

ARE YOU A RENTER OR AN OWNER?

By: Robert S. Sher

Many years ago, when I was a CFO, an agency sent our company a temp worker who was so good I hired her on-the-spot for full-time employment.

I could see from the minute she walked into my door that she took responsibility for her actions and had a certain pride and ownership in her job. She was interested in doing an extraordinary job.

Today, more than ever, it is important that each of you do the same thing and go to work every day with one task: do what it takes to own your career. There's just no room in this business climate for renters.

Whether you have a job with seemingly no prospects for advancement, or a temp job to hold you over, you should go to work every day with a good attitude. Smile often, stand out and act like you own it.

As a coach, I ask my clients if they know the difference between a renter and an owner. They get it - in terms of real estate.

In the workplace, like in real estate, renters have defined time commitments. It is more temporary, leaves the doors open so you can leave faster or, perhaps, test the product to see if you like it.

Renters at work join companies because they need paychecks and, perhaps, the benefits. They take jobs with a plan: to escape when something better comes along. They seem like visitors, they are distant, have few decorations in their workspaces and they are unlikely to grab a bite at lunch with colleagues. Work for the renter is half-hearted because they are never committed to the organization. They are there doing time until they can escape.

On the other hand, owners personalize their work spaces, make them comfortable and give off a vibe. They care about belonging and fitting in and they feel a certain pride. Owners collaborate with other employees, help generate ideas to build business and seek new opportunities. They deliver for the team while investing in their own careers. So, now ask yourself, are you a permanent or a temp? Are you in a department or a member of the team?

To succeed, you must proactively take responsibility for yourself and own your careers. To do so, you need to have great personal clarity about what you want, what you offer, and who needs to know about it.

Ready to own your job? Here are some tips:

Think about longer-term vision. The sky is the limit. If you could make a big difference in the world, what would you do? How does that translate to your career?

Develop your own job description. If your company engages employees to participate in setting their goals for the year, come to meetings with ideas for what you want to accomplish. Steer your job to areas that will both benefit the company and provide you with experience in a new area.

Figure out what you love to do. What are your strengths? What sets you apart from those who do what you do?

Take the initiative: Look for things that can expand your experience. Be strategic about the decisions that you make and put yourself in positions to create your own opportunities. Stretch yourself into different roles and activities.

Identify the people you want to work with. Search for co-workers and clients and begin to build relationships.

Be interesting. Read; stay current on ideas that matter to you and your workplace; share what you learn and how it applies.

Listen. I mean really listen and take an interest in what others have to say, learn about the problems they face on-the-job, be interested and provide perspective and support.

What have I done that demonstrates my commitment to others and the organization?
Ask yourself – Are you paying rent or investing in owning your career?

Robert Sher, CPA, is a Certified Executive Coach. Formerly CFO of a large Michigan-based real estate developer, Sher has been a delegate from the Michigan Association of Certified Public Accountants to the National Future Forum working on the CPA "Vision" Project. Sher serves on the boards of numerous charitable and professional organizations. His Email address is: info@bobsher.com.