

To Succeed in Any Job You Need to Create Work

By Harrison Barnes

To be denied the right to work is to be denied the right to participate in the society in which we live. It is for this reason that having the opportunity to work is probably the most important part of your existence.

Work is not something to be detested; instead, it is a path to mental and economic stability, happiness, and purpose in our lives. To be around people who think otherwise is never in your best interest. To associate work with something negative is also never in your best interest. The most important of all of your career skills is the ability to create productive work. The ability to create productive work is something that will change your career for the better, and it can also take you further than you might have ever believed in your chosen path.

Perhaps you know how to create work in your chosen profession and are doing it already. Perhaps you are not creating work in your chosen profession, or you detest work. Regardless of your current attitude towards work, you need to understand how to create work. The people who create work in our society are the ones who are the happiest, the ones who rarely lose their jobs, the ones who make the most money, and the ones who are the most stable in all respects throughout their lives. You need to know how to create work. Creating work is essential to your existence.

As a manager and also as someone who works very hard at my job, one of the most distressing things that I see is people who fail to create work in their jobs, or who look for ways to avoid work. I am a firm believer in the importance of work, not just from the standpoint that work provides us money with which to live, but also because the act of work is how we participate in society.

One of my jobs is managing a legal recruiting firm called BCG Attorney Search. As part of this job, I have had the opportunity to work with numerous **recruiters** throughout the years. Some of these recruiters have been absolutely exceptional, and others have been quite marginal. It is very easy for me to tell an outstanding **legal recruiter** from an average one. My conclusions are based on the recruiter's ability to create work. Regardless of your profession, understanding the key behind this observation and what it means will be of great assistance to you.

A legal recruiter's job typically involves (1) working with candidates who approach the legal recruiting firm seeking placement and (2) finding new candidates to work with. I have always sat in an office with legal recruiters and have had the pleasure of watching them very closely. Several years ago I remember having a recruiter who would come in at 8 a.m. every day and would generally leave by around 12 to 1 p.m. most days. When I would ask him why he was leaving so early he would generally say something to the effect of "there are no new candidates today." What he was saying was that he had done all of the work that had been presented to him-no more and no less. My obvious question for him was along the lines of, "Why not go out and look for new candidates?"

There is always plenty of work for anyone in sales to do beyond the tasks that are immediately presented to them. They can call old leads. They can send letters to old clients, trying to reactivate some old accounts. They can call old sales and see how the product is working out. They can look for new sources of sales. They can socialize to meet new potential clients. The list of work you can do to find more work and be good at your job is almost endless.

In my career, I have run across all sorts of people. I have met countless people who I know have **jobs making \$500,000 a year or more**. By simply examining their work ethics, I always know if they will last at this income level over the long-term. The ones who fail my observational test are never on top for long. The only thing I am looking for is whether this person knows how to create work in his or her job. When you create work you always have something to do and you are always adding value.

Work is most often not something that jumps right into our line of sight. In any job you have it is important to realize that someone created the job you are doing. It is up to you to maintain this job, ensuring that this job continues to create value for your employer. You should also take the initiative to add tasks to this job

that continue to make it as effective and profitable for your employer as possible.

For example, a secretary's main job may be to answer the phone. While waiting for the phone to ring, there should also be other jobs that the secretary is working on, to be more productive. The ability to create work will give the secretary more value to her employer, and will gain the secretary more appreciation. Few sane employers would ever let someone like her go.

In my job I have managed hundreds of employees. I have had the opportunity to work with some truly exceptional people. I would estimate that, in terms of people who are truly exceptional and indispensable in good times and in bad, the proportion of exceptional performers to average performers is around one in 10. That is, only one in 10 people are really, truly exceptional performers. The exceptional performers are the people whom employers rely upon and try to hang on to in all economic climates. The poor to average performers are not as important to the organization. In fact, unless a job is extremely well defined and measured, the poor to average performers will in many cases drag the company down to some degree. What I have noticed from all truly stellar performers is that they have the ability to consistently create work that the company values.

