

2014 OSRT Penn-Hu-Mac-Par Lecture

Passion for Radiologic Technology

To begin, let's start by thinking about people who dislike their job. What are signs that someone is not happy at work? First, they look as if they are bored as you can tell through their actions. They spend a lot of time on the computer, perhaps looking for sales, scanning Social Media or maybe even looking for a vacation destination. They are the last ones to clock-in and the first ones in line to clock-out. They use every possible sick and vacation day as soon as they accrue them and they never sign-up for overtime. They always complain about having a headache while working due to the stress of doing something that makes them so unhappy.

I am sure we can all think of several people we know that meet some of these criteria. Don't you wish that these people would find a job that makes them happy so everyone around them would be happier too?

Now think about someone who loves their job. A German author, Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, reporting findings of a survey he conducted in his bestselling book, Flow. His survey focused on a group of Germans who loved their work. They were engineers, teachers, researchers, publicist, politicians, and people who worked with animals. He discovered four common themes in these individuals: their level of competence, they enjoyed a variety of activities, independence, and they embraced challenge. These are your co-workers, the ones who are the first to arrive and the last to go home. They probably have lots of vacation time and rarely use a sick day.

CBS news reported on a survey done by the University of Pennsylvania where they followed social workers who scored high on a happiness test. They found they were happy because of flexible schedules, a strong sense of engagement in their work, a feeling of being appreciated and valued, having a high degree of freedom built into their jobs, a pleasant physical workspace, having a diversity of responsibility and having a mentor to talk about their lives. Some of these are the same as the ones from the Flow book, such as, independence or flexible schedules and diversity or variety. It seems these could be factors for happiness in any job. Which brings the question: is there a difference between being happy at work and having a passion for your work? You know, like getting involved with your local, state or national organizations or by going the extra step in your work; perhaps passion starts with happiness. I do believe you can't have passion unless you are first happy with your chosen profession.

I wish to share with you some of my journey and why I loved being a Radiologic Technologist. When I worked in the hospital as a diagnostic technologist, I took great pride in everything I did. I always tried to put my patients first and that included shielding and trying my best to keep repeats to a minimum. I learned as much as I could from the Radiologist so when they asked for something I knew exactly how and why to do it. I wanted to be the best at what I did and so I went the extra step with everything.

I loved taking care of patients. I did IVP's for many years which gave me a chance to work closely with patients sometimes for three or four hours at a time. I imaged many patients who suffered with chronic stones so I grew a really good relationship with them. I always tried to remember something special about each one so I could make them feel important when they came for their procedure. Even though I liked the patient, most of all I loved identifying abnormal pathology. The best part of the job for me was pulling that piece of film out of the processor and finding something wrong. It could be a fracture, dislocation, kidney stone, polycystic renal disease or a pneumothorax. It didn't matter how many times I saw a disease, it always felt like the first. Later in my career I left the hospital to work with students at the University. I always told my students how much I loved being a Technologist but I loved teaching too. In fact the last 5 or 6 years of my career I never used an alarm clock. I loved my work so much I always woke up way before I needed to be there. I guess I had the variety in my work and I always felt a strong sense of engagement and a diversity of job duties to keep things interesting.

Now that you have heard my story--what about you? Think about why you became a Technologist? I remember one of my instructors asking this question on the first day of class as a student. One girl in my class actually said she wanted to marry a doctor. It got a good laugh but I am sure there are many females and males who go into this

field for that exact reason. Still today, I remember my answer. I said, "I want to go into a technical field that would be ever-changing". I don't think I realized at the time just how much change I was about to experience. When I was a student, we were still using Xeroradiography for mammograms and direct exposures cassettes for arthritis imaging. I have to admit, the pneumoencephalogram was a bit before my time--by at least a few months! When I was a student, I never thought there would come a day without film or darkrooms. We were even printing CT images so the Radiologist could read them from film. I think the hardest change was moving some of the radiologists to read from a computer screen rather than from hard-copy film.

