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Title: Unhappy at work? Try anti-career path

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Source: USA Today; 05/10/2004

ISSN: 0734-7456

Accession Number: JOE406826592905

Database: Academic Search Premier

Unhappy at work? Try anti-career path

'Fire Your Boss' approach means focusing on life, not on your job

Section: Money, Pg. 05b

Fire Your Boss

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By Stephen M. Pollan and Mark Levine

HarperResource, 273 pages, \$23.95

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In *Fire Your Boss*, Stephen Pollan -- a New York-based attorney, life coach and author of *Die Broke and Second Acts* -- teams with Mark Levine to try to radically rattle how people think about work.

They envision a day when people meet each other on the street and ask each other about their lives, not their jobs. "It's a romantic approach," says Pollan, 75. "It idealizes life rather than work."

If you dislike your job, your boss (or both), live in fear of being fired, gripe that you aren't making enough money or are just entering or re-entering the workforce, the authors want you to try their anti-career strategy. It's not a quick fix.

The heart of the message: The only way to survive is to work for the money. You're not your job. Careers are passe. Once you accept that, you're free to find satisfaction in your personal life.

You might argue that you spend such a chunk of your life at work that you need to love your job. Poppycock, the authors say. There's no such thing as job security or reward for loyal service. People work hundreds more hours a year than they did in 1979 with far less to show for it. Hardly anyone climbs the corporate ladder. Temps and outsourcing are the future of Corporate America.

Pollan and Levine have a seven-step program for how to change your mind-set about work. The first step: "Fire your boss . . . and hire yourself."

They recommend a mental exercise to help you change your work/life perspective even if you're still heading to the same desk each day. First, write your own job description. Don't write, "I work for Acme Computer as a technical writer preparing software manuals." A better description might be: "I gather, analyze, and digest

complex information, and then translate and present it for a particular audience."

Then, write your own performance review. To do so, you'll have to become an expert on not just your company and industry, but on what other people who fit your job description earn in salary and benefits. Then have fun. Let your imagination go wild and write down other jobs your skills might satisfy. The idea is to "free you psychologically and emotionally from the narrow work path you may have been traveling."

While digging deep into your self-evaluation, you can try another key step which may seem counterintuitive to the headstrong: Stop focusing on your own successes and worry about your boss' success. "If you don't meet your boss' needs, you'll always be one day away from unemployment," they counsel.

Once you've got a handle on these mind shifts, it's time to start the unceasing quest for a job. Consider it job fishing rather than job hunting. When you regularly fish, rather than hunt with a hungry look of desperation, you're always looking for the next job offer.

You won't typically find leads the old-fashioned way of networking and setting-up "informational" interviews. You hear about jobs from personal connections made in your church choir or working out at the gym, talking to neighbors, pursuing a hobby. No one hires a stranger, they contend. It's who you know.

This is helpful, but the authors take the hand-holding a step too far perhaps. But if this duo's new approach to work allows you to collect a paycheck and have a life, then you owe them a warm thank you.

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**Source:** USA Today, MAY 10, 2004

**Item:** JOE406826592905