

## You Need to Pay the Cost

By [Harrison Barnes](#)

I have been working since the time I was around 9 years old. When I was 9 years old, I wrote my age down illegibly on an employment application so that I could get a job delivering newspapers for the [Detroit News](#). At the time, you needed to be 11 in order to get a job delivering the afternoon newspaper. Within a few years, I also got a job delivering the morning newspaper, [The Detroit Free Press](#).

I took on the largest paper routes my managers would allow me to have and, within a few years, was delivering hundreds of papers per day. The volume of papers on some days was so great that my bicycle would break. The handlebars would snap off. Some days I would have so many papers that the rack on the back would be pushing on the tire to the point that the bike's rear tire would not move. On those days, I often would carry sacks of papers on my back and push my bike a mile or more until I had gotten rid of enough papers to lighten the load enough for the bike. On one occasion a cheap bike I had purchased at Sears simply broke in half.

On rainy and snowy days, other kids would have their mothers and fathers help them with the paper route. They would drive them around in warm, dry cars and help their kids do the route. I lived with a single mother and she was off working—or sleeping—when I delivered my papers. Consequently, except for the occasional Sunday when my dad came to visit me from the other side of town, I did my paper route completely alone.

When I started delivering papers in the morning, I had customers who left the house at 6:30 a.m. and wanted the paper before they left for work. Therefore, I needed to be up by at least 5:00 every day because some of these customers were at the end of my paper route. I would finish my paper route by 6:30 and then go home and sleep an hour or so before getting up and riding to school. I lived about three miles from school and would ride my bike through snow, slush, and storms to get there after the paper route.

Despite all this hard work, having a paper route gave me tremendous flexibility and financial freedom in my life—from the age of 9.

- I purchased mopeds and motor scooters to ride years before I could legally ride them.
- Before that I was purchasing expensive BMX bikes and doing tricks on ramps and other obstacles on my driveway.
- I also purchased video games, bought snacks at the store, and always had lots of extra spending money. About every six months I purchased a new Sony Walkman.
- I maintained an exotic fish collection and even purchased myself an exotic bird.
- I joined the Columbia Record and Tape Club and got at least one new tape per month that I would listen to while doing my paper route.
- I bought new tennis racquets when I wanted to, basketballs, soccer balls, expensive baseball mitts, and similar athletic gear.

To the astonishment of the kids in my elementary school—not to mention parents and teachers—by the age of 12 I had started riding to school in the mornings on a moped I purchased (one of several I would have through the years). It is not even legal to drive a moped until you are 15—you need a driver's license, for one—but I was doing it at the age of 12. Pulling up to school on a moped when you're 12 years old is like driving a top-of-the-line Ferrari to high school at the age of 16. It was unheard of and it put other kids quite in awe of me—but also a little jealous, I think. (The school called my mother, outraged, about my riding to school on a moped, so I started riding it to a fast-food restaurant a block from the school and walking from there. I was raised with very little supervision, so pretty much anything went.)

It was around the time I started buying myself nice things that people started to steal from me. Most of the friends in my neighborhood—and kids my age—were dependent on their parents to buy them things and do things for them. Since I seemed to have an endless supply of money, I think a lot of kids became very jealous and decided that the way to get the things they wanted was to steal them from me.

At first it was little things. A calculator watch was stolen out of my locker during gym class. Tapes were stolen out of my locker. Then a tennis racquet was stolen. Then a Walkman was stolen. In 1982, a good Sony Walkman with all the bells and whistles cost around \$275.

When I reported the Walkman stolen and I told the school about it, they decided to bring in the police. A police detective showed up at my school and I was paged to the principal's office for a discussion with the detective during class. The detective and principal seemed to take the theft extremely seriously.

"I see here you have had your locker broken into three times in the past six months," the detective told me. "Why do you think that is?"

I told him I did not know.

"You're the kid with all the paper routes?" he asked me. "I've seen you on your bike out there every day for years," he said.

"Yes, that's me," I told him proudly.

"Maybe you are enjoying your success as a paperboy too much. Maybe you ought to start keeping all your toys at home instead of bringing them to school?" he said.

What the detective was saying was that it was my fault for bringing the things I had purchased to school. I had been stolen from because I had made the mistake of showing off the things I had.

To my astonishment, the detective was able to get all of my things back. He rounded up students that the principal suspected might be involved, interrogated them, visited their parents, and within a few days I had all of my things back—including a lot of my tapes and other small things that had been stolen.

I never listened to this detective's advice and continued bringing stuff to school. I continued to enjoy the fruits of my labor. I did learn, however, to be much more careful with my things to avoid getting them stolen, and it stopped for the most part. I could tell that many people were still somewhat resentful of the stuff I was having fun purchasing and using.

At the time, though, I always had the idea of "abundance" in my mind. I believed that there was endless money, **endless opportunities**, and more available. I did not see the need to aggressively protect everything I had. I felt that an attitude of trying to protect everything was the wrong place to put my effort. I felt that spending my energy trying to protect what I had was the wrong place to put my energy. If I protected what I had, that was all I would ever have. If I concentrated on working and growth, I would produce more.

On a paper route you need to "go collecting" every week or two to get the money that people owe you for the papers you deliver. By this time, I was bringing in at least \$1,000 a month in collections and needed to give more than half of that to the paper companies I did the deliveries for.

