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# Work: From Curse to Calling

**Author and motivational speaker Jon Acuff astutely coaches us out of his personal experience, “I don’t want you to wake**

up at sixty-five and realize, ‘I spent forty of my best years doing something that just funded my life.’” Even as someone who has negotiated and signed hundreds of office leases (i.e. helping to seal the fate of thousands of workers in one office for thousands of cumulative years) that observed fear of so many makes me pause. Somewhere around the time I signed the first WeWork lease in Texas, something changed for me. I loved what I did, but seeing what was coming for the future of work made me want to transition my job from something I did, even enjoyed, as a way to pay for life, to a calling – a platform from which to play some small part in truly advancing and improving the human condition through crafting and operating a profoundly better work ecosystem. While I do not think asset and property management will now require an HR strategy or psychology major (although that probably wouldn’t hurt), it likely does necessitate an understanding of the interconnectivity of employee, employer and asset. When any one of these legs on the three-legged stool of Office aren’t stable, we now appreciate the difficulty of this CRE food group standing for very long.

**Worker - the quest for meaning:** In this last 24 months, I’ve been on many zoom sessions with someone who controls a fair amount of office square footage. When you isolate the person just as another worker navigating life like everyone else, it is ironic because what they are living and experiencing personally is vastly different than the 8-5 office, back-to-normal world they are professionally so hopeful and sure all other workers will sooner than later resort to. The truth about all workers is that they are carefully evaluating the truth of John Acuff’s quote in their life and seriously



contemplating how and when to reset. I do think there is an important realization that today's worker needs to come to in that reset evaluation – nothing about “calling” for me has ever been easy... if anything it's harder. In this me-first, something-for-nothing, look-at-me social media crazed existence we seem to perpetuate, a calling is in fact a place of others-first, self-policing, and accountability. A calling, then by definition, will involve striking the right life/work balance but thrive on collaboration in the right environment with the right team.



**Employer - finding the why:** One of the surprises early in my initial learning curve in the U.S. Army and leading teams was the realization and expectation that I was responsible for nearly every aspect of the soldiers' wellbeing. That included marriage problems, timely car payments, and many other things that initially seemed like none of my business. The Army, while vastly different in its “business”, has figured out that the whole person approach is critical to ensuring that each individual and the team will be at their maximum productivity and effectiveness. But really, what it induced for many like me was a genuine care for those I served as their leader, and when any of us start to feel that level of care out of our organization and those we work for, trust is built and there is almost nothing they could ask of us that we wouldn't excitedly do. One of my favorite organizational thought leaders is Simon Sinek. He so eloquently articulates the importance of the “why” for companies. And when I connect the dots here, if and when business can turn the corner in this moment, rediscover a true “why” and embrace their teams, the move from “curse” to “calling” will be far more prevalent and contagious. As we've explored before, much of this will originate from the formation of many new and amazing compelling companies that are birthed for this reason alone.



**Office - a safe haven for the called:** While Office cannot take nearly all the blame for the “curse” so many employees feel, to remain an active participant in the Employee/Employer world going forward, it must embrace its much more



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active role in the creation and ongoing maintenance in fostering a “calling”. You want both companies and their employees (not just that one designated real estate person) able to say, “Sure I could do what I do elsewhere, but I do it best and enjoy it most right here with my business ‘tribe.’ The sincerity, fluidity, and preemptive nature of this operator’s approach enhances my business, and the flexibility always available aligns with my needs.”

One of the most universally respected and admired human beings and arguably one of the first faces that would appear on the Calling Mt. Rushmore was Mother Teresa. Shane Claiborne, in *The Irresistable Revolution*, relays a story of meeting her and noticing how deformed her feet were. He later found out that they received a limited number of donated shoes and Mother Teresa, always dug through the pile for the worst pair, so that everyone else had better options. When we can look down and see three sets of figuratively deformed feet between the worker, employer, and workspace provider, we’ll know that we have unearthed a true win-win-win.



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