

Upgrade Your Career and Life by Finding Work to Be Done

By [Harrison Barnes](#)

Several years ago, I decided I didn't want to work in a [law firm](#) anymore. The problem was that I didn't know what else I could do besides practice law. Also, I didn't have any money. In order to continue to make a living, I needed to do something that is among the most important skills we can have: I needed to create work for myself. I have written extensively about the importance of creating work before, because without the ability to create work for yourself, you might as well settle for a life of mediocrity. The more work you know how to create, the better off you are going to be.



If you know how to create work for yourself, you will never be unemployed or without excitement in your life. Everything that happens in this world comes about through the ability of us to use our minds to create work. One of my favorite motivational writers is Wallace D. Wattles. In [The Science of Getting Rich](#) Wattles writes:

No one is kept in poverty by shortness in the supply of riches; there is more than enough for all. A palace as large as the capital in Washington might be built for every family on earth from the building material in the United States alone; and under intensive cultivation, this country would produce wool, cotton, linen, and silk enough to clothe each person in the world finer than Solomon was arrayed in all his glory; together with food enough to feed them all luxuriously.

The visible supply is practically inexhaustible; and the invisible supply really IS inexhaustible. Everything you need on earth really is made from one original substance, out of which all things proceed. New forms are constantly being made, and older ones are dissolving; but all shapes are assumed by One Thing. There is no limit to the supply of Formless Stuff, or Original Substance. The universe is made out of it; but it was not all used in making the universe. The spaces in, through, and between the forms of the visible universe are permeated and filled with the Original Substance; with the formless Stuff, with the raw material of all things. Ten thousand times as much stuff as has been made might still be made, and even then we should not have exhausted the supply of universal raw material.

No man, therefore, is poor because nature is poor, or because there is not enough to go around. Nature is an inexhaustible storehouse of riches; the supply will never run short. Original substance is alive with creative energy, and is constantly producing more forms. When the supply of building material is exhausted, more will be produced; when the soil is exhausted so that foodstuffs and materials for Clothing will no longer grow upon it, it will be renewed or more soil will be made. When all the gold and silver has been dug from the earth, if man is still in such a stage of development that he needs gold and silver, more will be produced from the Formless. The Formless Stuff responds to the needs of man; it will not let him be without any good thing.

This is true collectively; the race as a whole is always abundantly rich, and if individuals are poor, it is because they do not follow the Certain Way of doing things which makes the individual man rich. The Formless Stuff is intelligent; it is stuff which thinks. It is alive, and is always impelled towards life.

Wattles' writings are somewhat abstract; however, the point is that there is unlimited wealth and unlimited opportunity out there for you. People can create great wealth and opportunity for themselves from nothing. You, too, need to do the same thing with your life and career.

I am amazed when I look around me and see how incredible certain people are in creating work for themselves and others. Entire cities and civilizations have been created by men and women who know how to create work. Giant companies have risen from nothing from people who know how to create work. Jobs have materialized out of nothing from people who know how to create work. The greatest riches in civilization have been created by people who know how to create work. You can be rich if you learn how to create work. The ability to create work is something that can benefit you regardless of your age.

Since I live in Los Angeles, I am constantly learning about people who have created something from nothing. A great deal of what goes on here is people simply selling ideas. One of the most unusual success stories I've ever heard is the story of Joe Francis, the creator of the *Girls Gone Wild* series of videos. Apparently, Francis makes \$29 million selling his series of videos. For those of you who are not familiar with this, all Francis does is show a bunch of girls jumping around on Spring Break in Daytona, for example, in these videos. He has been married to Pamela Anderson and was the man featured in the Paris Hilton Sex Tapes. The reason I'm telling you about Francis, who morally offends me on several different levels, is that I

want you to understand just how powerful the ability to create work is. Imagine if you were earning \$29-million a year. What would this mean for your life? You can do this with no education and you can do it without ever going into an office if you know how to use your mind correctly to create work. How did Francis do this? According to his own website:

Q: How did you come up with the idea for "Girls Gone Wild"?

