

The Importance of Sacrifice to Our Careers

By [Harrison Barnes](#)

I am usually up well before 7:00 a.m. However, due to some issues I have been dealing with, today I decided to sleep a little longer than usual. According to a [doctor](#) I recently met at a conference, when you are stressed out the best thing you can do for yourself is to sleep more. He said that cancer, heart problems and other things are often caused by a lack of sleep.

I am usually up and about well before 7:00 a.m. and had I been up earlier today, I am confident I would not have seen the bloodshed I did this morning. I could have prevented it because I am sure the attack probably started around the time I usually get up. I saw her lying there in her own blood, dying in front of my door. I was frozen with fear.

I should have known this was coming.

I had heard that dog barking before but somehow believed that the barking was far away. I never knew what she was capable of. I wish I would have gotten up earlier.

Edwardo was a farm hand we hired about six months previously. My wife and I had taken an Alaskan Cruise and he had picked us up at the airport in my pick up truck when our flight came in very early in the morning. The cruise had been a lot of fun and we were in good spirits when we got off the plane.

Edwardo's job was primarily to take care of the goats. At the time, our little farm was raising pygmy goats (which are goats about the size of a large cat). These little goats were having the time of their lives and had a very secure existence (at least we thought). One day my wife and I were at a PetCo and there was an open house adoption. I saw a little Australian Shepherd named "Sweetie" that I started to play with.

As I played with the dog the man from the Humane Society holding the open house said, "If you do not adopt this dog today we are going to euthanize her this evening."

These were some of the more manipulative words I had ever heard. We adopted Sweetie. Sweetie was extremely affectionate and we really liked her a great deal. I was also allergic to this dog. Additionally, the dog kept trying to go near the goats and herd them. It was instinctual. We had to keep Sweetie completely away from the goats.

"I do not know how to say this," Edwardo said about 10 minutes into the drive back. "The dog chased all of the goats but one out onto the freeway and they are all dead."

I could not believe it. I am sure the people driving down Pacific Coast Highway who had run over miniature goats could not believe it either. It must have been devastating for them to have run over those goats. I am not even sure what these people must have thought. We live on a small farm but are in Malibu. Most of the people driving by probably have never been on a farm in their life. It must be an omen of sorts to run over a miniature goat in the middle of Los Angeles.

We had to get rid of Sweetie, of course. Edwardo knew someone with a really big farm that had animals which actually required herding. We gave Sweetie to that farm. It was sad to see the dog go.

Over the next few months I rebuilt the farm and the animals. One evening my wife and I went to another "farm" which was right in the middle of Los Angeles, in a residential neighborhood. A guy was raising around 100 goats, 100 sheep, chickens and all sorts of other farm animals right in his backyard. It was one of the most incredible sights I had ever seen in a residential neighborhood. I wondered why the Los Angeles Health department was not involved. They should have been.

We purchased several sheep, chickens and goats. Recently, one of the sheep had a baby. The whole scene with the chicken and goats was very bucolic. My two year old daughter loved to play with them. I fed the alfalfa and goat feed every morning. The goats loved to lounge in the sun in the afternoon.

"There is a dog eating a live sheep in front of our door!"

My wife had run into our bedroom screaming. I was still sleeping, but barely so.

I was horrified. I ran out to the front of the house and lying there was a sheep on its last breaths, huffing.

I was not sure how the dog could possibly have gotten to the sheep and gotten onto our property, but it did. Wandering around the property was a giant Australian Ridgeback dog. The dog came up to me wagging its tail.

My two year old daughter was screaming and there was blood everywhere. The only remaining Pygmy goat, Jack, was looking at the dying lamb and trying to revive it by butting it with his horn. My wife was in her bathrobe and grabbed the dog and called its owner. She was crying.

"There is blood everywhere!! It killed all of our farm animals!!"

The owner of the dog must have been astonished. We live in Malibu, California and despite living on a farm most of our neighbors are people in the entertainment industry and others that have little in common with us. I cannot imagine what they must have been thinking.

Within moments our neighbor had pulled up in his Toyota Prius. We were wrapping the dying sheep in a sheet and carrying it to the pick up truck. My wife was getting ready to run the sheep over to the emergency [animal care](#) center a few miles away.

