

Are You on the Wrong Bus?

By Ken Robert

How do you know when you're headed in the wrong direction? It's easy to miss your destination if you've given no thought to where you're going. If you took the first job that came along, or the one everyone told you was right for you, with no consideration for your own desires, you may feel as though you're traveling on the wrong bus headed somewhere you never wanted to go. That feeling came over me one day like a thick, green cloud of exhaust fumes.

I was sitting in a hotel conference room listening to a mantra from the pages of a popular business book, "Good to Great" by Jim Collins, a book about how good companies become great ones. It was required reading for everyone in management, and on this particular day the members of our region business team seemed very excited about one line in particular. **Get the right people on the bus and the wrong people off the bus.** They really loved that line. They repeated it over and over.

Get the right people on the bus and the wrong people off the bus. In other words, hire the right people and fire the wrong people. Not exactly groundbreaking, but it really seemed to excite the speakers who chanted it. The rest of us took it as a thinly veiled threat we could deliver to our teams or apply to ourselves, but it impacted me in an unexpected way.

Get the right people on the bus and the wrong people off the bus. In my mind I saw a bus filled with passengers dressed in business attire and clutching briefcases. I realized my job was a seat on that bus and I noticed how so many of the passengers around me clamored and scraped for their seats, how they played games to take them from others, and how, in order to keep them, they often held their tongues, stifled their thoughts, and pretended to be enthused about where the bus was headed. And after all that clamoring, maneuvering, and pretending, most of them spent much of their time complaining about their seats and dreaming of the day when the bus would finally stop and let them off at a place called retirement.

Get the right people on the bus and the wrong people off the bus. Over and over they chanted it, and each time I heard a voice grow louder in my head: **I'm on the wrong bus. I'm on the wrong bus! I'M ON THE WRONG BUS!**

I realized I'd spent a good portion of my life on one wrong bus after another, trying to fit in and keep my seat. But no bus would ever be the right one, because being a passenger on someone's bus had never been my dream. If I were ever going to reach my destination, I'd have to get off the job bus and drive my own dreams.

Are you on the wrong bus? Here are five telltale signs to help you decide.

- **You purchased your ticket using price as your sole criteria.** Even though you don't buy a job, money's definitely a major criterion when choosing a career. If money's the only thing keeping you there, that's a very strong sign you're on the wrong bus. You wouldn't take a bus to Toledo when you want a trip to Vegas because a Toledo ticket was half the cost. Why would you settle for work that sucks the life out of you, even for higher pay, when you deeply desire to be inspired and energized? Drudgery at double the salary is still drudgery.

- **You hopped the first bus out of town.** Did you take your current job because it was the first thing to come along? Maybe your circumstances didn't allow you to be choosy, but yesterday doesn't always dictate today. Start taking steps right now to get your own set of wheels.
- **You took this bus because everyone else was taking it.** Your friends were doing it, your father or mother did it, or maybe your family has been doing it for generations. But you're all grown up now and life is not a game of Follow the Leader. Mary H. Jacobsen wrote an entire book about the perils of "Hand Me Down Dreams." Start exploring other destinations, find out where you want to go, and look for the first safe exit. If your parents jumped in a lake . . .?
- **You find yourself looking out the window and wondering . . .** What lies beyond the streets you're traveling? That bus you're on, the job you took some time ago, may have been just the thing you needed. A job can teach you the ins and outs of a business, develop skills you never knew you had, and yes, pay the bills, but it's okay to change. It's okay to grow. I'm giving you permission to explore new options. If you find yourself in a daydream stay with it and see where it takes you.
- **You just can't wait until the stupid thing stops.** Constantly checking your watch is perhaps the number one sign you're on the wrong bus. In all my travels (all the jobs I've ever held), once I got beyond the learning phase, once I'd mastered the ins and outs of the job, I was bored - painfully bored, and I watched the clock like a time keeper at a sporting event. But taking the steps to build my own business rooted in things I truly love serving the kind of people I love, I only check my watch to make sure I haven't missed an entire day. And that's a clear sign you've taken the wheel and started driving your own dreams.

Doing work you love transcends time. You get lost in it. You're absorbed by it. An intensity comes over you and as Barbara Sher writes, "Life is just too short to live without that kind of focus." And it's way too short to spend riding around in circles on a bus going nowhere.

About the Author

Ken Robert is a Creative Career Consultant, Writer, and Idea Freak who loves helping people find creative and exciting ways to make a living doing what they love. During his fun, idea-popping, 90-minute brain storming consultations, Ken leads clients through a full blown exploration of their passions and purpose and provides them with soul stirring ideas for sources of income that flow from who they truly are and what they truly love. He offers follow up coaching and is available for speaking engagements as well. You can contact him at ken@creative-career-ideas.com or by calling 1-888-TRULY-YOU. Find more details at Creative-Career-Ideas.com