

LifeMapSM



"LifeMap is a navigational tool to help you on your path towards personal and professional success. Our belief is that you can achieve a more rewarding career, a more productive organization and a more enjoyable and abundant life."

July 11, 2006

This Week's Message:

Don't Bowl Alone.

Paths Forward

Resources

Have Dr. Paul speak at your next meeting or conference.

Quick Links

Greetings!

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Don't Bowl Alone.

I've spent the first 25 years of my career as a psychologist consulting with, advising, and coaching people – in groups, teams, departments and individually - at their jobs. So, I hope it's obvious that I believe challenging, meaningful work plays a central role in a fully engaged and satisfying life. But there is an insidious and spirit-crushing trend afoot in the workplace and you may be a willing victim of it.

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Research has shown that the time Americans spend at work has been continuously on the rise for the last 20 years. Other powerful statistics: working hours are longer than they were 40 years ago, our work year increases by one day every year, after work and chores we have only 16 hours a week left for family, recreation and community. These numbers back up what many folks already feel in their gut – we’re working too hard and we’re working too much.

In his groundbreaking book, “Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community” (Simon & Schuster, 2001) and his follow-up, “Better Together: Restoring the American Community” (Simon & Schuster, 2003) researcher and author, Robert Putnam backs up the assertions I make above with reams of hard data. (The catchy original title comes from the fact that years ago thousands of folks belonged to bowling leagues and now they’re more likely to bowl alone.) Putnam painstakingly documents how, having little to no time for the likes of the Community Chest, the League of Women Voters, the Elks, the PTO, the K of C, or even a Sunday picnic with family or friends, we have created a “social-capital deficit that threatens educational performance, safe neighborhoods, equitable tax collection, democratic responsiveness, everyday honesty, and even our health and happiness.”

I will not play the blame game here; I will not point a finger at the stereotypical, rapacious corporate chieftain nor will I chastise the single-minded careerist who willingly sacrifices a balanced life on the altar of a bigger salary and conspicuous consumption. But as a professional who has been privy to the inner thoughts and feelings of thousands of people in today’s workplace I will firmly state that this trend is real, it is growing and it is having a corrosive affect on our partners, our children, our families and friends, our communities, our democracy and our souls.

Let me ask you a few pointed questions. Are you a member of your community or is it just someplace where you hang your hat at night? Are you informed about the social issues that affect your life and family and, if so, do you take any active role in addressing them? Do you know who your local and regional governmental representatives are; do you vote? Do you ever socialize with people of different social or economic strata? Is check writing the extent of your philanthropy or do you actually devote some energy to a group you believe in? When is the last time you made a new

friend – a real friend, not a business acquaintance? What do you do to keep up the friendships you already have? Do your children and grandchildren see you participating in your community; are they learning the benefits of doing so? Do you have any hobbies, interests, avocations, stuff you do just for the fun of it? You may spend up to a third of your life “post-career” (one of the new terms for retirement); other than saving money, what are you doing now to prepare for it? Are your spiritual needs met or is this something you will “deal with later”? In general – do you feel connected or do you feel isolated?

If you find the answers to any of the above questions bothersome here are some ideas you might consider to help you accumulate some social capital.

Paths Forward

The four elements of the LifeSpace Model (work life, home life, societal life, individual life- see LifeMap 2/1/06) provide a helpful way for you to discover ways to increase your level of social integration and reap the requisite benefits.

- **Work Life.**

Connecting with others will facilitate your career advancement and help you feel better about work. Become active (don't just attend meetings) in a trade or professional group. Become a mentor to a junior staffer. Take time to network with a job hunter. Participate in your company's job fairs. Help recruit employees from your alma mater. If your employer has a philanthropy or community involvement committee, join in. Taking an adult education course will help you meet new people and develop new skills.

- **Home Life.**

One of the best ways to “de-stress” home life is to get those closest to you involved – with you - in issues larger than themselves. Our schools, nursing homes, hospitals, churches, temples, organizations for the physically and mentally challenged, animal shelters, food pantries, museums, homeless shelters, youth groups, arts groups, park programs, civic groups, your political party are all desperate for volunteers. Keep trying until you find something that you enjoy doing together. These are great ways to strengthen family bonds, open up whole new worlds to your children and for you to meet new people and acquire new friends from all walks of life.

- **Societal Life.**

Get out and have some fun! Organize some friends and (yes) go bowling, or have a mini-golf tournament, or a potluck picnic, or a chick flick / action flick night, or a kite-flying afternoon, celebrate a real or fictional holiday (e.g. Flag Day, Groundhog Day, Cinco de Mayo or Bloomsday). Have each friend bring someone unknown to the rest of the group. Think of other ways to make new friends; they are a better way than money to measure the success in your life.

- **Individual Life.**

Think about yourself for a minute. What do you want; what do you need? Is it intimacy, is it a sense of spirituality, is it having a really fun and engaging hobby, is it to create an engaging retirement, is it to write that book, is it to have an adult relationship with your children, is it to finally find a job you love, is it achieving peace of mind? Create some quiet time in your life to ask yourself the big questions; use your journal to help you capture your thoughts. This may be your individual life but you don't have to create it in a vacuum. There are others (family, friends, professionals, and some folks you haven't even met yet) who can help you achieve your dearest dreams and connecting with these people – building your own community – are sure ways to make that happen.

LifeMap is about helping you build and strengthen your connections to others which, in turn, will help you achieve the goals you set for all aspects of your life

Resources

Stalled at work? Still struggling to find your true vocation?

Or know someone who is? To order your copy of "Love Your Job! Loving the Job You Have, Finding a Job You Love" by Dr Paul Powers, click the link below.

Someone you know job hunting or thinking about it yourself?

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Sincerely,

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