"I'll pay for everything!" the man in the Prius stated in an English accent as he walked towards us. None of this was about money, of course. The situation was completely devastating emotionally. The man was wearing the latest fashion of everything. I could not imagine why a 60 year man was dressed up as a hipster at 7:30 am.

"I was on this property before you bought it," he said as we were consoling with the dying lamb. "I was here with the model Kate Moss. We have been friends for over 30 years."

This was Malibu for you. Here we were in the middle of a blood bath with a dying lamb and this man was telling me all about how he was friends with someone famous. I was literally at a loss for words. The situation was almost beyond bizarre.

What does it mean to have a baby lamb sacrificed and killed on your front door at 7:00 am? We live on a large property and of all places I cannot understand why this sacrifice had to have occurred right on our front door. I have been puzzling over this all day. What does it mean to have a lamb sacrificed and killed on your front door early in the morning?

I found the following definition of a sacrificial lamb on Wikipedia:

A sacrificial lamb is a [lamb](#) (or metaphorical parallel) killed or discounted in some way (as in a [sacrifice](#)) in order to further some other cause. In typical modern usage, it is a metaphorical reference for a person who has no chance of surviving the challenge ahead, but is placed there for the common good. The term is derived from the traditions of [Abrahamic religion](#) where a lamb is a highly valued possession, but is offered to [God](#) as a sacrifice to obtain the more highly valued favour of God.

Sacrifice typically means to give something up of value to get something even more valuable in the future. Sacrifice always implies giving something up or doing something, or some sort of work, that is distasteful. The people in the world who achieve the most are the ones who are able to sacrifice. For example, Tiger Woods practices golf six hours a day and has since he was very young. Anyone who achieves something great is able to sacrifice.

The concept of "sacrifice" is something that is amazingly important to our lives. We need to constantly be sacrificing in order to insure that we are advancing in our lives. While I am not sure why a baby lamb was sacrificed on my front door this morning by a Rhodesian Ridgeback dog, the one thing I do know is that it is only through incredible sacrifice that our lives can change. This sacrifice has reminded me of the incredible sacrifice we need to do in order to live the lives we want to live.

There are lots of forms of sacrifice out there. Mother Theresa is someone who sacrificed by caring for the dying, the sick, the poor, the hungry and others. She took people that society had abandoned and cared for them with compassion. She stated of sacrifice:

A sacrifice to be real must cost, must hurt, must empty ourselves. The fruit of silence is prayer, the fruit of prayer is faith, the fruit of faith is love, the fruit of love is service, the fruit of service is peace.

Sometimes you too need to sacrifice in order to get ahead. Sometimes you need to move away from the familiar and what you expect in order to get the results that you are seeking in your life.

Recently, I had an experience with an employee who quit our company after working with us for several years. This person had consistently been working incredible amounts of overtime and this had ended up costing our company often double what the person's salary was. The person had formerly been in charge of a printing operation for our company and about a year and a half ago we shut down the printing operation. Due to this person's longevity with the company and presumed loyalty, I made the decision to keep them on and find other things for them to do. The other work this person was given was not demanding and involved simple things like filing and running errands. Nevertheless, this person continued to work incredible amounts of overtime, despite being warned on several occasions not to do so.

There was a time when this person was needed to work overtime when our printing operation was going a full bore. Nevertheless, this was no longer necessary and had not been for years. While I am not sure if I would call it a "sacrifice", what we now were asking this person to do was to work a normal schedule in an effort to save their job.

After months of warning this person about working overtime, we decided that the only solution was to put them on salary because, try as we might, the person would not stop working overtime. We calculated their hourly wage and one of our managers sat them down and told them we were putting them on salary going forward. Right on the spot, the person quit. A few hours later I received an email from the person telling me I was a horrible person and that I had stepped all over them by trying to limit their overtime. The person went so far as to say they felt sorry for my daughter because they thought I was a horrible person.

This is an example of someone who was asked to make a sacrifice (not work overtime) and could not do it. The person is now unemployed and trying to get unemployment despite having quit their job. A simple sacrifice for this person was too much to make.

