

Working on Sundays and Concentrating on Your Work

By [Harrison Barnes](#)

There is a secret to success, common among most successful people out there that I have seen time and time again: Working on Sundays.

When I was practicing law, the best attorneys were always in on Sundays.

When I was a student in college and law school, the best students always worked on Sundays.

In my professional career, a good portion of the most accomplished executives and others I have known work on Sundays.

When I say "work on Sundays" I mean that they are working the entire day. They are not working for a few hours—they dedicate most of their day to working on Sundays. They may go for a run in the morning, to church, or have brunch with their families; however, they still end up working the majority of the day.

There is something about Sundays that seems to attract the best, brightest, and most accomplished in the professional world. When you talk to the best lawyers, accountants, researchers, business executives, and others, a good portion of them will declare a profound respect for working on Sundays.

What is it about Sundays that attracts so many people? I have studied successful people all of my career and whenever I meet these "Sunday workers," I always ask them one thing: "Why do you like working on Sundays?"

Before I started asking these successful people why they work on Sundays, I was under the impression that they must like to work hard, be trying to get ahead—competing for a raise, promotion, and so forth. To some extent, I think this is true for many people. But the overwhelming answer that I have heard from all of these people who work on Sundays is this: "*It is the only day of the week when I can work without interruptions.*"

To me, this answer was fascinating—although I had never really thought about interruptions and how detrimental they could be at that point in my career. Very much wanting success and to be part of the crowd of people I saw working on Sundays, I too started working on Sundays more than 25 years ago ... and since then (holidays excluded) I have never missed a beat. Sunday is the day that is sacrosanct for me and working on Sundays is something that I need to do.

Why Sunday? Personally, I do not think people need to work on Sunday. The reason so many people (myself included) work on Sunday is because they are overtaken with interruptions throughout the week. It is as if it is impossible to get anything done during work hours. This is a trap everyone falls into:

- Their phone rings constantly (and they answer it)
- They check their email every few minutes
- They get up, go and get coffee, and chat in the hall
- They surf the Internet while working
- They day dream about this or that

On Sundays (for the most part) the phone stops ringing, the "urgent emails" stop coming and the people to chat with are not around. There is more reason to focus and there are fewer distractions. Sundays are when most people can get stuff done.

Recently I was speaking with a very well-known executive running a good-sized company who had an accident and had injured his brain: "I am the brains behind the business and a brain injury was not a good thing for the business," he told me.

When you look at the best executives (and the best people in any profession for that matter), their strength comes from their ability to think and make decisions. It is their ability to concentrate, draw upon their experience and get things done, where their true value comes from. In most cases, the best professionals are not paid to day dream, surf the Internet, or mindlessly check their email all day: Instead, they are paid for their powers of concentration and ability to formulate solutions and analyze, and communicate information in ways that others cannot.

I love watching shows about doctors trying to decipher various illnesses people have. A doctor is someone who is paid to think, paid to concentrate, and paid for the ability that they can interpret information. It is the same thing with most lawyers. Anyone who is good at their job (and has reached a good level of professional standing based on their abilities) has the ability to concentrate on the task at hand. This is the case for a good car mechanic just as it is the case for a physicist. Our abilities and the assessment of our abilities are determined largely by our ability to concentrate.

You do not need Sundays in order to concentrate. The most successful people should not need Sundays to concentrate. Instead, they should develop the habit and self-discipline to be able to concentrate every day, all of the time.

There are different types of work you can do on your job. There are both qualitative and quantitative dimensions of your job:

- Quantitative aspects of your job involves such things as how many hours you are working, or how much of a product you produce. For example, you might say you wrote a 10 page memo, or worked for 12 hours straight.
- Qualitative aspects of your job involves such things as (1) the intensity of your work, (2) how efficient you are with your work, (3) how hard you concentrate on your work, (4) how organized you are while working in order to make the best use of your time. For example, working three hours with no interruptions, concentrating and thinking very hard is something that is far more difficult than working for five hours with no interruptions.

The professional world is generally set up to reward people who are able to do an exceptional job on the qualitative aspects of their work. The most intelligent people and the people who do the best in the world are also the people who are able to do the best in the qualitative aspects of the work they do.

In college, for some strange reason, I placed into honors calculus. In order to do well in honors calculus you needed to be able to concentrate on very long drawn-out problems that were extremely sophisticated and had many, many twists and turns built into them. In contrast, regular calculus (which I transferred into later) was in the same class but just involved "baby problems" that were far less sophisticated and much easier to do. Everyone I knew, who was able to complete honors calculus and did not "chicken out" and transfer to another course, is doing exceptionally well professionally to this day. They are doctors, PhDs, and others. I have no doubt that the ability to think through and concentrate for long periods of time that the course inculcated in them made a difference to some extent in what happened to them.

The course taught more than calculus: It taught the ability to concentrate on complex issues for a long period of time and see a depth to problems (and solutions) that other people did not.

If you can concentrate for a long period of time on a single issue, you will improve the quality of the work that you do. Nothing is more important than the qualitative aspects of your work. The qualitative aspects of your work are incredibly important because they end up determining your outcome.

Good companies and employers value efficiency. Good companies and employers value people who can get more done in less time. Good companies and employers value people who are organized and think through issues when they are working on something.

Most employers can tell if you are "full of it" and not concentrating during work. When an employer walks around the office and sees a bunch of people talking and messing around, taking long lunches, doing all sorts of personal calls, screwing around on the Internet, and more — they know who is being productive with their time and who is not. No employer is stupid. What would you think if you were an employer?

When the time comes to make promotional decisions, the people who are promoted in companies are the people who have the ability to concentrate on the task at hand. Concentrating on the task at hand and not getting distracted is incredibly important. You need to work hard and be focused.

The people who work so hard on Sundays (in my opinion) are doing so because they have a hard time concentrating during the week. However, if you can concentrate during the week and minimize distractions then you do not need a Sunday. 100% focus during the week is crucial and it could change your career and life. The qualitative and not the quantitative aspects of your work are the most important.

At the end of each day you should be tired of having exercised and concentrated your mind. If you take breaks from your work every 45 minutes or so, you should be tired of having concentrated on your work. You should put your full effort on whatever you do.

You should also not try and do more than one thing at a time. Break up your day into the tasks you would like to accomplish and do them at specified times. Work on tasks in 30 minute increments (or whatever suits you). Never try and do more than one thing at a time.

Few people realize how crucial managing their work, time and qualitative aspects of their work are. You need to concentrate. Your mind and your use of it is where all of the rewards are going to come from. You need to give everything you are doing your full attention.