

Transcript – Job Satisfaction

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Guest: Jas Singh

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Mariella: Hello and welcome to the Actuaries Institute's CareerView podcast, my name is Mariella. Career and job satisfaction can be influenced by many factors including constructive feedback, achievements, support, recognition, flexibility in a role, work-life balance and great relationships with immediate supervisors and team. For young actuaries about to enter the workforce, or those who have entered the workforce in their first role, there are many myths about career satisfaction and when to stay in a great role versus when to exit a toxic environment. Today we have Jas Singh, Managing Director of SKL actuarial, a specialist actuarial recruitment consulting firm. Jas, welcome.

Jas: Thank You Mariella, thank you for having me here.

Mariella: In this episode today, we're talking about career and job satisfaction, so in a nutshell, we want to learn about what should we be looking for to have satisfaction in our jobs and careers? and what are the signs that are pushing us to leave a job? To start us off Jas, can you tell us what is your background as an actuary and who have you worked with?

Jas: I worked for different life insurance companies as an actuary here in Australia and in the UK. I've been in actual recruitment consulting for the last five years and currently I'm the MD (Managing Director) of SKL actuarial.

Mariella: Great, can you tell us about a challenging role or project that you've come across and how you've handled that?

Jas: Yeah, good question. Many challenges come to mind but I will talk about the challenge which I faced, when I shifted into actuarial recruitment consulting from my previous career as an actuary. When I first went into recruitment, I deliberately took the approach to de-learn some of the habits I developed as an actuary and try to take a fresh approach to how I think and how I work. It was well worth it and in the end, I developed myself immensely as a person and as a professional.

Mariella: So, you mentioned you de-learned some habits. What kind of habits are you talking about?

Jas: Some of the habits that come to mind are for example, quietly working away on your problems and being slightly siloed. Networking is one of the big parts of (the) recruitment industry and it certainly was a challenge to me, to make that a full-time job, as opposed to something that you do if you feel like it.

Mariella: Great, thanks for sharing that. In your perspective what are the key factors that create job satisfaction?

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Jas: I try to filter that down to three things. 1. Engagement, so what I mean by that is engagement with your role. You've got to feel the passion for the role and enjoy the work that you do. 2. is your immediate team and your boss and what I mean by that is you've got to have a healthy relationship and healthy respect for your peers and your boss. Thirdly, the organization. In my experience well-managed businesses with clear strategies (are) a lot better to work for relative to companies without clear strategies and poor management.

Mariella: With those key factors, do you see these changing in 20 years' time?

Jas: Well, yes and no. I think that the three key factors in my view stay the same, however the organizational factor probably comes more into play. I feel that organizations which whom are forward-looking whom are actually investing in technology and are walking the walk and talking the talk, will have more positive impact on the job satisfaction.

Mariella: What has been your favourite project to date?

Jas: There's been a couple of favourite projects that I've taken in my career. The first one that comes to mind is (myself) moving to the UK for a few years. I moved there in my early 20s, set up a new life for a few years, that was quite exciting, the travels, the new work environment, the new nature of the actuarial work that I found there versus here, and the second project more recently up until five years ago actually was helping to set up SKL, I was one of the founding directors of SKL and that was quite good setting up a new business from scratch, building up a structure, helping to build a brand doing basic things like organizing the furniture, organizing the fridge and (then) doing complex things like organizing the legal and working on the marketing and actually working in the business for very long hours initially for very little reward, it was good fun.

Mariella: That's great and in terms of working abroad, would you encourage more young actuaries to do that in their careers?

Jas: Yeah definitely, I think I've actually said this before I've held a few presentations that there is an optimal age after you qualify or close to qualification in the mid to late 20's when there's less strings attached here. It's a great time to go to a market, it can be any market that interests you. It can be the European market, London or it can be an Asian market and it's a great choice to make. You've just got to be careful as to where you're going, what kind of company are you going to work with, what's their values and how your CV is going to go forward and then how you're going to come back, always have a plan to get back with an advanced CV.

Mariella: Yeah, and be careful in what sense?

Jas: Just be careful along the lines of, sometimes as a newbie to the market, you're tempted into organizations which necessarily don't have the best working conditions or going through a morale issue so just research the market you're going into, research the company you're going into. Going into Asian markets, there's a big difference between working for a global company versus a local company. Local company would have different cultures, different working styles, you just have to be careful as to what you're walking into. Don't assume the

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world runs like little Australia it's a very big place with very different ways of working.

Mariella: and how do you appropriately negotiate conflict in the workforce?

Jas: Yeah, that's a very tricky scenario. My view on that is that firstly, you've got to be mature and you've got to understand the drivers behind the conflict and drivers of the person engaged in that conflict. Quite often, if you dig deep enough and look broad enough with a different perspective, you'll find that the real reasons for conflict existing are different to what they seem to be on the surface. So, my advice to negotiate in conflict would be to negotiate with a level of astuteness and a level of maturity.

Mariella: and when should you stay in a role and ideally how long for?

Jas: You should stay in the role for the right reasons, which, in my view should be about your personal and career development and professional development and the role should help you achieve your career goals. While personal relationships with your team and your boss are important as I mentioned earlier, these relationships should not be the sole reason for staying in any particular role.

Mariella: What advice do you have for young actuaries about to start their actuarial career?

Jas: The key advice I would have for young actuaries is to be ready to deal with lots of change and the potential for them doing many, many roles or for that matter having multiple careers. Actuary of the future in my view should be a networker, data and technology focused transformer and a futurist with keen interest in inventing, for this stay tuned for the next SKL blog in which I'll elaborate further on my thoughts on what the actuary of the future would look like.

Mariella: What do you wish you knew during the start of your actuarial career that you now know?

Jas: That's a that's a really good questions I reflect about that quite a bit and I feel I think the answer to that is that me, to my own tastes, what I like doing. My own self, my own mind and what I enjoy doing. I just feel for a few years, I did roles which I didn't really enjoy and hence I didn't thrive in and I think that that's the answer, you've got to know yourself.

Mariella: Awesome thanks for that. Well that's all we've got time for today thanks for joining us Jas, it's great to hear from a unique perspective on the profession and we appreciate your insights and your time taken today.

Jas: No problem Mariella, it's a pleasure.

Mariella: We hope you enjoyed this discussion look out for career articles on actuaries.digital and listen to other episodes on our CareerView podcast. Get in touch with us through the comments on today's conversation and let us know what your questions what questions you'd like answered next on CareerView. I'm Mariella, bye for now.