



Exploring Employee Disengagement: Views From a HR Expert

It has always disturbed me to realise that the majority of the people I have met from all walks of life since I joined the world of work in my 20s are dissatisfied with their careers. The reasons range from being in the wrong career, toxic working environments to reward systems that are deemed inappropriate.

I believe however that we are on this earth to thrive, not to get by or merely exist. We are incredible, magical beings who deserve better and since we spend most of our lives at work it is in our best interests to make the experience as fulfilling and as worthwhile as is humanly possible.

I spent some time with the Human Resources Director of Sanlam Investments, Raymond Schkolne, to talk about employee disengagement. Could he share his significant experience and give advice to disengaged professionals on how to learn to love what they are doing or where they currently are? Changing careers is not feasible for some people but there are ways in which one can still have a positive experience in the workplace.

Raymond Schkolne's tips:

- **Do what you love versus love what you do**

You may have envisaged doing something but find yourself not doing it; once you're in a situation however, there is a daily grind, rigour and discipline that has to be applied. It is best to deal with that reality with grace. Often the attitude of the disengaged professional may be, "I was meant for bigger and different things" thus becoming choosy. Rather keep the seat warm and find a way to deliver. Whatever you find yourself doing, do it very well because the ticket to the next role is how well you do in the current one. And you might find yourself loving it.

- **Volunteer for the "crappy" jobs**

Citing the Tom Peters quote to, "volunteer for crappy jobs" Raymond advises disengaged professionals to stand up and do what others are not keen to do. People sense your energy; volunteer for the not-so-popular tasks and find a way to enjoy it. If you have the proverbial glass half full attitude and take the bull by the horns, the fulfilment (and recognition) will come.



- **Engagement is about disposition**

People that have a positive attitude are usually engaged and give more effort. Raymond cited a scary statistic from a global Gallup study* on employee engagement which found that less than 13% of working people are engaged or plugged in. A good disposition is a worthwhile quality to cultivate.

- **It's sometimes not about your career**

Dissatisfaction with one's life in general is likely to spill over and, like a toxic poison, infects careers. Take responsibility for your broader life, particularly your interior life.

Reflect on questions like, "how plugged in and sensitized am I?" or "why am I not plugged in?" and you might experience fulfilment with a career that you did not initially envisage. Self-awareness, the reflective process, recognizing and developing what Raymond calls, "the internal locus of control" all empower one to engage with their work productively.

*<http://www.gallup.com/strategicconsulting/164735/state-global-workplace.aspx>