



One of the hardest things about our working lives is knowing what we ideally want to do with them. Sensing what is boring and soul-destroying is easy, identifying what would satisfy us is not.

## the pleasures of work

Indications of knowing which jobs might appeal tend to come in garbled and indirect forms; in the moments of curiosity and envy we sometimes feel when others are doing exciting things. We register signals of interest, akin to the bleep of a metal detector. There is something here, but tricky to unearth. We need to identify what sets off those bleeps.

Work comprises of a number of senses and emotions:

### 1. Ordering

The world is a chaotic place: fractured, incoherent, noisy and random. A central pleasure in a number of jobs is that of being able to bring order: of creating a realm of superior logic, coherence or meaning. It is the pleasure, in the grandest and simplest of ways, of tidying things up. The architect, car designer, waiter or train engineer, whatever their differences in status and salaries, draw on a common satisfaction in their ability to create or manage small utopias in a chaotic, irrational compromised world.

### 2. Understanding

Then there is the pleasure of understanding. It is present for the plumber who must pin down what is ailing the heating system and it is at the root of science, seeking elegant principles that explain the apparent disorder of nature. Similarly, the writer trying to put words to emotions and feelings and defining in language what the reader may have felt but never grasped before, is enjoying and creating understanding.

### 3. Money-making

Work isn't just about greed. It's about being rewarded in the most concrete way financially for grasping an aspect of life ahead of others. It's the same pleasure that moves the business mogul, the entrepreneur, the second hand bookseller or the stockpicker, who all are able to see and understand value. So those motivated to make money aren't doing it just out of greed, they may just be addicted to the intense satisfaction that a successful money-generating scheme can bring, not the money per se.

### 4. Serving

The words 'serving' and 'servant' have extremely negative connotations and yet to serve another human being offers some of the most intense pleasures available in the working world. Pleasing others is a sign that we've got it right and turned insight into a moment of joy or solace, which in turn lends us a sense of affirmation and triumph over the forces of unhappiness.

We can provide the solutions to those looking to renew themselves with a haircut, to repair their computer, to soothe their ailing dog and have the chance to contribute in some way to the great task of turning sadness and dissatisfaction into joy.

### 5. Collaborating

Work lends us the pleasure of being part of a team. The challenge brings out everyone's best sides: someone comes up with a suggestion you'd never have thought of, a colleague compensates for one of your weaknesses, another looks to you for encouragement and guidance that confirms your experience and authority. Collectively, a disparate group of people become more impressive than they each could be on their own.

Reminding ourselves of the possible pleasures of work and facing the challenge of knowing what the ideal position for us would actually be enables us to come to know ourselves better, remembering where the true sources of excitement and interest lie for us and lead us to the long path towards that eventual, infinitely tricky goal, discovering satisfying work.



Watch CRF's interview with Alain on 'The Pleasures and Sorrows of Work' here.

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