

*Incredible Science (6):*

*From the secret archives of the IgNobel-committee*

## Happy With Your Job?

**Y**ou've heard it all before. Whereas one colleague enjoys his job a lot, another fritters away the entire day either chain smoking, drinking tea or doing anything else just to skive wherever possible. How come? It's all in your genes!

At least, that is what three US psychologists of economics think.

In 1999 they were trying to substantiate what had already been established, namely, the connection between self-confidence and choice of profession. The researchers therefore chose 107 individuals, who, from childhood had performed periodic experimental personality tests. These test persons had to report whether they were happy with their current jobs or not.

In the 1980s it had become clear that people with high self-confidence usually land better jobs. Such top jobs, however, had nothing to do with money or fame but rather with the following five attributes: (a) The requirements of the job have to be versatile. The employee has to (b) identify with the (c) preferably self-determined tasks of the job. He has to (d) receive feedback from others in order to (e) perceive one's own work as relevant and important.



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At that time, it remained an open question as to why there was still a conspicuously high number of grumblers, even in jobs judged as perfect when determined by objective criteria. The personality tests finally provided the answer. People with high self-confidence who at the same time succeed in keeping everything under control don't give up when solving difficult tasks. Thus, the person becomes involved in ever more complex projects which, in turn, always correspond to their disposition and capabilities. Therefore he/she usually ends up working in a profession corresponding to the five top job attributes (see above) as well as matching one's own taste. Other people may have perfect jobs as well – these, however, might not fit their dispositions.

All of this is initiated and mediated by traits acquired in childhood. And, as most of us know, these are half genetic, half environmental (according to the wisdom of traditional biology). So one can say that even if things are running smoothly in the job – it doesn't matter! Crucial is one's own satisfaction.

IgNobel's final assessment: This might all be true. Therefore, regrettably, the paper is no candidate for an IgNobel award. Anyway, the authors themselves have apparently already found their dream jobs – and that should be reward enough.

(S. Kanazawa and M. Still (2000), *Evol. Hum. Behav.* 21(3), p185-190)