A: Just after graduating from USC, I was working as a production assistant for a TV show called "Real TV," which featured video clips of disasters, wrecks, and other sensational material. I noticed that the show's editors and staffers enjoyed sharing a compilation tape of video clips that were deemed too violent or outrageous for the broadcast show. Because this footage was going unused despite its popularity in the office, I decided to acquire the rights to the clips and market a tape called "Banned From Television." It was a successful product, and I solicited more material from various sources. But a lot of the footage was so disturbing that I had trouble watching it straight through, and I thought that the customers would feel the same way. I asked my various sources if they had any material of a lighter nature. Something funny or sexy. Someone sent me a VHS tape of a bunch of revelers getting arrested for public nudity at Lake Havasu, Calif., during spring break. The footage they were trying to sell me wasn't especially compelling, but I discovered that the tape also included some random footage of college girls flashing their breasts on spring break and at Mardi Gras. That got my attention. Because it wasn't porn; it was something better. Real college girls obviously having fun - and showing their breasts! It really turned me on, and I lived with the tape for a couple of weeks; it was my primary source of entertainment. I began to wonder if other guys would enjoy this kind of material as much as I did. I licensed the footage and put together a tape that I eventually called "Girls Gone Wild." It was a big risk, and it took some convincing to get any TV stations to air the commercial. But once the commercials began to air, the orders started coming in. And instead of buying more footage, I decided it made more business sense to create my own footage. And a phenomenon was born.

People take charge of their lives and change their futures when they know how to create work. You can create work literally from everything. Work is all around you.

At the age of 65, Colonel Harland Sanders began actively franchising his chicken business. The Kentucky Fried Chicken business he started ended up becoming one of the largest [retail food](#) operations the world had ever known. At the age of 40, Sanders started cooking for hungry travelers who stopped by his gas station in Corbin, Kentucky. He lived in the gas station and served people food. He did not have a restaurant and served people food at his own dining table from his home which was attached to the gas station. As more and more people started coming just for the food, he moved across the street to a motel and restaurant that seated more people. He eventually perfected his chicken recipe and the same chicken cooking technique still used today. Sanders soon learned that a highway was being planned that would bypass the entire town of Corbin. He realized that this would mean a quick end to his business since travelers would no longer be stopping there. He sold his business and after paying off all of his bills, he was left with nothing but \$105 in social security checks he received each month from the government.

What is important to me about this point in the story is that this is where most people would give up. Sanders' business was literally destroyed by government intervention. He was left penniless and without any substantial form of income. At this point, most people would simply give up and do nothing. However, Sanders--like so few people do--knew the importance of being able to create work for himself. The ability to create work for himself (and others) was something that would end up changing the world. I've seen Kentucky Fried Chicken Restaurants in places as diverse as China. Without Sanders' ability to create work, I am confident this is something I never would have seen.

Instead of simply being satisfied with his \$105 in social security checks, Sanders got in his car and started traveling across the country, traveling from restaurant to restaurant, cooking batches of fried chicken for restaurant owners and their employees. If the restaurant owner liked the chicken, he would enter into an agreement with nothing more than a handshake that stipulated that the restaurant owner would pay him five cents for each chicken the restaurant sold. By the year 1964, Sanders had over 600 franchised units of the company in North America. The same year he sold his interest in the company to a group of investors for \$2,000,000. In 1976, an independent survey ranked Sanders the second most recognized celebrity in the world.

Sanders was someone who knew how to create work. The ability to create work is something that will define your career and your life as well. If you have the ability to create work, it doesn't matter what happens to you. It doesn't matter if you lose your job. It doesn't matter if your company goes out of business. It doesn't matter if you live in an area that is experiencing economic hardship.

None of this matters.

If you have the ability to create work for yourself, then the world works for you and not the other way around. The most important skill you can develop is the ability to create work for yourself.

When I was in the process of deciding whether or not I wanted to continue working for a law firm, the most important thing I knew that I needed to do for myself was to create work. I had no intention at the time I was quitting of starting a recruiting firm, or doing the sort of work I am doing today. I thought that given my education and other steps I'd taken to better myself, the very best use of my time would likely be to continue practicing law. The thing was that I needed to be able to create work for myself.

