

Five Keys To Satisfaction In Any Career ㊦

(NAPSA)—U.S. worker productivity grew by 2.6 percent in the fourth quarter of 2003, recent U.S. Department of Labor statistics show, which is part of a trend in which the nation's pared-down work force continues to do more with less. But America's workers are showing signs of wear and tear, according to one career expert.

U.S. workers feel overwhelmed by the increasing complexity of the work environment, ineffective on the job and powerless to control their professional destiny, says Richard Smith, co-author of "The 5 Patterns of Extraordinary Careers: The Guide for Achieving Success and Satisfaction."

"Productivity in absolute terms is up, but I would contend that productivity in terms of how much of each person's potential companies are tapping into is down," Smith says. "We've created extremely efficient workers in terms of being able to produce output, but in many ways this rigidity has dampened their creativity and their ability to make an innovative impact on the organization."

Smith based his findings on feedback from readers of his "Office Coach" Web log and ongoing feedback he receives as a director with executive search firm Spencer Stuart. Among the topics: "The Downside of Upward Mobility," "Changing Jobs: Is the Grass Really Greener Elsewhere?" and "Is It Who You Know or What You Know?" Smith received more than 3,000 comments and questions from professionals during the three-month period the Web log ran.

Factors contributing to workers' sense of disempowerment run the gamut, from re-engineering and globalization to downsizing and layoffs—all of which have contributed to a more complex work environment in which both

employer tenure and employee loyalty are down, Smith says.

But the news is not all bad. Smith says successful professionals display a number of tangible behavior patterns that anyone can use to boost job success and satisfaction. They include the following:

- Expanding your permissions in the workplace—for example, by looking for creative ways to access opportunities and career-building experiences

- Practicing benevolent leadership—by focusing more on your subordinates' and peers' success than your own

- Doing not merely what you're told to do, but whatever needs to be done—seek to redefine your objectives rather than merely exceeding them

- Being passionate about what you do—nothing replaces a deep belief in the work you are doing

- Mastering productivity tools

The empowering potential of common software productivity tools is not to be underestimated, Smith says. Knowing how to use presentation or spreadsheet applications such as Microsoft Office PowerPoint and Excel allows workers to be more proactive and creative and can be the key that opens doors that might otherwise remain closed.

"Productivity tools allow you to go from being a task worker to being an information worker," Smith says. "Yes, the career world has become much more complex, but the tools that professionals at all levels have now to manage that complexity are more powerful than ever before—but only if you take advantage of them."

To learn more about software productivity tools, such as those found in Microsoft Office 2003, visit the Microsoft Office Online home page at <http://office.microsoft.com/home/default.aspx>.