

The Importance of Planting Seeds: My Experience with the Scientologists

By [Harrison Barnes](#)

"And when much people were gathered together, and were come to him out of every city, he spake by a parable: a sower went out to sow his seed: and as he sowed, some fell by the way side; and it was trodden down, and the fowls of the air devoured it. And some fell upon a rock; and as soon as it was sprung up, it withered away, because it lacked moisture. And some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprang up with it, and choked it. And other fell on good ground, and sprang up, and bore fruit a hundredfold. And when he had said these things, he cried, He that hath ears to hear, let him hear."—Luke 8:4-8.

For several years, I underwent a ritual throughout various suburbs of Detroit that year after year resulted in my dramatically increasing my income and customer base in the asphalt business. This ritual became effective year after year due to the power of "planting seeds" in my prospects' minds. I have continued to use the power of "planting seeds" throughout my career to start businesses and expand various businesses year after year. When you plant seeds in prospects' minds, they are far more likely to think of you when a need comes up in the future than if you don't. An extremely effective secret to [getting a job](#), getting a raise and more is based on planting seeds in your prospects' minds. In this case, your prospects should be the potential employers you would like to work for as well as your current employer if you are seeking more money or responsibility.

So few people understand the power of planting seeds, however. The inability to plant seeds is one of the biggest weaknesses of most people in the world—whether they are businesses, or individuals [seeking a job](#) or advancement. So many people out there are simply so short term in their focus that they are only looking for instant gratification. If someone or something cannot provide them instant gratification, they are not interested. This movement between one form of instant gratification to the other is something that hurts businesses and people.

Yesterday, I walked into a store called "Chrome Hearts" in the Malibu Country Mart in Malibu. I've been looking for a money clip for the past few years because my current money clip is getting near the end of its life. When I walked into the store, a beautiful woman walked up to me and asked if she could help me. I told her I was interested in looking at money clips. She told me they had two sizes "small and large" and I told her I was interested in seeing the small.

"It's \$825," she said.

"\$825! Wow that's expensive," I said. There was no way in hell I was going to spend \$825 for a money clip; however, I thought it might be something I could ask my wife for when we had our anniversary in a few months, for example.

"I guess not," she said rudely. She then disappeared and completely lost interest in helping me and turned around and left me standing there. I was still interested in seeing the money clip but was extremely turned off by her attitude. I will never go into the store again. Had the sales person showed me the money clip, let me touch it and been nice to me, I would have likely found my wife and brought her back and suggested to her this might make a good anniversary gift for me one day. Instead, I was completely turned off and turned away.

In my asphalt business, I had a tradition that I would always leave a brochure with every single house in the neighborhoods I worked in once a year. It didn't matter if the owner was home or not, I always left a brochure. When they answered the door, I also went through the same routine each year.

"I can help your driveway," I'd tell them, my teeth gleaming in the sunlight, my khaki pants and white oxford shirt fresh from the dry cleaners (heavy starch), my hair slicked back smelling like mangos. In front of their house I would have my Chevy Suburban with its emergency yellow roof beacon twirling. This was important. Sometimes people would rush outside and grab their children and hustle them inside.

"Is there a gas leak in the neighborhood!?" people would sometimes shout from their porches in alarm.

"No, but if you don't do something about your driveway..."

I would always hand the homeowners a copy of my brochure. The cover to the brochure warned:

Less than 48 hours from now, it will be too late to seal coat your driveway. We only come by once a year! Less than three months from now, the Michigan winter may kill your driveway. Call 1-800-SEAL-NOW and your driveway will be sealed in the next 48 hours. Guaranteed. Don't let ignorance let you make a decision you'll forever regret!

In addition to the brochure, I always included some helpful information about asphalt that I'd written that year. It might be something about how to take care of your asphalt, tips about how to hire someone like me, and more. For years, I left this information at thousands of peoples' homes regardless of whether or not they were at home. Every year, for almost a decade I performed the same ritual with the same brochure. In the first year of doing this ritual, a lot of people had me do their driveways. After several years of doing this people would actually rush up to my truck like it was an ice cream truck to make sure that I did their driveways. They felt like they already knew me because I'd been giving them information and dropping hints to them about doing their asphalt for years. I'd been dropping seeds. By the time I stopped doing this business, I had people practically throwing money at me begging me to do the work.

The secret I followed was planting seeds. None of my competitors ever planted seeds like I did. Their seed may have consisted of a small advertisement in the Yellow Pages. By giving people useful information, I was consistently planting seeds and by following a ritual, I made sure that my potential clients also knew how to act.

I've managed and run a [legal recruiting firm](#) for almost a decade. During that time, the substantial majority of people who've become recruiters in the company are the same people I've placed. While I hate to say this, these hires have, for the most part, come from my ability to also plant seeds. On the few occasions when one of the attorneys I have been working with has shown promise to become an exceptional [legal recruiter](#), I've said something like:

"You should consider [legal recruiting](#) in the future. I think you would be really good at it." Invariably, one or two years later most of the people I have said this to have called me and told me they were interested in recruiting. Some of them are subsequently hired. This is all the result of planting seeds.

Another thing about the exercise of planting seeds is that by the time these attorneys come to me to discuss being recruiters, they've already spent the past couple of years thinking about being legal recruiters. Consequently, they generally hit the ground running and are far more effective than the average recruiter. In addition, they are more committed and better at their jobs.

Think about the times you've planted seeds in peoples' minds and the results this has had. Think about the times people have planted seeds for you.

When I'm working with a candidate seeking a [legal job](#), I believe one of my greatest skills is planting seeds. When very good recruiters are deep into their work, they have a very good sense of where their candidates are likely to get interviewed and hired. I will start saying things to my candidates like this:

- "If you can [get a job](#) at this firm, you will really have done something special."
- "You would really fit in well at this firm."
- "I think you are going to do the best you've ever done in an interview when you interview with this firm."
- "They are really going to like you at this firm."

