



Finding Your Calling in Life

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THE SEARCH FOR CALLING

"I think most of us are looking for a calling, not a job. Most of us, like the assembly line worker, have jobs that are too small for our spirit. Jobs are not big enough for people."

— Nora Watson, quoted in Working

- What is a calling, and how do people find it?

REASONS WHY WE WORK

Job orientation
(economic motives)

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graph TD; A["Job orientation (economic motives)"] --> B["money"]; C["Career orientation (esteem, recognition, status motives)"] --> D["other [people]"]; E["Calling orientation (ideological, cause-related motives)"] --> F["cause"]; B --- G["[People] will work hard for money; they will work harder for other [people]. But [people] will work hardest of all when they are dedicated to a cause."]; D --- G; F --- G;
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“[People] will work hard for **money**; they will work harder for **other [people]**. But [people] will work hardest of all when they are dedicated to a **cause.**”

- Harry Emerson Fosdick
(1878-1969, theologian)

Career orientation
(esteem, recognition, status motives)

Calling orientation
(ideological, cause-related motives)

WHAT DOES CALLING MEAN?

THEN

Protestant Reformation: *A calling is work you are meant to do because of the service you can render with your God-given gifts and talents.*

NOW

“My dream job”

“Finding my bliss”

“Work that feels like play”

AN EXAMPLE: ZOOKEEPERS

Zookeeping lacks strong economic incentives:

- Average income is under \$25,000 per year
- About 63% rely on another source of income (e.g., second job, family)

AN EXAMPLE: ZOOKEEPERS

Zookeeping lacks strong economic incentives

It also lacks strong status incentives:

- *“[A] nun came by with a school group and the nun said, ‘See the kind of job that you get when you don’t finish your education!’ This was within ear shot ...”*

Note: About 73% of
zookeepers have a bachelor’s
degree or higher!

AND YET, ZOOKEEPERS ARE HIGHLY COMMITTED

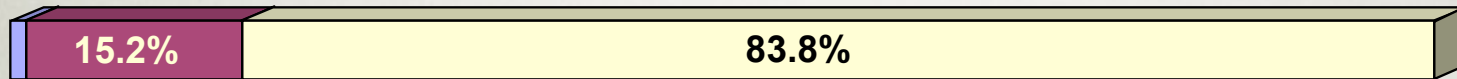
- Nearly half of 1330 keepers surveyed volunteered for at least a year before getting hired.
- Only 6.5% were seriously thinking of leaving the profession.
- Sample quotes from interviews with 24 keepers:

“There's not much that they could do to get me to quit.”

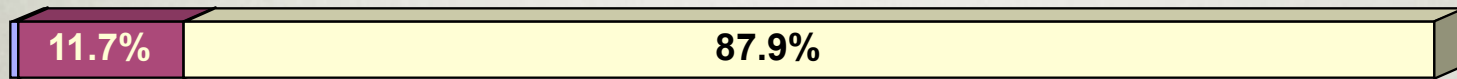
“I can't think what would cause me to leave.”

“I don't think there's anything they could do to me that would make me leave ...”

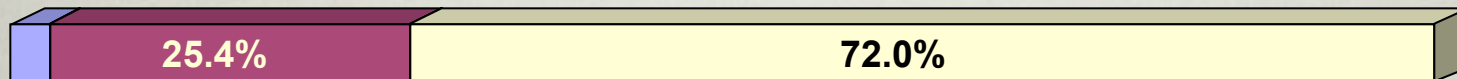
WHY? CALLING AND CAUSE



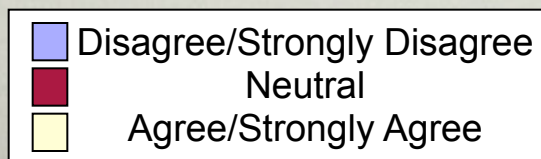
“I have a meaningful job that makes a difference”



“Working with animals feels like my calling in life”



“I’m willing to sacrifice non-work time for animal care & conservation”



WHAT IS A CALLING?

#1: "HARDWIRING"

"It's a calling for me just **because my whole life I've just been interested in animals**. So looking back I should have known at some time I would be working with animals ..."

"It's **a part of who I am** and I don't know if I can explain that. When you use that expression 'it's in your blood', like football coaches and players can never retire because it's in their blood. **Whatever my genetic makeup is I'm geared towards animals.**"

"I was **always interested in animals** ever since I was a kid. I drove my mom nuts catching bugs, and worms, and frogs, and salamanders, bringing home anything I could find ... butterflies, stuff like that."

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"It's a calling for me just **because my whole life I've just been interested in animals**. So looking back I should have known at some time I would be working with animals ..."

"It's **a part of who I am** and I don't know if I can explain that. When I was a coach, I was a football coach. I have a lot of football blood. **What I'm saying is, I'm hardwired for animals.**"

Theme 1: Zookeepers are "hardwired" in a way that suits them for working with animals.

"I was **always interested in animals** ever since I was a kid. I drove my mom nuts catching bugs, and worms, and frogs, and salamanders, bringing home anything I could find ... butterflies, stuff like that."

WHAT IS A CALLING?

#2: "DESTINY"

"I was here two days and I knew **this is what I was meant to do**. There's people that have volunteered here for years and they don't get a job and I worked here a month and a half. So it's kind of like my calling I think."

"I've always read a lot about [animals] and **it kind of led me here**. **It was magical in a way.**"

"So things kind of worked out **the way they should** ... I kind of fell into this. Things just worked out real well."

"I just fell into **the right places**. And I'll admit being where I am right now is 50% pushing me to go in a certain direction and 50% luck. I mean that part time job I got when I first came here, **I had nothing to do with it.**"

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"I've always read a lot about [animals] and **it kind of led me here**.
It was ~~supposed to be a career~~"

Theme 2: Zookeepers see the hand of fate in their opportunities

"So things ~~just happened~~ **and of**
fell into this. Things just worked out real well."

"I just fell into **the right places**. And I'll admit being where I am right now is 50% pushing me to go in a certain direction and 50% luck. I mean that part time job I got when I first came here, **I had nothing to do with it**."

WHAT IS A CALLING?

#3: “DUTY TO SERVE”

“[I]f I don't stay then who's going to be here to make sure that the animals are taken care of the way I want them to be taken care of? **I'm here for that.**”

“The animals never chose to be here and **it's our responsibility to come in and give them the care that they need** and make sure that they're healthy and happy.”

“[T]here's a quote that I read somewhere that says that we become responsible for that we have obtained. That's kind of how I look at it. We obtained these animals... I mean, they have no other choice... They're stuck here. **So I have to do what's best for them.**”

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Theme 3: Zookeepers feel a stewardship toward the animals they serve

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THE MIRACLE OF SERVICE MOTIVATION

Impact of one 5-minute conversation with a scholarship recipient:

- 140% increase in time on phone
- 200-400% increase in donations received
- Effect persisted for at least three months

PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

PASSION

My particular
gifts, talents, &
interest

Hardwiring

PURPOSE

My cause; the
people I want to
help or the
problem I want to
solve

Duty to Serve

PLACE

The organization
or location I feel
drawn to

Destiny

PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

