

# MONTHLY MENTOR

“A” Player Human Capital Leadership by  
HUNT EXECUTIVE SEARCH

Volume 16, Issue 3



*For twenty-seven years, the Monthly Mentor has been a value-added service to support our employers and candidates in their Personal & Professional Development.*



## Find Your Personal Passion

*by Joe Hunt*

At some point in your career, you may sense a creeping malaise. You're no longer enthusiastic about the day ahead. When did your brilliant career become the daily grind? What happened to your passion?

*“We hear a great deal of talk about the midlife crisis of the executive. It is mostly boredom.”*

~ Peter Drucker, management expert

“What should I do if I don't have passion?” and “How do I sustain passion?” are two questions that often come up when I'm advising executives.



Let's face it, after 20-30 years of all-too-familiar work, you're good at your job. Regardless, you may not be learning or contributing like you did when you were a neophyte. You might not feel challenged or particularly satisfied. Bosses can be unpleasant. Your favorite project is scuttled. Work simply begins to stagnate. Your position may feel like it's reduced to reports, meetings, and difficult coworkers. When your job is no longer enjoyable or meaningful, your energy sags, motivation lags, tasks go undone, and you make mistakes. You think about switching jobs, but this presents additional risks, similar to changing seats on the Titanic.

Yet staying in a job that's going nowhere, filled with mind-numbing work, can mean resigning yourself to a lack of growth and meaning. It doesn't have to be that way. Not if you're working with a coach.

Loss of passion is a very good reason to engage an executive coach. It may be time to explore the work/life issues of purpose and meaning. Unfortunately, most of us dismiss these early symptoms and try to fix things on our own.

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If you're one of those who quickly dismisses creeping stagnation, pay attention. The longer you ignore the warning signs that your career lacks passion, the worse it can get – and the harder it will become to crawl out and reignite your energy.

## Coaching for Passion

Most coaches will advise you to look inward before making a drastic decision to change your career path. What if the problem — along with solutions — lies somewhere inside you? If so, you can change your thinking, beliefs, or level of engagement as you strive to make work more meaningful.

This is a good time to review your values and purpose with your coach or mentor:

1. What was initially attractive about your job?
2. When you began your career, what did you expect or hope for?
3. In the early days, how did work excite you? What has changed?

People are often surprised by their answers, having forgotten their early enthusiasm. To rekindle your drive, explore three key issues:

1. Identify your core values.
2. Know and manage your strengths well.
3. Determine how your values fit with who you are today.

Few people are well aware of their strengths. This may be a good opportunity to take some assessments, such as my LeaderShift Architect TriMetrix HD. Others include the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator, Big Five Personality Test, Values in Action Inventory of Strengths and several other validated tools and instruments. You can find many free resources and abbreviated versions online.

The wisest people are those who use their feelings of malaise to find out what drives them, what their strengths are, and use coaching to rekindle their spirits.

## Rekindle Your Passion at Work

How can you rekindle passion for the work you do? Try to connect with your values and highest purpose every time you walk into the office, whenever you chat with a client or coworker, and even when completing routine tasks like paperwork.



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Don't allow yourself to fall into a zombie-like routine and forget what you love doing and what you are good at. Remind yourself: *this* is why I'm here.

## Know Your Strengths

Self-knowledge is essential. In business, nobody will manage your career if you don't. Ask yourself four questions:

1. What are my strengths?
2. How do I perform best?
3. How do I learn best?
4. What do I need in order to grow or learn?

## THE STRENGTHS TRIANGLE™

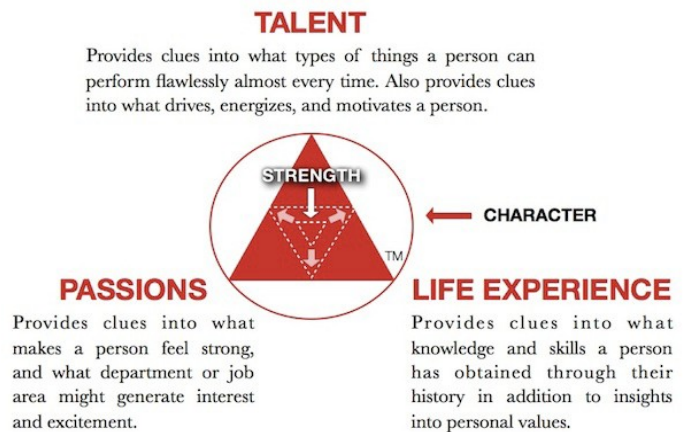


Image credit: joshallan.com

Learn about your strengths through feedback from others. Spend the most energy on developing strengths in lieu of focusing on weaknesses.

How do you perform best? Are you a reader or a listener? Some people work well in teams, while others excel when flying solo. Some learn by doing, while others process information by hearing themselves talk.

The key to knowing yourself well is to receive feedback from peers, formal assessments, or a mentor/coach.

Ideally, we'd all be working with passion in jobs that bring out our strengths and talents to achieve the greatest good in organizations and the world. But that doesn't always happen the way we envision.

An article in the Harvard Business Review by John Hagel III and John Seely Brown, "Shape Serendipity, Understand Stress, Reignite Passion" explains:



*"We focus on passion in work for two reasons. First, our research suggests that passion is key to achieving sustained extreme performance improvement. This is essential to relieve the stress that we all feel in our work lives."*

Ultimately, it's up to each of us to go where we can develop and express our strengths if we truly want to make a difference.

Be aware of this and talk with your coach. Before you conclude that you need to redesign your career, change fields, or pursue reduced workloads, try to find your personal passion doing work that is truly meaningful and satisfying.

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Joe Hunt is a Managing Partner at Hunt Executive Search/The Hunt Group, a boutique executive search firm that provides human capital solutions to consumer goods, retail, life sciences and diversified industrial markets.

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