Your Sustainable Career

With the focus of this issue of the FMJ on sustainability, it is an opportune time to think about what it means to have a sustainable career. In preparing for this column, I did a brief search on Google.com on sustainable careers and the outcome was very interesting. First of all, most of the material I reviewed, there appears to be a link to personal values, a sense of community and concern for the environment.

The Sustainable Careers Institute defines “sustainable careers” as:

• Environmentally restorative, maximizing opportunities to restore damaged resources
• Socially responsible, bringing courage and creativity to bear on social problems
• Vital and meaningful, with dignity for the working person and decent compensation and opportunities to grow and learn

Beyond values, another critical component to sustaining your career is: what are your talents? A realistic assessment of your skill sets and creativity. Another element to consider is the “fit” between your values and your employer’s values and how well your company or work group is doing related to those values. In their book, Love It Don’t Leave It, 26 Ways to Get What You Want at Work, Beverly Kaye and Susan Jordan-Evans describe the “value fit” as key to staying in an organization and address values in at least a third of their 26 actions. Companies that actually ask their employees what would make them stay would be way ahead of the game in terms of retaining key talent according to Kaye and Jordan-Evans.

A practical takeaway from this is to reflect upon what values are most critical to you in the work setting. Then, consider the “fit” between your values and your employer’s values and how well your company or work group is doing related to those values. In their book, Love It Don’t Leave It, 26 Ways to Get What You Want at Work, Beverly Kaye and Susan Jordan-Evans describe the “value fit” as key to staying in an organization and address values in at least a third of their 26 actions. Companies that actually ask their employees what would make them stay would be way ahead of the game in terms of retaining key talent according to Kaye and Jordan-Evans.

A favorite example of this is how, early in my career, I was encouraged to take on a role as a project manager so I could be included on the “fast track.” It was a very detail-intensive job and required extensive time and energy on things that are not natural for them. For facility managers, this may be providing service with a smile, environmentally sound building design, environmentally sound cleaning agents and energy savings. Today there seems to be more emphasis on sustainability in our buildings and facilities and hopefully in our careers. The possibilities are endless!