

## ***Get Yourself Back Into that First Work-Day Feeling***

By Roxanne Emmerich

Ask a hundred seven-year-olds what they want to be when they grow up and you may get a hundred different answers. One wants to be the President of the United States. Another wants to win ten gold medals in the Olympics. Others want to be teachers or firefighters or novelists or inventors.

But whether the dream is to be a President or a postman, one thing is for sure: Every child pictures him or herself as a great one. Nobody dreams of someday finishing seventh in the hurdles or of writing mayonnaise labels.

Now this is nothing against the fine folks who DO finish seventh and write those labels, you understand. We can't all be what we wanted to be in first grade, or I'd be a ballerina. My question is less about the job we end up IN than the attitudes we end up WITH.

And when it comes to attitude regardless of occupation, I always think of Florna.

### **Be all that you can be**

When I met Florna, she was cleaning an airport bathroom. Now let's be honest here. This is NOT what her mama wanted for her, and it's not the job she dreamed of in the first grade. This job was an excuse to be bumming.

But Florna was not bumming. She was humming.

Actually, Florna wasn't just humming—she was a *hummer*. She was born to it, like a bumblebee. You can just tell. I used the facilities while she cleaned. I found it entertaining. She made me smile.

And she didn't stop there. As I exited the stall, she shuffled toward me and started singing "Start spreadin' the news...I'm leavin' today..." she gestured for me to sing along. Why not?

That's right. A woman who cleaned airport toilets was singing "New York, New York" to me. And I wasn't special. THIS, I could see, is what Florna does.

Now contrast Florna with the millions of people who spend a good chunk of their day complaining about their lot in life, finding excuses for why they're mired in mediocrity and how the world is to blame.

These people need to get themselves Flornated!

Florna is GREAT at her job. And not just at her job description, which I'm sure does not include restroom recitals. She has a vision of her job that goes beyond the porcelain and steel to the

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profound service of those fellow human beings who are fortunate enough to cross her path. Florna changed me—and she did it by refusing to resign herself to easy mediocrity.

## **Regaining that first-day buzz**

Remember your very first day on the job? You stood in the mirror adjusting and readjusting your collar for ten minutes before leaving home, nervous and hopeful and happy. Your shoes had a shine like the tiles on the Space Shuttle and the crease in your slacks could have diced celery as you walked. The air was somehow fresher, the birds chirpier. You had been *hired*. You'd been given a chance to excel, a chance to make a difference, to be the best you could be.

Now contrast that with this morning.

I know, I know, who am I to presume? Maybe you sprang out of bed like Pee Wee Herman every day, all chuckles and mirth, ready to be the best li'l Pee Wee you can be. Maybe you do that every morning. I hope so. If so, this article is all done for you. Scoot scoot! Off you go.

(Is he gone?)

Okay, if you are still reading, don't let Pee Wee make you feel bad. Most people who signed up for the Big Game end up making one compromise after another until they've resigned themselves to mediocrity. It's darned hard to keep that first-day buzz going month after month and year after year.

BUT...there's no reason you can't choose to *recover* a good measure of that first-day feeling, that striving for excellence, and put it to good use in the service of everyone whose lives you touch on a daily basis.

It's all about making the choice to do it.

## **Finding your enthusiasm again**

Next to laughter, enthusiasm is probably the hardest thing in the world to fake. Yet for some, it comes so easily. Have you ever met a two-year-old who wasn't enthusiastic? We come prepackaged with it. And then...

What happens to us?

What happens is that we make a choice. Some of us choose to make the effort to stay in touch with our inner enthusiasm. Others find reasons to lose touch with it—boredom, responsibilities, challenges, fatigue. There's no end to the list of perfectly good reasons to lose your *joie de vivre*.

But here's the problem: Enthusiasm is the lifeblood of all success. Without it, nothing great happens. If you choose to lose touch with your inner enthusiasm, you are choosing mediocrity. It's really that simple.

Sure, there are plenty of reasons to curb your enthusiasm. But there are just as many reasons to find it again—to celebrate your incredible good fortune, and in the process, to make that fortune even better.

Let's start with what should be blazingly obvious yet is seldom thought about:

1. **You're not dead.** Some people are, you know, and most of them would probably change places with you in a heartbeat. (Er, bad choice of words.) It's fun being alive. Appreciate it.
2. **You were born.** Now now, stick with me here. Most "people" were never born. The biologist Richard Dawkins once put it this way: "The potential people who could have been here in my place but who will in fact never see the light of day outnumber the sand grains of Arabia. The set of possible people allowed by our DNA massively exceeds the set of actual people. In the teeth of these stupefying odds it is you and I, in our ordinariness, that are here." A thousand things could have kept your parents from meeting, from finding each other attractive, from marrying, or from having you. Yet they did. Same with your grandparents, and on and on.

Feeling special? Well I certainly hope so.

3. **You have a job.** An awful lot of people don't, especially right now. Think back to the first-day gratitude you felt and see if you can't feel just a little of that again.
4. **You have a *good* job.** Doubt it? Take a look around you. Would you trade places with Florna? Yet she has about ten times the job satisfaction of most people. And Florna is just the tip of the iceberg.

Now take a close look at the *circumstances* of this good job you have. Write down your five biggest complaints and spin them into positives. For example, "My boss micromanages me" can be reframed as "My boss cares enough about me and about keeping me out of trouble to step into my work when I need help." And if it *can* be, why *wouldn't* you reframe it?

## Which brings us back to...the Big Game

So what did we just do? If you've truly committed to finding your first-day buzz again, you should be an awful lot closer to it now than you were ten minutes ago.

All this rethinking and reframing has removed a HUGE energy drain from your life—one you were probably unaware of. It takes massive amounts of energy to continually reinforce your own sense of victimhood. Excellence is MUCH less expensive. Now that you feel lucky instead, what on Earth are you going to do with all that energy?

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How about playing the Big Game you signed up for?

What you've just filled yourself up with is a lion's share of this precious thing called the human spirit, and the human spirit will not invest in mediocrity. So play the meaningful, bighearted game you always dreamed of playing, and leave the mediocrity to others.

## **SIDEBAR**

### **Starve the mediocrity out**

Mediocrity needs to be fed and fed well. Starve it of the energy it needs by choosing to make your life one of profound service. No need to go to Africa or feed the hungry. Start right in your own backyard:

- Create rituals of joy at work and at home. Let somebody merge. Thank someone for a small kindness. Compliment three people on the way to your desk. HUM. Then be sure to notice how everything changes.
- Take the single worst thing in your life today and find ONE good thing about it. Just one. Once you do that, flipping everything else will be a snap!
- Put yourself back in the mind of a seven-year-old. What's your dream? Can you realize it? If not exactly, how can you bring the spirit of that dream into every single day of your life as it is?

*Roxanne Emmerich is renowned for her ability to transform “ho-hum” workplaces into massive results-oriented “bring-it-on” environments. To discover how you can ignite the passion of your employees, catapult performance to new levels, and boost the morale of your company subscribe to the Thank God It's Monday<sup>TM</sup> e-zine at [www.ThankGoditsMonday.com](http://www.ThankGoditsMonday.com).*