

Routine: Making It Fun!

In working with a client this month, it once again became clear the importance of breaking-up routines with creative and fun ways to track progress!

My client group consists of motor insurance professionals. Each day there is a steady stream of customers anxious to discuss their needs. Phones ring, email pours in, and the receptionist continually assigns face-to-face meetings. It's a busy place with a certain "same-ness" to every day.

If you have small children, you might be familiar with the hit TV show "The Backyardigans". During one episode, the characters end up working on a factory assembly line. They quickly become bored and lethargic until one of the team suggests they create a song to sing while they work, leading to fun and engagement. Before they know it, their energy is up and they are having a great time making pies! A little imagination can go a long way!

During a recent client visit, I noticed similar strategies. The sales agents were setting up friendly rivalries for various tasks; for example, agents competed to see who could get the most referrals. It was both good for business and a fun game for the agents. Each month their numbers are shared and fun prizes awarded.

One new agent shared that she likes to create "self-competition" through seeing how fast she can clear files. She lets the filing pile up to a certain height; then, she sees how fast she can make it disappear, improving her system with each round, and her timing as well!



To add to our client's ideas, here are two more examples from other clients:

- A government revenue-collection agency wanted their agents to understand the impact of their work. Each day, agents would log-on to their systems and see a list of files they had to close for the day. It involved phoning people who owed money and arranging for payment. Each day, more files and more phone calls. One of the agents decided that they would begin tracking the total dollars collected and run a total so people could see tangible progress. More importantly, they tied the dollar amount to government programs. For example, the agents would get a message at the end of the day which might say: "You collected \$50,000.00 today which will provide a needy family with a home this year!" Talk about understanding your contribution and giving your job meaning!

- Another client wanted to promote wellness so they started a walking club and made their target walking across Canada while never leaving their city! How? They created a virtual map and had people report in their individual weekly contributions (e.g., 5 kms this week). The coordinator calculated the total distance and moved the marker forward on the map while sending an email announcement: "We made it to Winnipeg this week!"

Remember, tracking your progress in fun ways can make routine activities much more fun and will help the passion at work to flow!

A Personal Story

Normally our newsletter is dedicated to client stories. In this issue, I would like to share a personal story and tell you a little bit about my mother, as my ability to sustain my passion is rooted in what I learned from her during my lifetime.

My mother began her career working at a university in a small town on the east coast of Canada. Her work did not bring her to a classroom or an office. She began her day in the student residences as a housekeeper. Later, when I was born, she stayed at home to care for me and our home but when I got to be school-aged, she began working in private homes, as a housekeeper. She did this throughout my school years.

Mom was always passionate about her work; some days more than others, but I never remember her griping and I know she never coasted. If anything, she had a tendency to obsess a little about the details of her work.

How was it that she was able to stay engaged doing work most consider menial?

In reflecting on her comments, stories and habits over the years, I have come to a conclusion that her passion was driven by primarily 3 elements:

1. **Her Values:** With a grade nine education, Mom was very conscious of those "educated" individuals for whom she often worked. She respected and appreciated education. However, she never under-valued herself. She often would say: "I may not be educated but I can walk down the street holding my head high." What she meant was that she did her best to live and work aligned to her personal values. Having observed her decisions over the years, I would have to agree! Personal values provide the highest level of meaning for people at work and in life. Without aligning to them, authentic PassionFlow is practically impossible.
2. **Her Pride:** Mom was uncompromising about the quality of work she expected from herself. She took pride in going beyond the surface and in attending to the details. She, on occasion, trained other housekeepers. She would sometimes come home and say, "They don't see the work." Her eye for detail and her standard of measure for a clean home was rarely matched by other housekeepers. She was a strong proponent of an "honest day's work" for your pay. She was rarely adequately

compensated, in my opinion, but what mattered more to my mother was a job well done -- by her standards, not by others', including her clients'. In many ways, she worked for herself, accomplishing goals set out by herself; the results, enjoyed by her clients.

3. **Her Contributions:** Mom's clients were quite diversified but there was a common demographic that emerged over the years: elderly, often widowed, women. It went, without being said, that the service Mom provided these women enabled them to stay in their homes. She knew that she supported a quality of life that might not be possible without her help. She often crossed the boundaries of housekeeping to ensure this. One striking example of this was her commitment over many years to administer a client's medicine (subcutaneous shots) twice a day. Mom didn't drive and our town had no public transportation so this meant walking to and from the woman's apartment twice a day. As a result, her client didn't have to go to a nursing home and was able to live her life in her own home. Mom never looked for kudos but she understood the impact of her contribution.

My lessons learned from my mother's work? Don't let society or others dictate what's meaningful to you and determine how you experience progress. Decide for yourself! Fulfillment will be much more accessible.