

The Only Thing That Matters Is Commitment

By [Harrison Barnes](#)

One of the stranger moments in my career came when I joined the now defunct law firm, Dewey Ballantine. I was in Los Angeles, and the firm flew us out to New York for orientation with all of the new associates in the firm. A good portion of the new associates I met said something to the effect of: "I'm going to work here a few years. Then, I'll figure out if I want to stay practicing law or do something different."

I could not believe that so many people were not committed to their jobs. Instead of being committed, they were interested in doing something else.

If you are not committed to what you are doing, then you are not going to be successful. You need to commit to win.

It does not matter how smart you are. If you are smart, that is good – but you can be enormously successful without being smart. In fact, out of the most successful people I know, only about half of them are really smart. The others are merely average.

Being "smart" academically is generally a measure of how long it takes you to learn and comprehend new ideas. Very smart people can learn and comprehend ideas very, very quickly. Because they can learn and understand ideas more quickly, they do better on tests and in their classes.

Long-term success in the real world, though, generally comes from mastery of something and improvement in the space. The longer you spend learning something, the better you will become at it.

There are very few people who are exceptionally gifted at something the first time they do it.

- I've known people that had the rare ability to play music by ear without being taught how to play an instrument.
- I've known other people that were great actors without ever taking an acting lesson.
- I've known great writers that never went to college.

This is rare, however. What is more common is that people need to practice and commit to something and do it over and over again before succeeding.

Excellence in anything is largely a function of time and commitment. Once you commit to something, everything changes.

What is so refreshing is that your life and career are really all a result of the choices that you make. If you choose to work very hard at something, the odds are you will find success.

Aptitude is largely a function of time. Thus, if you were not a great student, it is important to understand that you could be. Anyone can learn and understand anything given enough time. You could be a great doctor, lawyer, or scientist if you have enough time. That is why it is extremely important to commit. How you use your time is your choice.

Most people have an "aptitude" for something; however, it is very rare that you are completely gifted in something in an exceptional way. Commitment is about showing up and really enjoying something. If you really commit to something, the odds are you can be great at it over time.

When you commit to your profession and the work you do, you continually improve. You begin to see new ideas, new connections and new distinctions in the material you did not notice before. When you see new distinctions, you are able to improve at what you do.

People who are able to commit to something generally get the results that they want.

- Someone who commits to a diet is generally able to lose a lot of weight.
- Someone who commits to their profession is generally able to have a successful career.
- Someone who commits to their emotional health is generally able to be happier.
- Someone who commits to an exercise regimen is generally able to get in better shape.

The fact is, however, that not everyone is able to completely commit. I know many people who started PhD programs and did not complete them. They enroll in a school, take classes for several years, get a lot of criticism and, at some point, stop working toward this goal and do something else.

That is how it works with everything. Your commitment is constantly tested. The longer you do something, the better you will become at it. The better you become at something, the more successful you will be.

You can achieve massive success by committing to virtually anything—but you need to commit. Anything that detracts from your commitment is dangerous and should be avoided. Commitment is a force to be reckoned with and something that, over time, will produce good results.

There are four kinds of people according to Rev. Robert Schuller:

First, there are the cop-outs. These people set no goals and make no decisions.

Second, there are the hold-outs. They have a beautiful dream, but they're afraid to respond to its challenge because they aren't sure they can make it. These people have lost all childlike faith.

Third, there are the drop-outs. They start to make their dream come true. They know their role. They set their goals, but when the going gets tough, they quit. They don't pay the toll.

Finally, there are the all-outs. They are the people who know their role. They want and need and are going to be stars: star students, star parents, star waitresses. They want to shine out as an inspiration to others. They set their goals . . . The all-outs never quit. Even when the toll gets heavy, they're dedicated. They're committed.

Conclusion

There is a huge difference between being interested in something and being committed to it. Commitment requires accepting no excuses and only accepting results. If you want something and are not motivated to do the work to get it, the odds are very good that you will fail.

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