The first thing I did was take a huge risk. I found someone willing to let me use their office address for an office. I ordered a phone line. None of this costs me more than a few hundred dollars. I bought a couple of books about putting advertisements in the Yellow Pages and read about how to create advertisements. I wrote the best advertisements I could. I then went to the office of the Yellow Pages and negotiated the best rate I could for my [law office](#) advertisements. This cost me nothing to do and I knew I wouldn't even start receiving bills until the ads had been running for a few months. Creating work like this costs me nothing. The office and phone only cost me a few hundred dollars. Then I started looking at the cases I was working on and realized that there was a giant goldmine of potential wealth sitting right in front of me.

At the time, I was working on a matter which was bordering on the unethical but which I knew I could make a lot of money with if I did the same thing. There was a character at the time named Morse Mehrban, who was going around suing various establishments for selling cigars, cigarettes, and other stuff without displaying warnings. There was a law that had been recently passed in California called Proposition 65 that allowed private individuals to sue businesses if they were selling cancer causing compounds without displaying a warning (that was required to be displayed prominently and with a certain wording) that the products caused cancer. It was like shooting fish in a barrel because so few businesses knew about this law. Since vegetables that contain pesticides arguably cause cancer, cars that contain plastics arguably cause cancer, and

virtually every product out there causes cancer, I knew that there was a lot of opportunity in this field. What an attorney could do was sue an establishment for not displaying the warning and then get them to agree to display the warning. He/she could then extract a settlement out of them of say \$10,000. The business was a gold mine.

I was very impressed with Mehrban. He was an outsider in the legal community. He was young and didn't have the right pedigree (schools, law firm experience) at all. However, hundreds of attorneys from the best firms around California were running around spending hundreds of thousands of dollars of their client's money defending these little lawsuits he was filing and Mehrban was becoming very rich. He had taken a look at a law that existed that allowed these lawsuits (called "private attorney general actions") and ultimately ended up starting a huge business doing this. While Mehrban portrayed himself as a fighter for the environment, he was really someone who was just out for the money and nothing more.

Looking at Mehrban's business from a distance, I knew it was one I could easily replicate. The more I thought about it, however, the more it really seemed to me that it was just far too "fringe" and not really something on my particular level of ethics. It seemed unethical. It was serving a purpose, but the entire thing seemed questionable to me.

When my advertisements started to run, I started to get numerous phone calls. The calls just kept coming. When a client would come in to speak with me, I would have to look at what they were telling me about and start creating work. I'm going to say something that I know is going to upset a lot of people, however, it's true. When you look at the wealthiest attorneys, doctors, and others, those who are the [highest paid](#) are most often those who really know how to create work. They will often do this to your disadvantage.

While I'm not speaking of every attorney I ever worked for, if you go to many attorneys with a conflict or a problem, the attorneys do not want you to solve it easily. They get paid based on how much they bill, and they will often take a path that exacerbates the conflict so that you spend more money. They will do as much work as they possibly can because this is what will get you to open your wallet and spend, spend, spend. This is how attorneys make a living. In terms of the best paid attorneys out there, what many of them will do is consistently figure out how to increase the money you spend by finding more and more things to do.

I will never forget a case I worked on once when I was practicing law. Our client had been sued and it was very clear that they could easily get the dispute dismissed. It would have gone away by arguing a few simple points in a hearing. As far as I was concerned, there was no reason in hell any judge who knew what was going on would allow the case to proceed once he heard what I had to say. I went in and told the partner I was working with about this finding.

"Let me argue the motion on Monday," he said. I agreed.

On Monday, I decided to go to the motion since it was early in the morning. When I got there, I don't think the partner had expected me to show up. I wished him good luck before he went up to the podium. This man was a very talented attorney and was capable of very great things. On this particular occasion, however, I couldn't believe what I was seeing. He intentionally appeared to lose the argument. He didn't bring up any of the arguments that would have allowed him to win. After the judge had started ruling, I will never forget his face as he turned around and looked at me. His eyes appeared to have grown larger and seemed to be saying "I had to lose this."

