



The Importance of High Standards in Your Life and Career: What High Standards Mean

By [Harrison Barnes](#)

It is important to have high standards. For the most part, life will pay any price you ask of it. The people who achieve the most in the world have incredibly high standards. It is like this with businesses as well. A great piece of machinery, or a great service, is like this because of the standards that are followed.

For example, the best law firms generally have the best standards. When a document leaves their office, it is generally exceptional and very well done. There are no typos and the logic is clear and compelling. The people working on the material are extremely intelligent (the law firm requires this) and of a certain caliber. Information moves through channels and a certain quality of work becomes a standard.

In contrast, the worst law firms are the opposite. Information exits their office and does not make sense and may be riddled with errors. The attorneys appear broken down and may be unkempt. They may not be the smartest, and they may not be of the best caliber. Information moves through channels in the law firm, and there are few controls on how it flows.

It is like this with everything. The best constructed homes, the best cars, the best clothing, and the best furniture: All of these things are the “best” because of the high standards that they follow.

If you want to achieve the most and be the best possible product, you too need to have standards.

With people, it is the psychology of standards that separates the best people from the ordinary. For people with high standards, they believe that everything matters and that nothing is small stuff. They hold themselves to high standards because they know that without doing this, they will not get to where they want to go, or become the people they want to be. They get “stressed” about not meeting the standards (their goals) and use this stress to drive them forward to get better and better. Stress is drive when you convert it. You want to have stress to drive yourself forward.

Working in an exceptional law firm is stressful precisely because they have such high standards. Everything is taken very seriously and the culture of the law firm is based on high standards. It is like this with medicine, finance and everywhere else where the people are the very best at what they do.

When you work with exceptional people, they generally have high standards and these standards will rub off on you. You become like the people you spend time with. This is why people who come out of certain employers where high standards are rigorously enforced tend to do better in the job market. Employers believe that they too will have high standards.

You can see how standards work in the fitness arena. If someone is a professional bodybuilder, they are generally going to be far more demanding of themselves from a fitness standpoint than someone who is not. They are going to work out harder, lift more, eat differently and live a different lifestyle than someone without these sorts of standards.

See the following article for more information:

- [Try as Hard as You Can](#)

Nothing that has great rewards will generally come without having high standards.

- If you do not have high standards for the people you associate with, you will not have the best network and friends.
- If you do not have high standards for your job, you will not have the best job.
- If you do not have high standards for your significant other and how you are treated, you may find yourself in a bad situation.

In most cases, once you have set a high standard, you will need to work harder than someone without those high standards. That is the price you pay for having high standards. The reward, however, is generally a much better life and career.

I have run sales organizations since I was about 18-years old. When I was 18-years old, I started hiring salesman to help me sell asphalt service products for my asphalt business. I hired experienced salesmen, and they always told me a certain amount of money they needed to make. Since their commissions were based on sales, I would always tell them: “Then this is how much you need to sell.” In almost all instances, each of these salesmen sold the amount they needed to sell in order to make the amount they needed to make to pay their various expenses.

They rarely—if ever—made more (but very, very rarely less).

I’ve been in the legal recruiting industry for most of my professional career. Here, many of the recruiters joining our firm are attorneys coming out of law firms accustomed to making \$200,000 or more per year. Because they have expenses and a life based on these expenses, they almost always made what they were making when they were working in a law firm.

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What is going on? I think that people have standards. Regardless if they are a salesman accustomed to earning \$1,000 a week, or an attorney accustomed to earning \$4,000 a week, they make sure that they earn the amount they need. This is their standard. Their standard is a “must” and something they enforce no matter what. They make sure this is what they earn.

Because people seem to have so much control over what they achieve (at least in the sales world), I always wondered what would happen if someone suddenly decided that quotas did not matter, and they set their standards higher. For example, what if someone decided they were going to make \$50,000 a week selling asphalt services – or decided they were going to

make \$20,000 a week as a recruiter. Very few people do this, though. Their standards are too low, and they set goals for themselves that are, in almost every case, much lower than they could achieve if they really put their minds to something.

“The mass of men lead lives of quiet desperation.” –Henry Thoreau, [Walden](#)

Most people do a “good” job because that is what is expected. When you do a good job, however, you get poor rewards. Most people do a good job and that is enough to get by.

When you do a “really excellent” job at something, you will get good results. The jump to excellent from good is generally a very large one. Most people do not make this jump, and it requires much more work than simply being good.

The most important and best rewards come to people who are “outstanding.” When you are outstanding, you get most of the rewards, most of the credit and become a hero. Our cultural heroes—actors, athletes, entrepreneurs and others are the ones who are “outstanding” and set the very highest goals for themselves. They have the highest standards and are the ones who work the hardest, practice the most and do the absolute best they can. They reach these heights due to their high standards.

See the following article for more information:

- [The Importance of Being Extraordinary](#)

When law firms, companies and others lay people off, the people who lose their jobs are generally the people who are “good”. People who are “outstanding” never lose their jobs – hardly ever. Outstanding people are the ones who bring hard work, constant improvement and greatness to whatever they do. The world needs people who are outstanding and set the highest goals possible for themselves.

There is a part of you—and all of us—that is also outstanding and will come out if we set the right standards. Everyone can be outstanding with the right standards. If you say you cannot be outstanding, you are slapping the face of your creator. The entire secret to being outstanding lies in the standards you set for yourself. There is nothing on this earth that does not have a purpose. You are in control over what happens to you and can control it by the standards you set for yourself. Life has meaning when you give it your all.

It is all about the standards and decisions you make. What standards are you going to choose for your life?

Comfort in where you are is dangerous. People who get too comfortable are the ones who get fat, lose their jobs, whose spouses walk out on them and who die early deaths because they do not take good care of themselves. People who get too comfortable do not earn the respect of the world, their children, peers and others at anywhere near the level they are capable of. People who get too comfortable slowly waste away.

See the following article for more information:

- [Never Get Too Comfortable](#)

If we are fat, we can lie to ourselves and say we are fat because “we have a slow metabolism”. Alternatively, we can “step up” and tell ourselves we are fat because we eat too much and need to eat less. The difference between those who achieve at the highest level and those who do not is the difference in standards.

See the following articles for more information:

- [You Must Produce and Do Quality Work](#)
- [Don't Be Dead Weight: Contribute More Than You Take](#)
- [The Quality of Your Life and Career is the Result of Your Habits](#)
- [Your Habits Determine the Outcome of Your Life](#)
- [You Need to Condition Yourself to Make Lasting Change](#)