

Happy Holidays and Happy Work

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All my life, I have been researching, teaching and elaborating applied models of a new interpretation of work. This has meant rethinking of the traditional work ethic of the past century. I have no doubt that Western economies require, on an emergency basis, to develop a positive theory of work. We have to overcome alienation from work, increased emphasis on leisure in spite of difficult times, widespread over dependency on government handout, excessive self-indulgence, and family pressures conflicting with career obligations, insufficient employment opportunities, and in general, decreasing commitment to hard work and diminished loyalty to organizations. Last week, a good friend mine was sharing with me that one of the many indications of this idiosyncrasy is people being late to work... and the relaxation of work discipline... Many recent studies trying to establish the degree to which the prosperity of the previous century undermined the zest for work.

A recent survey found that 52% of the Puerto Ricans felt at their best when relaxing rather than working and maybe this can explain why we are very happy people. Perhaps the priority has been that of relaxation! As a culture we must combat any form of laziness!

As a rule, when prosperity rises, the work ethic disintegrates. Conversely, as unemployment rises, absenteeism diminishes or at least it should. When prosperity is threatened, the work ethic has to improve. Nevertheless, people spend at work their best hours, days, and months, which are their finest years of their lives.

A word of alert is that the results of work without meaning are depressed, even wasted, lives and ineffective, noncompetitive organizations.

Today, we all need to work hard on turning around the work ethic. Every person faces the challenge of work responsibility to make a root leadership decision: **TO CREATE A LIFE OF MEANINGFUL WORK, A COMMITMENT TO WORTHINESS, AND A DEVOTION TO HIGHER STANDARDS.** If that person is a leader, a manager or a supervisor, then only to the degree that he or she releases heroism, inspiration, creativity, and high standards in his or her fellow workers is that person doing the job for which a salary is collected.

The new work culture decision to bond meaning with work can only go two ways: resign from work and choose something else that leads to authentic meaning, or- and this is what really matters- invest with profound and self chosen meaning the work that you are doing right now or could be doing. This is the sanctification of work. It's about making the decision to sanctify the work you do not because the organization requires it (that of course it does), but because the salvation of your soul demands that what you do every day be crafted like a poem, be composed like a work of art and illuminated by the halo of profound significance. This is the renewal of the work culture.

Kahlil Gibran said it very well:

Work is love made visible. And if you cannot work with love but only with distaste, it is better that you should leave your work and sit at the gate of the temple and take alms of those who work with joy.

If we follow the beauty of the above logic, then it is possible to understand the proposition or the principle that labor is life. It is not something irksome or degrading. Work is something happy and noble. This statement needs to be taken to heart and more and more thoroughly learned. We have to teach kids early the blessing and dignity of work.

Mental, physical and spiritual activity is the essence of life! To my good friends with whom I share this ethos, I say this now: the complete termination of work is death. Ease and death are closely related. The more there is activity, the more abounding is life!

With a profound sense of humbleness, hope and optimism, I can say as a brain-worker that the human being with unceasing mental activity is the longest-lived person in the community. For the agricultural labor, the gardener, the person of unceasing physical activity comes next with length of years. The healthy minded people, and the pure hearted and spiritual persons love work as an expression of a higher to service, and of their creativity, and they are happy on their works. They never complain of being overworked.

This I share with my readers. It is impossible for a human being to be overworked if he or she lives a sound, significant, productive and pure life!

Last week we had the honor and great privilege to listen to the newest member of the U.S. Supreme Court, Associate Justice Sonia Sotomayor, saying that she had a busy schedule and she was happy! She added that her

definition of success was doing right her work and invest her life in a process of continuous improvement!

So let us, as a society, get rid of the mind-set of being overworked. Nobody should be afraid of hard work, regarding it as an enemy or an illness, or something leading to a breakdown by doing too much. Work is a healthy-bestowing friend.

The industrious human being, who loves to work, and the person of true dignity, who glorifies work, is both on their way to joy and happiness, if they are not already there.

These Holidays, let us rejoice in our work; let us rejoice that we have the increased strength and the capacity to work. Of course, work has to be coupled with family affairs. It also has to be connected to learning, education and community ventures.

Blessed is the man that has found his work. At the end of this intense year, we wish to all our friends, students, customers and stakeholders, happy Christmas and happy work, and our full solidarity to those struggling to find one.

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