

Focus on What Is Truly Important & Frame for Progress

Over the years of researching passion in the workplace, we have discovered that there are two core skills in sustaining your passion for your work.

1. The ability to focus; and, at regular intervals, re-focus for meaning; and,
2. The ability to frame; and, at regular intervals, re-frame for progress.

A Client Story

Bob is a professional speaker and trainer. To support his clients, he wanted to develop an online planning tool. He began the project with great gusto and set a 6-month timeline for himself. He hired a software developer and began to research the technology and design the content. Bob had never undertaken such a project before; so the learning curve was steep and getting the specifications right was tricky. As the weeks and months passed, Bob found the software developer worked more slowly than anticipated and required more supervision than anticipated. Bob also had other projects to which he needed to attend, in order to maintain his revenue base. He was enthusiastic and he worked hard.



However, the 6-month deadline came and went. Bob continued to push the project forward but became increasingly frustrated with the developer and with himself for not working quickly enough. Tensions grew and some friction developed between Bob and the software engineer. Nonetheless, the project did end successfully after a total of 12 months.

Bob called me to share his exasperation that the project had taken so long. He was disappointed in himself and frustrated that he had not hired the “right guy” to help him. Bob had enjoyed the project, at times, but had more frequently been Griping, Rushing or Obsessing; the dominant phase of his experience had not been PassionFlowing.

Grounding Bob in Reality

I asked Bob a few simple questions:

- Were you pleased with the end result? Bob declared that he thought the online tool was fantastic, and better than anything of its kind in the marketplace.
- When you originally set your deadline, how did you determine 6 months was reasonable and realistic? What knowledge was the basis of this decision? Bob paused and said that he simply had thought it was reasonable, as 6 months was usually plenty of time for many of his projects.
- And, did this timeline take into account your revenue-generating projects and personal commitments? Bob paused again and said that he probably hadn't considered the entirety of his commitments.

- When obstacles emerged, how did he handle them? Bob said that given how much he'd needed to learn to work on the project and given how many technical challenges were impossible to predict, he felt he'd done a decent job of solving problems.
- Final question: What was the cost of being 6 months late? Bob said lost opportunities but no other true consequences.

It became obvious to me and to Bob that he'd been holding himself accountable for a deadline based on complete lack of experience and one that didn't take other priorities into account. In short, it wasn't grounded in reality!

The Cost to Bob

The more interesting question is at what cost? Bob's focus on missing his deadline distracted him from maintaining a focus on the meaning behind the project tasks and timeline. He was not "remembering" that he was creating a great value-added product for his clients. His mind, instead, was making a lot of noise about how he was falling further and further behind this unrealistic, self-imposed deadline.

And, perhaps even more importantly, because he had neglected to frame for progress, he felt he had failed! He had missed his deadline. Therefore, he had managed the project poorly and had failed.

Re-framing for progress would have had a very different outcome: He would have been able to authentically celebrate his success. He would have seen progress on many levels, both during and at the end of the project. He would have acknowledged that he had increased his knowledge substantially. He would have seen that this one product, brought to market in a professional manner, was laying the foundation for a new and exciting business model based on internet marketing. And, he would have allowed himself to stand back and spend time resting and admiring his creation.

When we maintain a focus on what's truly meaningful and we train ourselves to see the progress (or take action to achieve progress), we will be in PassionFlow ... guaranteed! Everything else is a distraction.

A Short Story about Fundraising

I was on an American Airlines flight in October and a flight attendant made an announcement that she was a volunteer for UNICEF and was currently involved in a fundraising campaign. I have been on many flights involving fundraising but this flight attendant distinguished herself.

Before she began walking through the cabin, she gave us important information: She said that for every dollar collected for UNICEF, \$0.93 went directly to those in need. An impressive fact!

She then successfully moved down the aisle speaking to passengers and collecting money. A few minutes later, she came back on the PA system with the following announcement: "I want to thank you for giving \$155.00. You have just saved lives. With this money, we can buy 22 mosquito nets and provide 1020 immunization shots. You've made a difference this afternoon." Wow! The atmosphere in the cabin completely changed and everyone, whether you gave or not, felt they had contributed to meaningful progress!

People give generously when they believe it makes a difference!