

What You Want, Do Not Want and Need to Be

By [Harrison Barnes](#)

When I was younger and less experienced in the ways of business, I made some huge mistakes.

One of the most memorable mistakes I ever made was hiring someone to work for me for a healthy six-figure salary in a job I did not even understand. The person interviewed well but some strange things happened during the interview. For example, about 45 minutes into the interview, the person mentioned he had a dog in the car that needed a walk. There was also the faint aroma of alcohol that clung to the air. The person also had several gaps in his resume that he did not explain very well. Nevertheless, I ignored these warning signs and ended up hiring the person.

I will tell you what happened with this person in a moment; however, at the onset I want to make you completely aware of the mistake I made in hiring this person: *I did not know what I wanted*. Anytime an employer does not know precisely what they want when they are hiring someone there are likely to be several problems. Why? Because the employer will be forced to make up expectations as they trudge along. This is an incredibly dangerous prospect.

The type of position was something I had no experience in hiring and because it was such a new position, I had little idea about the sorts of questions I should be asking, how the person should behave, whether or not the person had the skill set for what I needed, etc. The person was skilled in a certain type of work, but it was still unclear to me why I needed him. All I knew was that several people had told me I needed to fill this position, so I ended up hiring the person that day.

When the person arrived in the office, I started noticing when I went by his office that it smelled faintly like a distillery. Because the fumes affected my eyes, I started requesting meetings in my office. After a few weeks on the job, the person started creating incredible excuses for missing work. For example, there were countless home repairs, a massive numbers of car breakdowns, multiple jury duties and one excuse after another, leaving me astonished.

Moreover, because the person was doing a job I did not understand, he began dictating how he should be doing the job –and not the other way around. Each time I received instruction how this person should be doing the job, I would always be left thinking that the person was doing his best to do as little work as possible. Nevertheless, I was not sure of this, mainly because I still had no idea what the person actually did.

In the United States, the Lexus division of Toyota has been extremely successful. One of the keys to the success of Lexus is that it is extremely clear about what it wants when it hires people. It can often take months for Lexus to hire because their job descriptions are well defined. The fact that Lexus goes to such great lengths to insure an accurate hire is a competitive advantage and a sign of strength. The more an organization knows what it wants, the more likely it is to have a successful hire.

Many of the most successful organizations use personality testing when hiring people. While this certainly does not work for everyone, personality testing is a sign that the organization knows what it wants. The more an organization knows what it wants, the more careful it is being with the prospective hire's career and the decision to hire him/her. It is obviously more beneficial to be part of an organization that knows what it wants than one that has no clear direction.

Consider relationships. Many people become involved in relationships and are not sure what they are looking for. Due to this, many people begin dating - and end up marrying- the first person that comes along. Other people have very clear ideas about the sort of person they want to be with long-term. These people define their wants and needs. Often times they may narrow down their choice by using the following categories: religion, race, age, interests, hair color, weight, number of previous partners, income, profession and the question of children.

Many ethnic groups, religions and so forth have a strong preference for marrying people of the same religious or racial backgrounds. Jewish-Americans in the United States are a perfect example. Virtually every Jewish parent aspires - and in many cases expects - that his/her children will marry into the Jewish heritage. This is an example of someone being clear about what he/she wants.

Employers, like people, also develop various criteria and standards in terms of what they want in employees. The more defined this is, the more likely they are to choose someone who fits their needs. There is nothing wrong with an employer knowing what they want, as employers should know when hiring people to help prevent future problems.

Keep in mind that the more rigorous an employer's screening process, the more likely someone is to be precisely what the employer wants if they hire the person.

Just as an employer should know what they want, so should you when you are seeking a job. If you do not know precisely the sort of job you are seeking, then you are likely to accept whatever comes along. You need to be clear about exactly what it is you are seeking. The clearer you are, the more you are likely you are to achieve your goal.

Just like a relationship, if you do not know exactly what sort of job you want then you are going to be likely to fall into the first thing that comes along. When you are clear about what you are seeking, you will behave differently in interviews when you come across the ideal employer with a job that matches your interests. You are going to appear more enthusiastic in the interview; you will say the right things.

Have you ever noticed after buying a particular make or model of vehicle that you begin to see that vehicle everywhere you go? There is a simple reason for this - because your brain realizes it is important to you and starts noticing it everywhere. In a similar manner, once something becomes important to you, you begin to see and find different avenues of attracting this in your life.

Just as a good employer describes their ideal employee, you too should be describing your ideal job in the absolute clearest terms possible. In doing so, you will be far more likely to find your ideal job.

Another important aspect is what you do not want in a job. In the employment world, employers are generally quite clear about what they do not want in an employee. For example,

- They may not want people who did not attend a top 10-business school.
- They may not want people who do not have experience working for a large company.
- They may not want people who are not from the company's geographic area.
- They may not want to hire people who were fired from their last job.
- They may not want people who have been out of work for more than a year.