"I guess we are going to be busy for the next several months," he said to me as I walked down the hall with him in the courthouse.

What was going on here? This attorney was intentionally losing a part of the case in order to create work. This is not ethical, of course, but this sort of thing happens all the time and it is happening all around you. I was young at the time and of course didn't understand the sort of pressures this attorney was under. Attorneys are under pressure to generate a certain amount of business per year when they are partners in law firms. This is how they are evaluated. In some law firms, if a partner is unable to generate at least \$1,500,000 in business from their clients each year, they will lose their job. Do you think this always works for your benefit? Of course not.

Hospitals and doctors are also under tremendous pressure to generate work. When a hospital gets a new machine, the machine might cost millions of dollars. The only way the hospital can possibly pay for this machine is if it gets hoards of people lined up to have tests (or whatever the machine does) at thousands of dollars a pop. Hospitals may do the same thing with operations and other procedures that they do with tests. Who knows if this is something you really need? The hospital and your doctor may simply be creating work.

There is a saying out there that it is "impossible to find an honest mechanic." While this is certainly not true, I am sure you can understand that mechanics also make their livings from their ability to create work. According to the 2001 book, *The Psychology of Legitimacy*:

The retail giant Sears, Roebuck & Co., recently operated over 1500 auto repair centers in the United States, performing routine maintenance and repairs for private customers ("Retailing 1995"). National sales from auto repairs were over \$3 billion in 1992. On June 11, 1992, the California Attorney General's Office announced that it had conducted an 18-month undercover investigation of 33 of the state's 70 Sears auto centers. State consumer affairs director Jim Conran reported that the investigation uncovered "a consistent pattern of abuse" linked to corporate reward and quota systems that encouraged mechanics to recommend unnecessary repairs (Gellene, 1992c).

According to the report, undercover agents working for the California Department of Consumer Affairs took cars in top condition to Sears for mechanical inspection and were overcharged on average \$223 for repairs. (Gellene, 1992c). The scandal did not stop there. As the *Los Angeles Times* reported, "Besides making unnecessary repairs, Sears mechanics also charged some undercover agents for work that was never performed ... In a few cases, Sears' mechanics damaged cars: One undercover agent that went in for a brake inspection left Sears without brakes." (Gellene, 1992c, p. A1).

As Consumer Affairs director Conran put it: "These are not honest mistakes ... This is the systematic looting of the public." (Gellene, 1992c, p. A1). Furthermore, Conran directly threatened Sears legitimacy by claiming, "People go to Sears because they feel they will get good service. They believe it is a company you can depend on. Unfortunately, this is not the case," (Gellene, 1992c, p.A1) (p. 406)

What is going on in the case of the Sears is the same thing that may have occurred to you when you went into a mechanic, a doctor, or a lawyer. Presumed legitimacy is used against you by people you trust who are instead creating work for themselves--even if it means they need to be dishonest to do so. These people are creating work, but in a negative way.

In order for you to really reach the heights you are capable of in your career and do the things you are capable of doing, you need to know how to create work. Work is created from nothing. Do it honestly. You should never find yourself without work.

There are incredible amounts of things you can do to create work. The more work you create, the better life you will have. A really funny quote from the Joe Francis website is this one:

Q: Do you really have a private jet?

A: Yes. I took my first ride in a private jet about six years ago, and found the freedom of the whole experience so amazing that I bought a Falcon jet three weeks later. The first trip I took on my plane was to Lake Tahoe. I was 27, and my buddy Mark and I laughed the whole way like a couple of giddy frat guys. It truly is the only way to fly. Nine months later, I upgraded to a Gulfstream.

Who are the people flying in the skies above us in private jets? They are people like Francis who know how to create work. Imagine being in a position to upgrade your private jet. Start by upgrading your life by creating work right now.

THE LESSON

If you can learn how to create work for yourself, you will never be unemployed or lacking for excitement in your life. You must learn to use your mind to create work. If successful, this ability will come to define your life and career because outside circumstances will no longer matter to you. The world will work for you, rather than the other way around.

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