



**Michael Kinsman:
Why Do You Go
To Work?**



WORKPLACE

BY MICHAEL KINSMAN

WHY DO YOU go to work? Everyone has a quick-and-dirty answer to that question: money.

But life is not that simple. Not many of us go to work only for the money we earn. There are deeper motivations in progress, whether we choose to recognize them or not.

Some of us work out of duty to our families, expectations heaped on us by society, for the social good, for the challenge of excelling, or any combination of an endless stream of motivations.

Whatever it is that is driving us should be pulled to the surface, says Stephen R. Covey, a Utah-based management consultant who has long labored to help workers understand why they work and how they can become more efficient.

"Everybody needs a personal mission statement," says Covey. "You have to identify what you are about and what your values are."

"When people do that, they build an internal sense of worth and guidance. Then they aren't running scared."

Mission statements, of course, are popular in the corporate world, but Covey believes that individuals have the opportunity to put more direction and order into their lives by drafting an individual mission statement.

Covey, who was in San Diego this week to lecture at the Masters of Executive Excellence seminar series, said many of us already have our values set out in our hearts and minds, but need to clarify them in writing.

"In a sense, you may already have your values in line, but you may not have thought about this closely," he said. "The exercise of writing this down on paper allows you to clarify your thoughts."

Covey said that a mission statement shouldn't be thrown together, but should come as a result of months-long simmering of thoughts about what you want out of life. He said six months isn't too long to weigh your values since the true value of the exercise rests not in the actual mission statement, but rather in clarifying your values and how you want them to shape your life.

Once you have prepared a personal mission statement, Covey said you should move forward and develop a mission statement for your job. To be effective, your job mission statement will have to strike an accord between your values and those of the company you work for.

You might find that your work goals are similar to your personal goals, in which case you are lucky. If the mission statement for your job seems vastly different than your personal mission statement, you at least have written them down so you can examine the discrepancies and set about separating your work priorities from your personal priorities.

Unfortunately, Covey said, this is all easier said than done.

Covey said people tend to shy away from dealing with the major issues in their lives unless there is an overriding need to do so.

"Most of us won't do it unless we are hurting," Covey said. "We don't want to work on chronic problems. Usually, it takes marriage problems or losing a job or something similar before people are willing to deal with these things."

But while most of us will wait for those upsetting moments to wrench free our values, it is the intensity of those restless situations that allow us to focus more clearly on our lives.

"This stirs up the conscience," Covey said. "When people are able to do that, they often discover a hunger to make a difference."

Having a handle on your values is one way of promoting job sanity. If you know why you are working, you are better equipped to deal with the turbulence of external events, Covey said.

Layoffs, changes in management direction, industry downturns and other unsettling work circumstances are more easily managed at the personal level if workers already have their values defined.

"People will work harder if they know why they are working," Covey said. "They will work more efficiently and be harder on themselves than bosses will."

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