In your job and in your career you are going to be called upon to make sacrifices. It is exceedingly important that you make sacrifices. All of my life I have been fascinated with success and what makes certain people more successful than others. As I have studied the most successful men and women out there I have seen that they have all made tremendous sacrifices in order to succeed. In order to do anything and be someone of great substance you need to learn how to sacrifice.

One of the greatest causes of failure in life is the inability to make sacrifices. For example, many people spend every cent of money they make, go into debt, and never save money. The failure to save money results in them never being able to afford the sorts of material objects they would like. Saving money is a sacrifice.

When children are growing up they learn early on that if they want to get good grades in school they are going to have to not play video games or be out playing and instead are going to have to sacrifice "fun time" for "serious time" and do their school work. Notwithstanding, many children simply fail to make this sacrifice and never learn how to do so. The children who do make the sacrifice and study may end up becoming doctors or lawyers, for example. The ones who never make this sacrifice, despite average or even excellent intelligence, may spend their lives moving from job to job in fast food restaurants, or do other things that are largely insignificant in terms of the impact they could end up having.

In our careers and lives, the most important thing that we can do is constantly and consistently sacrifice so that we can achieve greater rewards. We must always be sacrificing in order to grow. We often also need to sacrifice to help other people. A 2004 article in the *New York Times* discusses the importance of sacrificing for another:

Matthew Berenguer's parents sacrificed all they owned so he could get the one thing he could keep forever: an education. When his father lost his job, they lost their apartment. The family put everything in storage, and all seven of them lived in homeless shelters. If that was not hard enough, his parents had to decide how to spend what little money they had left: continue paying storage fees for their belongings or send Matthew to a [summer program](#) at [Syracuse University](#).

His parents chose his future over theirs.

The storage company auctioned their belongings. Their beds and sofa? Gone. Their piano? Gone. His sketchbooks, which he filled with vivid pencil sketches during subway rides? Gone. His father's library, which gave Matthew delicious moments of escape and education? Gone.

Other families now have the bits and pieces of his life. But Matthew, who got his first taste of college life that summer, insists

he got something far more precious.

"I was grateful we lost everything," said Matthew, a senior at Rice High School in Manhattan, who hopes to attend Cornell University. "I was very materialistic. This changed what my values were. I found out I still had my mother, my father, my family."

His parents' sacrifices continue to pay off. Matthew is among this year's winners of a New York Times College Scholarship, which will provide him with a \$30,000 four-year scholarship, a summer job and a mentor. He and 19 other young people -- some from countries around the world and others who never would have ventured much beyond the block -- possess that wondrous mix of talent, determination and optimism that enabled them not only to overcome considerable obstacles, but also to thrive.

The power of sacrifice is something that can change lives and has huge meaning.

I know there is meaning in the dead lamb killed on my front door. The situation is too coincidental and incredible for it to be otherwise. In thinking about this in a state of shock for the past few hours. I came upon a definition of the word "sacrifice" from Latin. In Latin the derivative of the word "sacrifice" is "sacred office". "Sacred office" means to hold one's work or mission sacred and close to one's heart. Anything sacred requires that we hold it in deep reverence and respect. What is sacred is holy and divine.

The message I want to bring to you and the message this brought to me is the importance of holding my work as holy and divine and others also holding their work holy and divine. Whether this was a message from God, I do not know. What I do know is that it has made me believe in the importance of our work and doing everything within my power to hold my work as the most important and sacred thing in the world. I have dedicated my career and life to getting people jobs and a lamb sacrificed on my front door step and a search for meaning in this has helped me realize the importance I place on my job.

The final message has nothing whosoever to do with me. The final message is all about you. You need to hold your work sacred and divine. A job is sacred. The work you do is sacred. You need to take your job seriously and you need to take your career seriously. The more you put into it the more you will become. The more you appreciate something the better you will get at it. You need to remind yourself of this every single day because it is about the most important factor in who you will become.

THE LESSON

You must constantly be sacrificing in order to ensure advancement in your life. You will always be called upon to make sacrifices in your life and career, and you must do so in order to grow. Take your job and career seriously, and remember that the work you do is sacred. The more you appreciate your work, the better you will get at it.

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