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Columnist

Professional Development

Optimizing your job satisfaction

If you're feeling a lot of job stress or dissatisfaction, it could be because your Task Quotient is out of whack. The Task Quotient (TQ™) is the time you spend doing tasks you prefer vs. those you dislike doing.

A TQ assessment will show your level of job dissatisfaction based on the work you're doing: routine tasks, trouble-shooting tasks, and project tasks.

The Developmental TQ assessment, developed by Target Training Intl., looks at three areas: your Ideal TQ (how you want to do the job), your Actual TQ (how you're doing the job), and your Optimized TQ (how the job should be done to optimize your work distribution). For most people all three are different.

Research by TTI shows most people prefer to do Project Tasks, which is work that is highly predictable and does not have to be done immediately. By contrast, routine tasks are also highly predictable and do have to be done immediately. Trouble-shooting tasks are highly unpredictable and also have to be done immediately.

The bottom line is if your ideal and actual TQ are considerably different you may experience decreased productivity, stress, and poor performance. The result may be that you lose your job or quit to find more satisfying work.

So, what can you do to bring your job duties more in line with your ideal job? First, the report suggests, keep a detailed record each day for one week of what you're doing. Write down the time spent and what type of tasks you're doing – routine, trouble-shooting, or project. One task could be a combination of two. Then find ways to increase or decrease the types of tasks you're doing.

The TQ assessment's creator, Dr. Kevin Gazzara, suggests specific things you can do if you have:

Too much routine activity – create project activity to increase the efficiency of the routine tasks to reduce the amount of routine work.

Too much trouble-shooting task activity – create project activity to identify the sources and patterns of the unpredictable problems, and put a process in place to reduce the trouble-shooting tasks.

Too much project task activity – perform routine and trouble-shooting tasks necessary on a more frequent basis that is required to accomplish elements of the project. These are commonly described as milestones or subtasks of the project.

He also says you can modify your tasks into other task types. For example, if you have too much routine work, you can *set* personal challenges to increase the quality or creativity of the work or complete it faster. Now you've changed it into a trouble-shooting task.

If you *plan* the same personal challenges, you've changed routine work into a project task.

What if you have little or no influence over the tasks you're required to do? Talk to your manager. Most managers are (or should be) concerned more with your job output and performance than the type of tasks you do. Managers appreciate employees who focus on how the job can be done more efficiently. Perhaps together you can find ways to bring your TQ more in line with your ideal job. It may be that you can share, swap, or rebalance tasks with other employees.

Every company wants employees who are happy in their jobs. So it's in the company's best interest, as well as your own, to increase your job satisfaction.

If you'd like more information on how the TQ assessment works, send me an email with the words "TQ info" in the subject line.

Annette Estes is a Certified Professional Behavioral and Values Analyst, Coach, and Consultant. She is a professional speaker and author of the book, *Why Can't You See it My Way? Resolving Values Conflicts at Work and Home*. Annette won Matrix Awards in 2004-05 from Women in Communications for her columns in *The Easley Progress*. The Estes Group is celebrating its 15th anniversary this year. Contact Annette through her website at www.CoachAnnette.com.

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