This almost always works. The candidate I'm dealing with ends up going to the firm I'm promoting in their candidate's interest. This is the result of planting seeds.

When I was 16 years old, there were a bunch of advertisements running on television showing volcanoes (representing breakthroughs) and saying stuff like "Increase your IQ by 30 points--page 124!" The promise was that if you read a book called *Dianetics* by L. Ron Hubbard all sorts of miraculous things would happen to you. At the time, I was incredibly motivated and worried about being able to get into Harvard College. This was beginning to look like all but an impossibility given my performance in chemistry, for one. To this day, I do not know how I passed that class. In any event, I picked up *Dianetics* and read it. None of the promised changes happened and the book didn't make a tremendous amount of sense to me. At the time, I knew nothing about Scientology but was very interested in anything that could help me pass high school chemistry and get into Harvard College.

I am not proud to admit that I used to purchase clothes at Goodwill when I was in high school. One day I was in Royal Oak, Michigan after school and wandered out of the Goodwill with a sweater or something I'd purchased for a few dollars. I came across a little Scientology store front that had a sign out front that stated "Free Personality Test!!" This was too much to pass up. Since I had also tried to decipher some L. Ron Hubbard recently in the book with the volcano on front, I decided to take the test. I went inside and took the personality test. As I was waiting for the test to be graded, I was taken into a basement, seated on a plastic fold out chair and shown a film about the evils of psychiatry. There appeared to be a family living in the basement and several children scurried out of the room as they prepared an old projector for me to watch the film. I still don't remember much about it to this day. However, I do remember something about a football player getting horribly injured and people saying stuff like "he'll never walk again!" when the football player was unconscious. Sure enough, the guy never walked again after being treated by a succession of evil psychiatrists. But he did walk after being introduced to Scientology.

After some time, the guy who'd given me the test came down to speak with me and bring me up to his office. "Are you sure you read *Dianetics*?" he asked me.

"Yeah, I read it," I said matter of factly.

"Well your test is among the worst we have ever seen. Your graphs are alarming. I will go over them with you right now."

He sat me down and explained to me that I needed an emergency Scientology intervention because a bunch of psychological things were wrong with me. It must have taken him an hour to tell me how messed up he thought I was. Then he started asking me if I could somehow come up with \$2,000. I needed something called "auditing" and a few courses immediately or I was going to crash and burn. He asked me what my parents did and if they would be interested in paying for all of the services I needed.

"How much is all this going to cost to fix these issues?" I asked him.

"Well \$2,000 to just get you functioning normally and at least \$30,000 to effectively address the issues."

He showed me a couple of tin cans hooked up to something called an "E-meter" that they planned on using on me (if I came up with \$2,000).

Given the fact that I was in the position of shopping for school clothes at Goodwill, I knew there was absolutely no way my parents were going to give me \$2,000 to give to the Scientologists. Since I couldn't afford the services, I became interested in learning about the guy I was speaking with. I found it fascinating that he was living in a store with what appeared to be a couple of other families and was telling me I was screwed up. He told me he had read *Dianetics* while on a ship in the navy and this had changed his life. He volunteered to work for the Scientologists after this great read. Between periodically telling me about himself, he encouraged me to investigate other options for coming up with \$2,000, such as selling my car. That was a nonstarter. While I was understandably upset with the results of the personality test, I knew there was absolutely nothing I could do.

I had nothing to give.

A week or so after this, I received my first correspondence from the Church of Scientology. It was a brochure or a book or something. This was 1986. Over the past 22 years, I've moved at least 15 times (more times than I can count). I have moved to numerous different states, lived in dorms in various schools, lived in various apartments and homes. Within a few weeks of arriving at these addresses, correspondence from the Church of Scientology suddenly appears. They send me voluminous amounts of information and it just keeps coming--in 2000-2007 I received information from them almost every single day. While the information has slowed down recently, I am confident that they have communicated with me via mail thousands and thousands of times.

At least three or four of my assistants have tried to cancel the mail from the Church of Scientology but they cannot. My ex-wife got so upset with all the mail she wrote them several letters and was at one point asking me to sue them when I was practicing law.

I don't have opinions about the Scientologists one way or another. I've actually known some who were good people and I am sure they do a lot of good for some people. What is so astonishing to me, however, is how aggressively they've been "planting seeds" with me for over two decades. This is an example of being extremely proactive. The more proactive you are and the more seeds you plant, the better you are likely to do in the long run.

What were the Scientologists attempting to accomplish with all this mail? While you would have to ask them, to me it appeared as if they were doing everything within their power to convince me that if I ever had a problem, or needed a new religion, I should think of them. They wanted top of mind awareness. They have succeeded in getting top of mind awareness with me. I am writing about them right now.

How is this relevant to you and your career? You need to plant seeds and make sure that the people around you are aware of what you have to offer. You can do this in a ton of ways. You can send people copies of articles you've written or read, that are applicable to them and many more things. The point is you want to insure that you are always there for the people who are your potential employers. Top of mind awareness is huge.

One example of something that can be very effective is after you interview with someone and find out something the person may be interested in, you can cut out a small article and send it to the person with a note that you thought of him or her while reading it. This sends a message that you care. Planting seeds is extremely effective and is something that helps people remember you. Remember, the world is huge and you need to do everything within your power to stick out.

THE LESSON

You must plant seeds in the minds of others, so they will be more likely to think of you when a future need arises. In planting seeds, you're making people aware of what you have to offer. You must make sure that you're ever present in the minds of your potential employers. Planting seeds is the most effective way to generate top-of-mind awareness and to ensure the right people remember you at the appropriate time.

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