These workers tend to appear to have the happiest personal lives and make the most money in their jobs. I have seen this pattern enough times in my career that I really believe there is something to it. These same individuals also typically have the most employment stability. When they come to work at our company they may have been with their previous employer 10 years or more. They always have good references. They are the sorts of people companies and groups want to keep around.

One of the most infuriating things for me as a manager is when I walk around the office and see people screwing around, not really doing any work. As our organization grew several years ago I wanted to ensure that our employees were always working on productive tasks, so I started giving managers weekly tasks to do. I would write these tasks up on a Sunday night and then speak with our managers in a one-on-one meeting each week to gauge the tasks. The meetings tended to follow two sorts of tracks (and generally still do to this day):

One type of manager would come into the meeting, his team having accomplished most of the tasks, and he would be very familiar with the status of each of the tasks. He would be excited to report on his progress, and would be aware of the exact amount of work required to complete each task, and would provide me with an estimated date of completion. This manager might also suggest new tasks in addition to the existing tasks that needed to be done, for the organization's benefit. In addition, ongoing tasks that were started would always be brought to completion, and never stopped once they were underway. Before ever requesting additional staff, this type of manager would always ensure that their people were fully utilized and were doing their work as efficiently as possible.

The other type of manager would come into the meeting and would have accomplished few of the tasks. He might even be slightly annoyed at having to report on the status of the tasks. He would state that certain tasks had not been completed or started, for reasons that were very trivial-and only served to help him avoid starting the tasks. This manager would go on to complain about his workload, and would request more staff. In subsequent meetings, I would find that tasks that the manager had started had, for some reason, suddenly been abandoned. The manager would never suggest new work that could be done.

While I hate to make the distinction between managers in such a black and white manner, this is something I have seen over and over and over again. It goes without saying that the people I want on my team are the managers who are proactive. You do not need to be a manager to be proactive, however. Everyone needs to be proactive in his or her job in order to create work.

You need to be working for companies and people who are proactive in creating work. Young companies are generally hungrier and know how to create work better than older ones. Companies that are expanding and not contracting generally know how to create work. You need to be creating work inside your organization. I believe that entrepreneurs are the engines of our society, because they are constantly trying to create work and, in the process, they create new jobs.

In the movie About Schmidt, Jack Nicholson plays an actuary in Omaha who retires from his job after a long career. In the movie we see Nicholson go back to the office weeks after retirement in an effort to give the organization some sort of information he had been working on prior to his retirement. He speaks to his replacement in the job he once held, and is politely told that he is no longer needed. Nicholson is crushed and the audience realizes that the fact that he is no longer needed by the company, to him, almost means he is no longer part of society.

People who cannot work in society are the most unhappy and troubled. To work is to be part of society, an active participant. To be prohibited from working is to be cast out by society. There is nothing more crushing to people than being prohibited from working.

After taking vacations most of us are happy to get back to work. Work defines our psyche and our sense of purpose. People with no sense of purpose often go mad.

You need to create work in your job, and to continue to create work. You should also stay away from people in your job who are critical of the act of work. While I believe unions have their place, they can be very dangerous in many respects because their goal is often to protect you from doing too much work. Work is healthy for you and it gives you purpose. If anything, you should have more work rather than less. People who try to give you distaste for work are extremely dangerous because your identity and life, for the most part, revolve around work.

You have a more wonderful and productive life and existence the closer you are to work. The more productive work you create, the better you will do in your job. Cherishing your work and creating more work will change your career and life.

This article was originally published in www.aharrisonbarnes.com. A. Harrison Barnes is the founder and CEO of CareerMission.com, the parent company of more than 100 job search websites, employment services, recruiting firms, online employment news magazines and student loan companies. Harrison also writes daily articles to inspire and motivate job seekers. Log on to HarrisonBarnes.com to read many more such inspirational articles.