

# Case Incident 1

## Thinking Your Way to a Better Job

You have probably been dissatisfied with a job at one time or another in your life. When faced with a dissatisfying job, researchers and job holders alike usually think in terms of job: Ask for more pay, take control over your work, change your schedule, minimize contact with a toxic co-worker, or even change jobs. While each of these remedies may be appropriate in certain situations, increasingly researchers are uncovering an interesting truth about job satisfaction: it is as much a state of mind as a function of job conditions.

Here, we're not talking about the dispositional source of job satisfaction. It's true that some people have trouble finding any job satisfying, whereas others can't be brought down by even the most onerous of jobs. However, by state of mind, we mean changeable, easily implemented ways of thinking that can affect your job satisfaction. Lest you think we've gone the way of self-help gurus Deepak Chopra and Wayne Dyer, think again. There is some solid, albeit fairly preliminary, evidence supporting the view that our views of our job and life can be significantly impacted by changing the way we think.

One main area where this "state of mind" research might help you change the way you think about your job (or life) is in gratitude. Researchers have found that when people are asked to make short lists of things for which they are grateful, they report being happier, and the increased happiness seems to last well beyond the moments when people made the list.

Indeed, gratitude may explain why, when the economy is in bad shape, people actually become more satisfied with their jobs. One survey revealed that, from 2007 to 2008, when the economy slid into recession, the percentage of people reporting that they were "very satisfied" with their jobs increased a whopping 38 percent (from 28 percent to 38 percent). When we see other people suffering, particularly those we see as similar to ourselves, it often leads us to realize that, as bad as things may seem, they can always be worse. As *Wall Street Journal* columnist Jeffrey Zaslow wrote, "People who still have jobs are finding reasons to be appreciative."

So, right now, make a short list of things about your job and life for which you are grateful. Now, after having done that, do you feel more positively about your job and life? Now try doing this every day for a week. Do you think this exercise might make a difference in how you feel about your job and your life?

### Questions

1. So, right now, make a short list of things about your job and life for which you are grateful. Now, after having done that, do you feel more positively about your job and your life?  
**Answer:** The answer to this question depends on the students' personal beliefs and values. For this reason, the answers will vary widely. In general, you are looking for answers that suggest that the students have given the question some thought.
2. Now try doing this every day for a week. Do you think this exercise might make a difference in how you feel about your job and your life?  
**Answer:** Again this will depend on the students' values. Answers will vary.

## Case Incident 2

### Long Hours, Hundreds of E-Mails, and No Sleep: Does This Sound like a Satisfying Job?

Although the 40-hour workweek is now the exception rather than the norm, some individuals are taking things to the extreme.

- **John Bishop**, 31, is an investment banker who works for Citigroup's global energy team in New York. A recent workday for Bishop consisted of heading to the office for a conference call at 6:00 P.M. He left the office at 1:30 A.M. and had to be on a plane that same morning for a 9:00 A.M. presentation in Houston. Following the presentation, Bishop returned to New York the same day, and by 7:00 P.M., he was back in his office to work an additional three hours. Says Bishop, "I might be a little skewed to the workaholic, but realistically, expecting 90 to 100 hours a week is not at all unusual."
- **Irene Tse**, 34, heads the government bond-trading division at Goldman Sachs. For ten years, she has seen the stock market go from all-time highs to recession levels. Such fluctuations can mean millions of dollars in either profits or losses. "There are days when you can make a lot, and other days where you lose so much you're just stunned by what you've done," says Tse. She also states that she hasn't slept completely through the night in years and frequently wakes up several times during the night to check the global market status. Her average workweek? Eighty hours. "I've done this for 10 years, and I can count on the fingers of one hand the number of days in my career when I didn't want to come to work. Every day I wake up and I can't wait to get here."
- **Tony Kurz**, 33, is a managing director at Capital Alliance Partners and raises funds for real-estate investments. However, these are not your average properties. He often travels to exotic locations like Costa Rica and Hawaii, wooing prospective clients. He travels more than 300,000 miles a year, often sleeping on planes and dealing with jet lag. Kurz is not the only one he knows with such a hectic work schedule. His girlfriend, Avery Baker, logs around 400,000 miles a year, working as the senior vice president of marketing for Tommy Hilfiger. "It's not easy to maintain a relationship like this," says Kurz. But do Kurz and Baker like their jobs? You bet.
- **David Clark**, 35, is the vice president of global marketing for MTV. His job often consists of traveling around the globe to promote the channel, as well as to keep up with the global music scene. If he is not traveling (Clark typically logs 200,000 miles a year), a typical day consists of waking at 6:30 A.M. and immediately responding to numerous messages that have accumulated over the course of the night. He then goes to his office, where throughout the day he will respond to another 500 messages or so from clients around the world. If he's lucky, he gets to spend an hour a day with his son, but then it's back to work until he finally goes to bed around midnight. Says Clark, "There are plenty of people who would love to have this job. They're knocking on the door all the time. So that's motivating."

Many individuals would balk at the prospect of a 60-hour or more workweek with constant traveling and little time for anything else. However, some individuals are exhilarated by such

professions. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, in 2004, about 17 percent of managers worked more than 60 hours per week. But the demands of such jobs are clearly not for everyone. Many quit, with turnover levels at 55 percent for consultants and 30 percent for investment bankers, according to Vault.com. However, it is clear that such jobs, which are time consuming and often stressful, can be satisfying to some individuals.

