

Career Advice

CARA HEILMANN, SOCIETY FOR HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT (SHRM) HAWAII CHAPTER – LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE CO-CHAIR; CEO – READY RESET GO; AUTHOR, 'THE ART OF FINDING A JOB YOU LOVE: AN UNCONVENTIONAL GUIDE TO WORK WITH MEANING'

How to integrate your career and passions



Although some may think that finding a job you love is too idealistic, it is, in fact, attainable. Just like with a lot of things in life, you can achieve a goal once you put your heart into it. You may even be surprised at how easy it can be.

Q. How do I start the process of looking for meaningful work? I don't know what job that would be.

A. It starts with reflection. Think of times in your career when you felt successful, or when you were very excited about a project. Think back to instances when you couldn't wait to share good news about a project, or of moments when you were very proud of yourself. Write these down. Then, find common threads. Often, there are several connecting themes woven throughout these moments.

Q. What are my next steps?

A. Once you have a vague direction — yes, it is fine if it is vague — then test it. Say, for example, that you've realized you love working with children. At work, you volunteer to organize the "Bring Your Child to Work" day, or you volunteer every week at your church to watch the children, etc. Test out a thread (I call it a glimmer) of working with children.

Q. What do you mean by "test?"

A. When you test out your interests it provides information you otherwise may have overlooked and may even bring about personal realizations. Maybe you really like helping kids stay healthy, but you are not all that excited about working in a hospital caring for children. Knowing what doesn't feel right is important, too.

Q. Then what should I do?

A. Once you've narrowed a direction, identify the steps to get there and ask yourself the right questions. Can you move in that direction in your current company? Could you stay and just create more of these programs where you're at? Is that enough for you, or will you need to change jobs? Then, take steps in the right direction. It might take a couple of moves before you are there, but you will feel that it was worth the effort once you reach a path that is meant for you.