

## College of Business Book Review by Kevin Ayers

Title: "The Three Signs of a Miserable Job"  
Authors: Patrick Lencioni  
Publisher: Random House  
Length: 257 pages  
Price: \$24.95  
Reading time: 8-10 hours  
Reading rating: 9 (1 = very difficult; 10 = very easy)  
Overall rating: 3 (1 = average; 4 = outstanding)

Patrick Lencioni uses his experience as the CEO of a moderate sized fitness equipment company to hone his managerial skills. When this company is bought out he finds himself in need of a challenge. He becomes part owner/manager of a small dysfunctional Italian Restaurant and tests his theories about employee relations, job satisfaction and improved productivity. The three signs of a miserable job is an easy and quality read for anyone interested in job satisfaction and improved productivity

According to Lencioni the three signs of a miserable job include: anonymity, irrelevance, and immeasurement. Anonymity is felt by workers when their managers show little interest in them as people, thus making them irrelevant as workers. Irrelevance is the belief that what the workers are doing does not make a difference to anyone else. Immeasurement is the inability on the part of the workers to measure how they make a difference in others lives. Lencioni puts the majority of the blame for a miserable job squarely on the shoulders of the manager. The miserable job leads to worker dissatisfaction, cynicism, misery, loss of enthusiasm, feelings of inadequacy and lower productivity.

The solution to the miserable job is presented as simple steps the manager should take to address each of the above mentioned areas. To overcome anonymity the manager should take an interest in the individual worker. Get to know the worker outside the workplace. To overcome irrelevance the worker has to recognize how they improve the lives of others by the work that they do. As Lencioni points out, "even if that person is the manager", the worker needs to be aware of the positive impact they have by doing a good job. Finally, the manager needs to identify with the worker how doing a good job can be measured and self monitored. For some jobs this is a fairly easy task; like better tips for a waiter or waitress. For other jobs it may be more challenging. Regardless of the job the worker needs to identify ways to recognize that they are making a contribution to better the lives of someone else.

As the author points out in the book this approach to managing people seems overly simplistic and I might argue that there are individuals that will not be motivated to perform on the job no matter what managerial intervention takes place. However, I was also struck by how few managers/supervisors that I have worked for actually did any of the mentioned steps Lencioni outlined. The very few I remember making attempts at overcoming my anonymity, irrelevance and helping me to self monitor and evaluate

really made a difference in my liking my job and not coincidentally were among my favorite places that I have worked. Those managers were also highly successful and those businesses did very well. I think every manager should read this book and try and implement some of these techniques. You may just learn to love your job.

Kevin Ayers is an Associate Professor of Sport Management in the College of Business at Western Carolina University. For previously reviewed books, visit our website at [www.wcu.edu/cob](http://www.wcu.edu/cob).