – so that you can be involved in that sort of work again.

Get engaged. Rather than concentrating on what seems like lost passion, define more specifically what excites you. Do you want to make a difference in people's lives, or do you love to take on high-risk projects? When you are doing work that engages you, the passion will follow naturally.

Seek new challenges. People who aren't challenged in their work can end up with a "been there, done that" attitude that leads to serious blahs. Avoid the doldrums by looking for new challenges within and outside of business. Look for opportunities that test your abilities and give you a chance to learn something new that you can take back to your work.

Measure yourself. Make sure that you can see the results of your efforts. It's hard to stay passionate when you are just one of many parts in a process. Do you know what the other "parts" are doing? Can you improve the outcome? How can the parts work together for a better whole? I live near the Harley-Davidson plant. Many (most?) of their employees own motorcycles and almost all wear Harley clothing regularly. And I have never met a more passionate group of people than Harley owners! They're not just a "part" of the process; they ARE the process.

