

Enjoy Life in the Slow Lane

By

David Wilson

This article appeared in My Career in
The Sydney Morning Herald, 18-19 July, 2009, Page 3.

Want to chill out? Here are some professions to consider, writes David Wilson.

Suppose workplace stress is getting too much or you are "between jobs" and keen to avoid CBD sweatshop slavery. Suppose you want to wake on Monday morning keen to work and coast along untroubled by jolts of tension while the money rolls in.

Aside from that long-gone Great Barrier Reef tourism ambassador role, plenty of "nice-work-if-you-can-get-it" opportunities exist. All about lifestyle, low-stress jobs are short on pressure to sink sales or climb a corporate ladder. Instead, typically, they feature routine, a twist of creativity and independence. "The less stressful jobs provide the most control over workflow and effort," says work psychologist Tom Crvenkovic.

They may also generate less salary than their up-tempo drone-zone counterparts but that is the price. A team of insiders sheds light on a range of relaxed roles.

Personal trainer

This job hits the spot for several reasons, Crvenkovic reckons. For a start, it offers workflow control - the one-at-a-time client procession saves the trainer getting overwhelmed. Another benefit is freedom from supervision. Better yet, the job entails plenty of personal interaction, which boosts mental health, as does the high activity

level.

Florist

Organising flowers and plants requires creativity and flair and is fun, success coach Paola Branas-Born says. Mostly, you work at your own pace and effectively are your own boss. You pursue your routine, advise which flower sends the right message and enjoy the passing "people contact". When business picks up at Valentine's and Mother's day, you just hire some help, she says, adding that her own job is low-stress because she has control over how much she does a good work-life balance.

Dog-sitter

Caring for dogs means you undergo exercise without aggravation because they are low-maintenance. Unlike people, they live in "the now", says Branas-Born. They just want attention, food and play. "This makes it the ideal job for those who need to take it easy." If you enjoy being with animals, "caring for them is second nature - no effort really". Tending cats, which sleep up to 18 hours a day, can be easy - although it's said that while dogs have owners, cats have staff.

House painter

Typically, house painters manage their own workload and responsibilities, notes recruitment consultant Michael Dimopoulos. Painters choose this career and, in most cases, quote for jobs and work at their own pace. They are lucky to have no managers and be free from deadlines and targets. The job attracts an "autonomous, laidback style of personality", he says.

Librarian

The perception that being a librarian is a breeze appears to be grounded in truth. In a library's serene sphere, you are not constantly forced to be accountable and comply with social norms, so your anxiety and stress levels drop, organisational psychologist Christopher Shen says. A piqued reaction to a fine may be as harried as it gets.

Gardener

Experimenting with creative ideas in private activates feel-good brain regions, Shen says. Rooted in visualisation, gardening is a classic example of a creative, low-stress occupation. The positive mental processes sparked reduce anxiety and depression. Being out in a wilderness-style world replenishes your mental energy supply.

Surf instructor

Like gardening, being a surf instructor puts you in touch with the wilderness, which invigorates the spirit. Another perk of the job, which Shen calls "absorbing and captivating", is the auditory angle - the pulse of the waves, which provides the score for many relaxation MP3s. In addition, there's the buzz generated by distributing knowledge and the bliss of riding and uniting with a primal force.

Massage therapist

Business coach and recruitment expert Yoon Cannon highlights the charms of massage therapy. "You are in a work environment surrounded by soothing music, aromatic scents, soft lighting, no pressing deadlines and no cranky people yelling at you," Cannon says. You are instantly making other people more relaxed - if you are comfortable with the intimacy and can handle "yuk factor" episodes.

Bookkeeper

Accounting can be cool because you need not negotiate "cranky" clients, Cannon says. You just complete a simple task that business operators are too pressed or numerically inept to execute. Their palpable relief when the tax return is filed may swell your sense of job satisfaction.

* * * *

Based in Melbourne, Australia, Christopher Shen Consulting brings organisational psychology solutions to workplaces, helping people become stronger leaders and teams become better performers.

Website: www.christophershen.com.au