

February 2009



Postcards from Professional Paradise

Continuing this month, I've made the newsletter more "user friendly" and a quicker read by dividing it into sections. Here is an overview of what you can expect to see.

Your Passport to Professional Paradise:

This section gives you specific ideas and tools to create and maintain Professional Paradise no matter what is happening around you. This section is for everyone who wants to be the CPO (Chief Paradise Officer) of their job! Want to watch this month's *Postcard from Professional Paradise* on YouTube? Just click [here](#), turn on your speakers, sit back and relax for the short video.

The Leader's Passport:

This section is for managers and leaders who want tangible, easy to implement, proven tools and tips for creating a culture of Professional Paradise for their team or organization.

Your Passport to Professional Paradise



Professional Prison & Parole Revealed

Picture a prison. What comes to mind? Barbed wire, bars, locks, cold bare cells, orange jumpsuits, guns, threatening people, surly guards, confinement, hopelessness, despair. It's not a pretty picture.

It's hard to imagine that these images could be related to work, but unfortunately, too many people feel like they're doing time in **Professional Prison**. In fact, a report published early last year on employee loyalty from Walker Information states that approximately 25 percent of employees "feel trapped in their jobs." I'm guessing that the numbers are even higher now.

Like Professional Paradise, Professional Prison is not a physical place. Instead, it's a state of being - a certain mindset that drives unproductive actions and, ultimately, undesirable outcomes. And, just like Professional Paradise, it's a function of internal drivers more than external drivers. Those who perceive that they're trapped at work create their own mental barbed wire and lockdowns that keep them imprisoned. They often see others as threatening or ominous (like inmates) instead of helpful and supportive. They view a complaining customer, challenging coworker or difficult boss as someone who is out to get them personally, much like the bully in the prison exercise yard. As a result, they're always waiting for the other shoe to drop, so to speak. In their world, anxiety and uncertainty are the common elements of each day.

If you've ever done a stint in Professional Prison (and who hasn't?), you likely felt stuck in your job. You probably experienced relentless pressure, a lack of energy, maybe even sheer misery. Perhaps you were endlessly negative, complained about everything, overreacted to situations or became easily overwhelmed. You might have found yourself calling in sick when you weren't ill or dreaming of greener grass in some other company.

Everyone has different ideas about Professional Paradise, and so it is with Professional Prison. People see it differently. What would Professional Prison look like to you? Stop right now and take a few minutes to experience it using the same techniques you used to visualize your Professional Paradise last month. It's crucial to identify Professional Prison so you can recognize it should you start to spend too much time there. Let yourself think about what

Professional Prison means to you and jot down your thoughts:

I see:

I hear:

I think:

I say:

I feel:

I experience:

I don't connect with:

My Professional Prison:

Last month you created your vision of Professional Paradise and today you identified your nightmare of Professional Prison. Now the question is, where do you spend most of your time - in Professional Prison, Professional Paradise or somewhere in between? Carefully think about your view of your typical daily work experience - not your best day or your worst day. Now, take a minute to do this exercise.

Draw a horizontal line on a piece of paper. Write "Professional Prison" on the left end of the line and "Professional Paradise" on the right side. Now, draw a vertical line to best illustrate where you are currently at work.

If this exercise has confirmed what you've been feeling in your gut - that you're stuck in Prison - don't despair. Too often, people think they have to quit their jobs in order to get out of Prison. Before you go changing jobs, try changing your mindset about your job. Sometimes that makes all the difference. Need help? Go to www.ProfessionalParadise.com and download several FREE tools to start you on your journey out of prison!

But what if you're neither in Prison nor in Paradise? If you placed yourself somewhere in the middle, you're on what I call **Professional Parole**. Professional Parole is - you guessed it - a state of being, an apathetic mindset that leads to reaction instead of proactive action. You know you're on Parole when you've lost the skip in your step. Maybe you have chronic mild stress and find yourself complaining about little things that never bothered you before like occasionally having to stay late, a messy common area, vacillating thermostats or a minor change in parking arrangements. You likely spend a lot of time questioning your value to the team or organization, and you may have that nagging feeling that you're wasting your potential, that there must be something more to life.

Does any of this feel familiar? If so, you're not alone. Most people are on Professional Parole. My research indicates that a small percentage of people truly feel trapped in their jobs every day, a slightly larger percentage truly live the good life at work, and the vast majority are stuck in Limbo Land.

Why so many people on Parole? Some have managed to escape from Prison. For them, Parole is simply the next step. Others began their careers or jobs in Paradise, but over time it slipped away from them. They've tasted the good life at work, and they believe they can have it again...they're just not sure how to get it back. Then there are those who've been on Parole their entire careers. Their work experiences have always been just so-so because their negative beliefs about work drive their perceptions and, therefore, their outcomes.

Here's another quick exercise. How would you describe Professional Parole? Jot down a few words or phrases on that same piece of paper with the Prison-Paradise Continuum. You can finish this sentence: Professional Parole feels like...

Although your manager, your organization and the economy obviously have an impact on your work experience, they are not the reason you're disengaged, nor are they responsible for engaging you. You are responsible for engaging you. You are the **Chief Paradise Officer (CPO)** of your own life. It's up to you to create your own Professional Paradise. You have a choice: do nothing and stay on Parole, slide backwards into Prison, or *SHIFT* towards Paradise.

And that brings us to the main reason why so many people never get off Parole - they simply don't know how. I believe that many people genuinely want less stress, more energy and remarkable results at work and are ready to take control, but they don't have the tools to make it happen. Now is your chance to get more information. **If you want a free 50 minute teleseminar on how to get to Professional Paradise**, just [click here](#) and include your contact information or go to www.ProfessionalParadise.com and download several FREE tools to start you on your journey toward your own Shangri-La at work.

Next Month: Internal and External POWs!

Signing off from Professional Paradise-

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