

# WHAT GETS YOU OUT OF BED IN THE MORNING?

by Glenn Williams



Tag: [Leadership](#)

The answer to this question can be quite revealing. Do you jump out of bed, ready and excited to work on the day's projects? Or do you feel rising levels of stress and anxiety the moment you start thinking about your "to do" list? You may prefer to stay in bed pondering what life would be like if you were doing something else.

A lot of us go to work because we must – we have mortgages to maintain and families to provide for. But beneath the external drivers of working and earning an income, there are more primary motivations for why we get out of bed each day. These have more to do with what our income means to us– how it enables us to achieve the things that are most important, and contributes to our [definition of success](#).

Not everyone is motivated by the same things. Liz loves the people she works with and the workplace culture. Andrew feels productive and accomplished. Lucy finds her work meaningful and feels valued for the contribution she makes. Mark enjoys the opportunity to learn new skills and feels rewarded by gaining greater understanding and experience. Peter goes to work because he "has to".

## Do you know what really motivates you, beyond earning an income?

Understanding your motivational drivers is key to fulfilling your goals as it is the filter for how you make decisions. This is especially important to consider when leading a team or an organization. For those who highly value learning new skills, they will gravitate toward roles that provide them with greater breadth and autonomy. For some, directly meeting the needs of others makes them feel they are making a valuable contribution. If being geographically close to family is an important value, some will consider taking a job that is closer to home over one that requires greater time away. For others, their job is a means to an end, and their passion is something they pursue outside of work, so a role with greater flexibility is more appealing.

Your priorities at different stages of your life tend to influence what motivates you. For example, you might have a young family and thinking about where the family should live and what school would be best for your children to attend, or you might be focused on securing some investments that will set you up later down the road. But when family responsibilities have changed, your priorities will change too, and therefore what motivates you in one life stage may be different to what motivated you previously.

Merely earning an income or being employed is rarely the primary motivation for people, and it is not enough when they are having to navigate life's many transitions and the challenges these bring. Gratton and Scott's *The 100 Year Life* offers ways to address this by contrasting tangible and intangible assets, saying that it is the *transformational* assets – self-knowledge, diverse networks, the pursuit of new

experiences - that influence our “*capacity and motivation to successfully achieve change and transitions*”<sup>1</sup>. Understanding this is not only important for managing yourself; it provides a level of awareness that is important as you lead and motivate others around the goals you are trying to achieve.

## What’s the bottom line?

What is important to you may not be what’s important to others in your team, or your organization. Feeling dissatisfied, or pulled away or toward something, can be a good indicator that there is misalignment between what is most important to you and where you currently find yourself. This is a great opportunity to reflect and get clarity on what, and who, motivates you to pursue your definition of success, and understanding what success looks like for others.

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### References

- <sup>1</sup> Gratton, L., & Scott, A. (2016). *The 100-Year Life: Living and Working in an Age of Longevity*. Bloomsbury Publishing, London.