### Questions

1. Do you think that only certain individuals are attracted to these types of jobs, or is it the characteristics of the jobs themselves that are satisfying?  
**Answer:** This is an excellent discussion starter for students. You may wish to focus on personality characteristics, life/work balance issues, and/or environmental concerns. Factors such as age, gender, etc., may also play a role.
2. What characteristics of these jobs might contribute to increased levels of job satisfaction?  
**Answer:** Have students “apply” the various approaches to defining job satisfaction. For example, is the job as a whole satisfying? Are there certain elements in these jobs that are preferred?
3. Given that the four individuals we just read about tend to be satisfied with their jobs, how might this satisfaction relate to their job performance, citizenship behavior, and turnover?  
**Answer:** We would expect that citizenship behavior would be positively affected and these individuals would likely remain in their jobs. As for job performance, there is no direct correlation between satisfaction and performance. However, it can be inferred from commitment and staying with the job over a longer period of time.
4. Recall David Clark’s statement, “There are plenty of people who would love to have this job. They’re knocking on the door all the time.” How might Clark’s perceptions of having a job that many others desire contribute to his job satisfaction?  
**Answer:** This could have a positive impact on job satisfaction. If others perceive the job as positive, the occupant may also view it this way.

Source: Based on L. Tischler; “Extreme Jobs (And the People Who Love Them),” Fast Company, April 2005, pp. 55–60. [http://www.glo-jobs.com/article.php?article\\_no=87](http://www.glo-jobs.com/article.php?article_no=87).

# Instructor's Choice

## Discovering Your Own VALS

It is always difficult to assess one's values because of the various factors that can influence values. One company that has come up with an interesting but simple approach to values designation and assessment is SRI Consulting Business Intelligence. SRI developed a topology called VALS (Values and Lifestyles). This trademarked process assesses a person's values and lifestyles with respect to their primary motivation and resources. A person's primary motivation would determine what in the person's meaningful core would govern his or her actions and activities. Resources go beyond mere wealth or possessions. Resources include personality traits (such as energy, self-confidence, and so forth) and how these traits match to demographics and resources. Through the VALS studies, SRI has devised eight segments that reveal a great deal about a person's values and how they live their life. For more information on VALS and SRI see [www.sric-bi.com](http://www.sric-bi.com).

Go to the Web site and find the link to VALS. See the VALS survey link and take the VALS survey (it only takes a few minutes). List the VALS segment that you match and describe the characteristics of your segment. What surprises (if any) were there for you?

Go to the link that describes the VALS Types. After reading about the various types, which types would be the easiest to manage? The most difficult? Explain.

The instructor will ask everyone to indicate their VALS type and list the results on the board. Find another person that has your same VALS type from the list. Briefly interview them to see what you have in common and any clear differences. Comment on these similarities and differences. By knowing what you now know about your partner (and his or her VALS type), what managerial conclusions could you now draw?

### **Instructor Discussion**

Students generally enjoy this exercise and can prepare it prior to class. They will receive a nice printout from SRI indicating their VALS segment with a recap of the characteristics of a person from that segment. However, before assigning this project, it is recommended that the instructor visit the Web site to insure that all links are still as described above as these links often change. By examining the brief characterizations of the various VALS types, students should be able to see that the following generalizations can be made:

- Actualizers—successful with many resources, open to change
- Fulfilled—satisfied, reflective, comfortable, practical
- Achievers—career-oriented, avoid risk, self-discovery
- Experiencers—impulsive, young, offbeat, love risk
- Believers—strong principles, favor proven brands
- Strivers—like achievers, but with fewer resources, need approval
- Makers—action-oriented, self-sufficiency, do-it-yourselfers
- Strugglers—bottom-of-ladder, immediate gratification

Though VALS has been used to study consumer lifestyles it can also tell us something about a person's values that can then be studied by managers. Students will enjoy talking among themselves about their characteristics.



### EXPLORING OB TOPICS ON THE WORLD WIDE WEB

Search Engines are our navigational tool to explore the WWW. Some commonly used search engines are:

www.excite.com      www.yahoo.com      www.hotbot.com  
www.google.com      www.lycos.com      www.bing.com

1. Jeff Van Duzer wrote an excellent piece on ethics in business, which can be accessed at <http://www.ethix.org/article.php3?id=212> . Write a two-page paper relating his three pragmatic factors (speed, spin, and stuff) to your life as a student or employee. Have you felt the pressure he talks about? Do you think they are contributors to ethical lapses as he suggests? Do you think the strategies he recommends are ones you could apply to your life as a student or employee? For example, you might find donating money at this time unpractical, but maybe you are donating time as a tutor or at other campus activities.
2. How satisfied are you with your job (or a job you had in the past)? Take a job satisfaction quiz at [http://www.humanlinks.com/orgsn/job\\_satisfaction.htm](http://www.humanlinks.com/orgsn/job_satisfaction.htm).
  - a. Job satisfaction—what are people saying about their job satisfaction? Try these Web sites to find out more about what American workers are saying:

<http://www.inc.com/magazine/19980601/946.html>

<http://www.computerworld.com/careertopics/careers/story/0,10801,61742,00.html>

[http://www.humanlinks.com/orgsn/job\\_satisfaction.htm](http://www.humanlinks.com/orgsn/job_satisfaction.htm)

Are you surprised at what you read? Write a paragraph or two on the three most important facts you learned from these Web sites. Bring to class for further discussion.

3. What do American workers value? At Workforce.com you will find several articles on the topic. (You will need to complete a free registration.) <http://www.workforce.com> .
4. What is the state of employee loyalty? Do organizations even care if employees are loyal? What are the consequences if they are not? Conduct a Web search on employee loyalty and write a two-page paper answering the above questions. [www.workforce.com](http://www.workforce.com) has several excellent articles on the topic. (You will need to complete a free registration to access them.)
5. Organizations often conduct attitude surveys of their employees. What is it that they want to know? Go to: <http://www.hr-survey.com/EmployeeAttitude.htm> to learn more about employee attitude surveys. Write a paragraph or two on what you think would be the three most important topics to include on an attitude survey and why.