Typically, I would just throw all the money in a drawer in my room. Every few weeks my paper manager would stop by and he would collect the money I owed the company for the newspapers. I would keep the rest of the money in a sort of ongoing "till" in my drawer. I never ran out of money and there was always much more left over than I would spend.

One day I had five or six kids over to play video games, some of whom I did not know. It was a fun day, but a few days later when I went into my money drawer in my bedroom I noticed that a stack of at least thirty \$20 bills was missing. I was panicked. A few days later, my manager came by my house looking for \$500 or so for the papers I had sold. I did not have the money. The next day when I came back from my paper route at 7:00 a.m., he was standing on my front porch lecturing my mother. I think she ended up writing him a check and I paid her back a short while later.

This episode upset me a bit. I never got that money back and never knew who stole it. What I did realize, though, is that there are a lot of people—even those close to us—who are not willing to pay the price for the things they want in their lives.

- The kids who stole my tennis racquets, bikes, Walkman, and so forth were not willing to pay the price.
- The kid or kids who stole the money out of my drawer were unwilling to pay the price.

What is the price? For me, it was working hard at least four hours a day—in rain and in shine. It was putting myself out there and doing something lots of others were unwilling to do.

Throughout the rest of my life and career—repeatedly—I have met with people who were unwilling to pay the price to advance in their careers. They were:

- Unwilling to put in the hours
- Unwilling to show the commitment
- Unwilling to get the extra schooling
- Unwilling to sacrifice
- Unwilling to control their emotions
- Unwilling to go out and meet people instead of wallowing
- Unwilling to keep going when others were quitting

Instead, most of these people were looking for shortcuts. Everyone wants a shortcut. The people seeking the biggest shortcuts, of course, wind up in jail or prison eventually. But most people do not go to prison. Instead, they continually take one job after another hoping they can get ahead fast. They **look for the job** that is easiest. They try to make a quick buck instead of providing long-term value.

Yesterday I met a very interesting woman. I live in Malibu and have been hearing for the past month or so about this woman who is a good masseuse. For the past few weeks I have been trying to get in touch with her. She has had all sorts of scheduling conflicts and so forth but finally, last night, she was able to give me a massage—from 7:00 to 9:00 p.m.

She showed up and 6:55 and was ready to go at exactly 7:00. She is around 27 or 28 years old and attractive. She is also very muscular and strong. It was a good massage. Since I have been getting a massage for years, I am very familiar with most of the people in the business in my area. Most of them are not busy—and most of them need work. I was curious about her success and started making small talk.

On an average day, she gives at least twelve hours of massages—seven days a week. Some days she works more. She also exercises seven days a week because she believes it is important to look good and stay in good shape for the work that she does. She goes to crazy "boot camp" type exercise classes where she says more than 50% of the people can never complete the ninety-minute exercise routine it is so physically taxing.

She told me she has clients who request massages at 2:00 a.m. (one is a famous producer who likes to edit movies late at night and wind down with a massage afterward); other clients request massages at 6:00 a.m. (they like to be relaxed before work). She will show up and give a massage anywhere and at any time—assuming she is not giving another massage.

She charges \$120 an hour to give a massage. This means that, conservatively, she is probably earning \$6,000-\$7,000 a week. She lives in Malibu in a home I would estimate she rents for at least \$7,500 a month. She lives well.

For someone as young as she was, I was amazed at her success. She dropped out of college in Minnesota after two years and took a Greyhound bus to California with a friend. She had no idea what she was going to do. She liked it here, so she decided to look for a job. She found a job working for a chiropractor on Craigslist giving massages to his patients. The job paid \$25.00 an hour and she was only paid during the time the chiropractor had patients—so she was not working the whole day and spent a lot of time sitting around.

Nevertheless, she was incredibly happy to have the job and gave it everything she had. She did not hold back and gave the best massages she could to every single patient. Eventually, the patients started asking her to give them massages outside of the doctor's office and told her that if she would start working on her own they would refer tons of other people to her. That's exactly what happened.

*This is how someone goes from making an average living to making an income that puts them in the top 1% of everyone.*

This woman succeeded because she was willing to pay the price. She gave her job everything she had, created value, and was rewarded accordingly. You need to be willing to pay the price to do well at anything.

Most massage therapists do not give their work 100% effort. Most of them are not willing to work in the middle of the night and do everything they can to accommodate their clients' schedules. They are not willing to pay the price. Instead, they scrape by doing okay, but are always very calculating with their time and energy. Certainly, the last thing any of the other massage therapists I know would do is ensure they worked out daily so they were in good shape to give massages. This is the "extra mile" and an example of a small thing that the most successful people do. They pay all the prices to get ahead.

Everything costs us something. Mental peace has a cost. Money has a cost. Everything out there has a cost. If you want to have the life and career you are capable of, you need to pay the cost.

### **THE LESSON**

In this article Harrison discusses that you need to pay the cost if you want to have the life and career you are capable of. There are a lot of people who are not willing to pay the price for the things they want in their lives. People are unwilling to pay the price to advance in their careers. They want a shortcut. They try to make a quick buck instead of providing long-term value. You need to be willing to pay the price to do well at anything. Most successful people pay all the prices to get ahead. You have to give your job everything you have, you have to create value, and then you will be rewarded accordingly. Everything costs us something.

---

<https://www.harrisonbarnes.com/>