

Why Don't Honeymoons Last?

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Ever been part of something that started out with a bang, but ended with a bust? Maybe a dream job turned out to be a dud job. Or a promising investment turned your principle into a pittance. Or your company equity stock became penny stock. Or you purchased something with all the features you wanted but in the end sold it for junk.

Why do relationships, jobs, investments, and things that initially seem perfect turn out to be so imperfect? Why do honeymoons with spouses, bosses, cars, suppliers, and children become such hard work? Why can't parties, vacations, paid-time-off, great partnerships, flourishing companies, successful products, profitable customers, growing portfolios, prosperous economies, puppies, and cute babies last forever?

Of course, some things are physically impossible. People and animals grow up. Money doesn't last forever. Technologies become obsolete. Things wear out. But what about jobs, partnerships, clients, and personal relationships? Can't relationship based activities steadily improve rather than decline? Clearly its possible. Some enjoy an entire career with one company. Some stay happily married to the same person for life. Some

relationships start out strong and finish stronger. Some enjoy the last week of their job at retirement as much as their first week. Some utter "I love you" with their last breath as lovingly as their first one.

Jobs and relationships can endure the test of time, but statistics show that most don't. Less than a third of employees truly enjoy their job causing virtually everyone to change jobs at some point with twelve being the average number of jobs people hold in their career. Over half of marriages end in divorce. Less than a third of company initiatives produce the results that were intended. Most business partnerships fail within a few years.

Yet some choose to stay in long-term relationships and succeed beyond the odds against them. Some keep their honeymoon going for years. So, what do successful people do different? What enables them to happily stay with one employer, spouse, client, or supplier for a very long time? Is it because they know how to survive or do they know how to thrive?

Here are seven principles that consistently underpin long-term honeymoons and happy relationships:

- **Pick well.** Select your jobs, friends, partners, and mates carefully. Don't make hurried decisions based on emotion. Use logic. Be discerning in your selection. Know the attributes that support long-term success, not merely short-term satisfaction. Pick with the end in mind. Seek the help of trusted friends and advisors to offset your biases. Make decisions based on what is best for the goals and needs of everyone involved.
- **Give more than you get.** Be unselfish. Look for opportunities to give before getting. Be proactive, especially when someone is struggling. Buy lunch. Offer a ride. Open a door. Help put on a coat. Carry someone's burden. Help with a proposal, sale, chore, or meal. Teach, coach, exhort, praise, recognize, and reward. Don't give to get, but know that the more you give, the more you will get. Your investment in others is returned with interest.

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- **Be grateful.** The more you know people, the more you will find wrong with them. But appreciate what you have. Look for what is working as much as what isn't. Don't take all the good for granted. Write thank you notes. Appreciate differences. Find contentment from within rather than outside yourself. When problems arise, confront them, but turn your attention to solutions as soon as you have learned the lessons to be learned. Focus on how to make things better going forward rather than dwell on what went wrong in the past.
- **Grow together.** Continually learn, grow, and change together. Everyone changes, but lasting relationships are ones where people change together. Set and pursue shared goals toward a common purpose. Work together as a team. Read books together. Participate in shared investments. Go to seminars, classes, and courses together. Cook, eat, drink, and clean together. Walk, bike, run, ski, and exercise together. Build shared experiences.
- **Stay connected.** Communicate often. Share ideas. Stay informed. Keep everyone involved in important matters. Absence doesn't always make the heart grow fonder. Being uninformed and disconnected makes the heart and mind uncertain. Uncertainty creates fear and doubt. Motives are questioned. Rarely do people fill a void of uncertainty with positive assumptions. Nor are people good mind readers. Make people feel secure by keeping them involved and informed.
- **Be respectful.** Be polite and respectful, especially when in disagreement. Being honest isn't an excuse to be rude. Be the first to offer a compliment to foster a spirit of harmony. Seek to understand before being understood. Show empathy before sharing your opinion. Remain constructive. Avoid words and deeds you might regret. Take responsibility for maintaining a professional, mature, encouraging, and positive atmosphere.
- **Have fun.** Enjoy your relationships. Engage in activities in which everyone participates. Allow time for relaxing, playing, releasing creative energies, and celebrating achievements. Regularly find occasions to open a great bottle, box, or whatever everyone's pleasure. Spend a little extra money on a trip, massage, book, adventure, or dinner. Buy something impractical for all to cherish. Keep things engaging and interesting. Maintain the spark.

Article written by Mike Hawkins, award-winning author of *Activating Your Ambition: A Guide to Coaching the Best Out of Yourself and Others* (www.ActivatingYourAmbition.com), author of the *SCOPE of Leadership* six-book series on coaching leaders to lead as coaches (www.ScopeOfLeadership.com), and president of Alpine Link Corp (www.AlpineLink.com), a boutique consulting firm specializing in leadership development and sales performance improvement.

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