We could spend an hour or more talking about all the changes that have occurred since I first became a technologist but, that is not what I want to talk about. I want everyone here to stop and think about the reason they became a technologist. Was it for the technology? Was it a strong desire to help others? Was it the excitement of being the first person to know the diagnosis? Was it for the money?-(I left time here for a laugh). Was it because you liked working in the dark, or was it because you wanted to do sonograms on babies? I think I heard this reason most often as an advisor for the Radiologic Technology program at the University of Cincinnati.

I wonder if anyone here thought they would be president of a state or national society when they chose this career path? The Radiologic Technology site on Facebook asked this question in February. The answers varied from fractures, trauma, aid in diagnosis of patients, job security, a few actually said money, but, most said, for the patient. One person said "endless opportunities, state of the art technology and most important to be the best part of someone's worst day." This was the one I liked the most.

According to the US News List of 100 Best jobs, Radiologic Technology did not make the top ten, it did not make the top fifty, it was number fifty-six positioned between medical secretary and bill collector. The top ten list started with number one as software developer, computer systems analyst, dentist, nurse practitioner, pharmacist, registered nurse, physical therapist, physician, web developer, and dental hygienist. The criteria used for this list was based on the number of expected job openings, advanced opportunities, career fulfillment and salary. So, passion indeed was a consideration in the list. Why would registered nursing and physical therapy, both health care professions, make the top ten ahead of RTs. According to the American Nurses Association in 2008, there were 3.6 million registered nurses. The Physical Therapy Association only listed 88,000 current members while the American Registry of Radiologic Technologist registers 300,000 technologists. So the number of members did not influence the list.

According to an article in Forbes Magazine, a survey reported by the University of Chicago listed the 10 happiest jobs started with clergy, firefighters, physical therapist, authors, special education teachers, teachers, artist, psychologist, financial services sales agents, and operating engineers. The experts believe these people feel worthwhile with their jobs. Maybe this is why so many people answered the question to the Radiologic Technology survey that the reason they are a technologist is to take care of patients. The act of patient care is what makes our profession worthwhile.

People really want to be happy at work and this is thought to be the reason why over 300,000 people read the article about the 10 happiest jobs. The article caused Forbes to write an additional article on what makes us happy at work. In this study, they surveyed 100,000 employees with questions about their jobs. The top five happiest with their jobs were 1) software quality assurance engineers, 2) (tie) executive chefs and property managers, 4) bank tellers, and 5) warehouse managers. This motivation can be explained by Dan Pink's book, Drive which says what we want most is the desire to direct our own lives, the ability to improve and have a purpose. Now this one makes a lot of sense except why are there not any health care professions on this list?

Whatever the reason you became a technologist--why are you still one? Think about your journey and how you got to where you are today?

What gets your blood flowing? I am very passionate about our profession and I wish everyone who has RT behind their name could feel that same passion. Wouldn't it be great if we could teach passion like we teach professionalism or positioning; unfortunately, we can't put that fire in people. That is the fire that makes them go that extra step to give top quality patient care, shield every patient, or participate in professional societies.

There are people who believe you can teach passion. The theory is that everyone is passionate about something and the employer or teacher should find what that is and push the person toward those passions. This is probably true if everyone selects the correct major or field of work to match their passion. I know most of my fellow technologists sitting here tonight know what I am talking about. It is the reason you are here instead of getting your CE credits at this meeting and quickly going home. The number of technologists registered for this meeting compared to the number present in this room is a big difference. I blame most of it on the lack of passion which makes me very sad. I am very proud to be a member of the OSRT which has more passionate members than most other States. You don't have to look very far to see evidence of this as we have among us Presidents of national societies such as the ASRT and AEIRS in addition to numerous committee members of both of these societies as well as many others including the JRCERT.

Forbes magazine states that 70% to 80% of people hate their job. When I think about all those people who go to work every day doing jobs that make them so unhappy it breaks my heart. I feel so blessed to be one of the lucky ones to have found a profession that made me so happy. I do think passion can rub off so maybe that is why we have so many dedicated people in Ohio and that is why I am proud to be one of you!

Thank you!

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