Employers are generally quite clear about what they do and do not want in their employees—some of these statements are written and others are not. For example, if an employer is seeking to hire someone in their 20s they are not going to write in the advertisement: DO NOT APPLY IF YOU ARE OVER 40! This will be something that is unwritten. Similarly, there are certain things you may want in a mate (like a beer belly?) that you would never put in a personal ad.

You should begin writing down everything that comes to mind when you think what you do not want in a job, as the clearer your wants, the more direction you will have.

In most peoples' lives, they end up somewhere because they have not been clear and honest about what they do and do not want. Avoid what you do not want in a job. If you do not, the more unhappy you will be.

As the job of the man I had hired progressed, there were more and more problems. Eventually, it was quite rare for me to see him in the office before noon. Then, he started coming in even later. I warned him several times and even had our human resources director discuss this issue with him. Eventually, it became too much and I had to fire him.

To my astonishment, when I fired him he said to me that I had never been "clear enough" with him about what I expected in terms of attendance. Moreover, he told me that I had failed to warn him.

He, of course, sued me and it was a nightmare. In one of the hearings, he told the judge: "If he had told me I would have been expected to keep regular hours during the interview I never would have taken the job." This was an incredible statement to me. He had taken the job expecting there to be irregular hours?

I am not sure how much getting sued, hiring lawyers, going to court and so forth cost me. It was well over \$100,000—not to mention the time, aggravation and embarrassment surrounding the ordeal. Incredibly, after the person was escorted from our offices we discovered that he was running a business in the mornings and this is why he had been unable to make it into work on time.

Why did all of this happen?

First, it happened because I was not clear about what I wanted when I hired him. Had I been clear about what I wanted I would have put a great deal of time into selecting this person for the job. I would have made sure that he was a good fit, taken a great deal of time checking references, etc. If I had taken these precautions, I probably would have known the exact sort of person I wanted and never made this mistake.

Second, I also failed to be clear about what I did not want. Someone showing up for an interview with a dog that needs to be walked and smelling of alcohol is not the sort of person who is likely to be a good employee.

There were, of course, many good things about this person, too. Nonetheless, when it came right down to it I was not clear about what I did and did not want in an employee. You need to be as clear as possible about what you want and do not want in an employer.

In the legal field, many lawyers want less stress, fewer hours and so forth. Typically, associates working in large law firms express this. What ends up happening to many of these lawyers is they end up going to a new firm that gives them the exact same experience as they had in their former job. I have seen attorneys repeat this process seeking jobs this way for years and many come to believe that a job without stress and many hours is impossible.

Of course, none of this is impossible. It is just that the lawyers do not listen to their instinctual desires about what they do and do not want. Instead of voicing clarity, they are not firm with their wants and needs, which end up causing one problem after another.

You need to be clear about what it is what you want and do not want and most importantly, you need to listen to yourself.

In the realm of personal relationships, many women and men put a tremendous amount of effort into their appearance. Women may watch their diets, exercise, put on makeup, and get plastic surgery, etc. They do these sorts of things because they are trying to be someone else and attract someone they think is a good match. In a similar way, many men may try to earn a great deal of money in order to be the sort of person who is attractive to a certain type of woman. On the other hand, a man may become very romantic to attract a woman, too.

When the man showed up to interview with me for a job with a dog, I was attracting the wrong sort of person. I do not remember how this person ended up coming into my office that day. Perhaps he was a referral, or came through someone I knew. The problem with this was that I was the sort of person, and was running of the type of company, that attracted this sort of person. This man was operating a business on the side at the time; he had no intention of coming into work regularly. Because of the freewheeling atmosphere at our company at the time, he likely knew that if he came to work at our company he would be able to get away with the sort of behavior he was planning to engage in. Had he come into an organized environment with set protocols and so forth, the odds are he would have had very little interest. He would have known that the deception he had in mind was not tolerated.

After this person left, I asked myself *what sort of company would I need to be running to avoid ever hiring this sort of person in the future again?*

When you decide what you want and do not want, you need to understand the sort of person you need to be in order to attract the job you are seeking. Once you decide this, you need to become that person. In your career, you will not get what you want unless you attract what you are seeking. Self-improvement, education, fitness, dress and so forth all relate to this. I love watching aspiring young bankers, actors and other professionals who are hungry to succeed. In most cases, these people put on an exaggerated version of what they think they need to be to attract the sort of job they want. The actors will be overly image conscious. The bankers will wear the correct brands of shoes, suits, watches etc. They will want to be seen in certain places and live in certain neighborhoods. All of this relates to being the sort of person that attracts the sort of job the person wants.

In your career and life, a great deal of your success (or lack thereof) comes down to (1) understanding what you want and do not want and (2) the sort of person you need to be to attract what you want.

There are two huge dangers to be aware of in your career: (1) not knowing what you want to do specifically; and, (2) working for an employer who does not know what they want specifically. Anytime either of these is present, you may be headed for trouble.

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