

Employees that are proactive at work find their jobs more meaningful

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Being proactive at work is key to finding your job meaningful, a new study from ESSEC Business School has revealed.

According to the research, undertaken by Karoline Strauss, Professor of Organisational Behaviour at ESSEC Business School, proactivity at work and job meaningfulness are linked, especially when employees are otherwise unsure about the impact their tasks will have.

The research explored the link between proactive work behaviours and meaningful work in a series of studies, using stories and a daily diary study. The results show that individuals have a role to play in making their work meaningful, and their own behaviour can lead to that fulfilment.

Strauss and her colleagues also found that people's sense of meaningfulness fluctuated from day to day and was shaped by daily experiences. On a day when people said that they were more proactive, they also reported higher levels of meaningfulness.

Reflecting on the study, Karoline Strauss, Professor of Organisational Behaviour at ESSEC Business School, said:

"When someone experiences their work as meaningful, it means they feel that what they're doing is significant and has a positive impact. Work also seems meaningful when people feel that they form a connection with the future, when what they do today has an impact in the future.

"Meaningful work has been linked to job satisfaction, engagement, and motivation. And it's not just good for the employee: it can also be linked to positive outcomes for the employer, like low absenteeism and boosting commitment and job performance. In short, finding work meaningful is beneficial for both employees and employers."

According to Strauss, uncertainty about the future could explain the importance of meaningfulness to employees. She notes that finding such meaning in our work is helpful to us psychologically as we feel that we have some control over our fate.

The paper, 'Creating meaning by taking initiative: Proactive work behavior fosters work meaningfulness', has been published in *Applied Psychology: An International Review*, and can be accessed here (<https://iaap-journals.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/apps.12385>).

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