

Weight Loss, Security Guards, Hard Work and Your Career

By [Harrison Barnes](#)

In the Midwest, where I am from, many of the men and women there tend to start getting bigger and bigger, and wider and wider, when they hit their 30s. I am not saying they all do, of course, but there is a definite trend there that I believe is much, much more "pronounced" than in other areas of the country.

On the block where I grew up, a group of these women got together and decided to do something about it by exercising. For hours each day, in a group of five or more, they would walk around the neighborhood in plus sized sweatpants with water bottles. Rain or shine, I would see them out there meandering around the neighborhood. It must have been a lot of work. In the winters, I would see them sitting on indoor bicycles at the gym peddling away while watching soap operas.

However, when I saw these same women at neighborhood picnics they would eat all sorts of sweets, carbohydrates and other unhealthy items. It does not take a rocket scientist to know that exercise does not change anything if you do not change your diet. If anything, a lot of exercise might even make you eat more and gain more weight. For years I watched these women walk around the neighborhood without losing any weight. They worked and they worked and nothing ever happened.

To me these women are a very good metaphor for what most of us do in one way or another with our careers: *We may work a lot but we do not get anywhere.* We do not get anywhere because we are not willing to do the "hard work" to get ahead.

In the case of weight loss, the really "hard work" is resisting the temptation to eat when you are hungry, changing your eating habits, eating less, eating less satisfying foods. That is easier said than done—but this is where success or failure comes from in terms of losing the weight. It is not the amount of work you that matters ... it is how hard you work that matters. Resisting the temptation to eat when you are hungry is much more difficult than walking around the neighborhood at 2 miles an hour while gossiping with your other friends.

The skill and ability to fight the urge to eat is difficult and hard work. It is in hard work, though, that we get our real results.

When I was in college, our fraternity used to have parties with 500+ kids every Friday night. They were a "for profit" enterprise and we invited the whole school, served cheap beer and used the funds from the party to subsidize the expenses of running the house.

Since there were so many people at the parties, we used to hire a retired Chicago policeman to stand by the door in case there were any problems, fights and so forth.

He would show up around 9:00 pm and stand in the doorway until about 1:00 am and then leave. He would not talk much and would stand there in cold, heat and all sorts of weather just waiting until the party was over. Despite being in his 60s, he was a large man and always carried a gun. He looked menacing and served as a deterrent for people getting out of control and trashing out house.

At the end of the party, we would pay him \$150 for his "security" services. He was more expensive than other guards we could have hired because he carried a gun. We thought it was "cool" to have a guy at the party with a gun and a good deterrent in case something went wrong.

I was the Treasurer of my fraternity my junior year of college and used to be in charge of paying him. I thought that \$150 seemed like a lot of money to pay him for standing around. One day I told him that I thought he had a pretty good job standing there doing nothing for a few hours. That was the only time I ever saw him get mad:

"I'll tell you something," he said. "When you are my age you will not be spending your Friday nights standing on the porch of a fraternity house. I guarantee it."

I have thought about this statement numerous times throughout the years. He was right, of course, but I felt there was a lot more depth to what he was talking about than I was seeing. The policeman was working hard and making a major effort—working all Friday night—and yet he was not really getting ahead.

However, there were not many other expectations for the policeman beyond standing there.

He was not expected to engage in long division.

- He was not expected to sell anything.
- He was not expected to perform surgery.
- He was not held responsible for the results of a marketing campaign.
- He was not charged with helping people understand their problems.
- He was not responsible for merging two companies together.
- He was not responsible for giving complex stock advice.
- He was not given complex tasks to think about when he went home that evening.

He was just expected to stand there. For the most part, he could think about what he wanted, when he wanted. No one was controlling his mind.

Towards the end of his life—after a tragedy struck his business, my grandfather was a security guard and sat in a booth at the entrance to a factory every evening not doing much of anything. He just sat there and there was no expectation that he engage in any type of complex thought, movement, or likewise. He was just expected to sit there. After having had a rewarding and exciting career, his life suddenly changed when he was expected to do nothing. He died a short time after

starting the job.

Just about everything that you can do that is going to provide substantial economic and societal rewards is going to be difficult, taxing and hard work.

It is going to require that you remain focused and use your mind in ways that others do not. It may require that you take risks.

- It may require that you think so hard that you get tired.
- It may require you organize people to help you.
- It may require you move far away.
- It is going to require you do work that others do not want to or cannot do.

When I was growing up, I always heard about how doctors and lawyers made a lot of money. I never understood why. Now I do. Why do they do so well? Because they do work that others do not want to do and the work they do is hard.

First, they have to go to school and stay focused for a decade or more. They have to sit through classes and do well in them. They have to take tests and study a lot. They have to do all this instead of working and potentially enjoying the fruits of their labor right away.

Not only do they have to invest all of this effort in school, but they invest all of this effort and risk failing. They may not get into a medical school or law school. They may flunk out of medical school or law school. They may not pass their medical boards or the Bar Exam. All of this is tough.

And it is risky.

Second, they have to work very, very hard when they get out of school. In the case of a doctor, they may have to stay up for 48+ hours several times a week and be responsible for peoples' lives while they are working. In addition, they need to spend years working for low wages before they even can get a decent salary.

A lawyer may work 3,000+ hours a year for years inside of a law firm reading papers, filing things, being yelled at and more. The work is difficult and it is not easy. The work has a price. And even after all of this the lawyer is not guaranteed a good job, salary and so forth.

The components that make doctors and lawyers highly paid are

Hard work

- Sacrifice
- Risk
- Using their mind
- Always being available
- Committing to something for a long period

...and more.

This is far different from what the typical security guard is expected to do. Most security guards are just expected to stand there. None of the hard work, commitment, sacrifice and so forth is at all necessary.

When the most successful people in the world go to work—whether it be Warren Buffet, Steve Jobs, or otherwise—they probably are not working longer hours than you or I are working. However, the quality of their time and the way they use their minds during work is going to be drastically different than the way we use our minds and time.

- They are going to be more focused.
- They are going to be engaged in complex thoughts and pushing their minds instead of daydreaming.
- They are going to confront difficult issues and concepts instead of avoiding them.
- They are going to be honest with themselves about what they are doing right and wrong.
- They may force themselves into a difficult routine even if it is not comfortable.

The people who succeed are willing to work harder. It is like this with everything. The quality of the work you do is about how hard you think, the

The most successful salespeople, for example, spend lots of time prospecting. They follow up with past clients. They send out birthday cards. They go out to lots of dinners. They make phone calls even when they do not want to. They take pains to make sure they have the best appearance and dress. They read and think about sales. They push themselves in ways that people who are not successful do not. In contrast, the person who is not successful may spend their time not being as “productive” and taxing their mind to the same degree.

This is the difference.

In your career, you need to do the “hard stuff” and make sure that you are doing what others will not. This is the key to success and it is going to make all the difference. You need to use your mind when others are not. You need to take risks when others are not. You need to be “on the ball” when others are not.

Read More About It is Important to Look and Act Healthy and Take Care of Yourself:

- [Supermodels, Your Body and Your Mind](#)
- [Use Existing Resources](#)