

You Will Succeed in Your Job and Job Search When You Are Concerned with Giving and Not Taking

By *Harrison Barnes*

The quality of our lives, in many respects, is determined by our working lives. Being able to enjoy our jobs and being able to [get jobs](#) is something that's incredibly important. A job is not just about earning a living; it's about forming a relationship with an institution, or a group of people, and being supported by that organization. For example, the organization may provide you with a good outlet for your skills and give you work you enjoy. In your work environment, you will also have the opportunity to come into contact with, and interact with, the public. If you don't enjoy your job, you don't enjoy life. Therefore, you must ensure you have the skills to both get and keep jobs.

[Getting a job](#) and working for an employer is no different than being in a relationship with another human being. There are people who go into relationships that try to see how much they can take from someone else. I use this example because I am sure you have met people (we all have) that have been more interested in what they could take from you in a relationship rather than what they could give. Perhaps they wanted a place to stay indefinitely, and you didn't even know them very well. Perhaps they wanted you to listen to them talk incessantly and never listened to you. Everyone has known people like this who, for one reason or another, seem more interested in what they can take from us, rather than what they can give.

In our personal relationships, we have a very simple solution to this: we avoid these people. We don't like people who are focused only on taking from us. We learn this from a very young age and by the time we are even six or seven, we avoid people whose objective is to take from us rather than to give. This is just how things work. There are people out there who want relationships with us that are one-way streets, where they perceive us as a solution to their problems. Most of us don't want to be the solutions to other people's problems or to be in a relationship that is a one-way street like this. We want our needs taken care of as well.

One of the most important components of relationships is that we need to go into them with the intent of giving something--not necessarily taking something. What you put out does tend to come back to you. In a relationship where two people are going into it to give, both parties are likely to benefit. One of the most important components in any relationship is understanding what the other person needs. If both parties understand what the other needs, then both are likely to be very happy in the relationship.

Several years ago, I was staying with a young couple who were in their early 30s. Every morning, she would get up early and make her husband a large breakfast and then wait on him while he ate. She would refill his juice, ask him if there was enough salt on his eggs, tell him she could make some more sausage if he needed it. She would not even eat herself until he was long gone to work. He liked being taken care of like this and she would also make him his lunch to take to work. I spoke to him about this and he told me that this is what his mother used to do for him and it made him feel very loved.

Throughout the day he would pick up the phone, what seemed like almost every hour, and ask her what she was doing and how her day was going. She would relate what had happened over the past hour and seek his input on various decisions. She loved having a sounding board for various things. If she spoke to a friend on the phone she would ask him what he thought about the conversation. If she was deciding between two different priced goods at the grocery store, she might call him and seek his input. She loved getting the input and not having to make certain decisions, and this made him feel important. While I thought all of this was very unusual, the point is that it worked. Both of these individuals had certain emotional needs that were being taken care of extremely well in the relationship. More importantly, it seemed to me that both of them were really in the relationship to give and this made everything work extremely well.

Some people just need certain things. This guy needed a wife that would wait on him and cook for him. She needed a husband who would speak to her every hour. That was just how it was. Everyone has certain buttons that, when pushed, fulfill their needs. Finding these buttons can be difficult but when they're found, everything falls into place. For many relationships, these buttons are never found. When they are; however, an incredible amount of trust, happiness and respect can be established between both parties. The buttons are needs that two people have in a relationship.

A relationship with an employer has a lot of similarities to a relationship with another human being. Just as people have certain needs that need to be taken care of, so do employers. Moreover, just as it is advisable to go into a relationship with another human being with a desire to give, you should also go into work relationships with the idea of giving. You need to be more focused on the other person's interest than your own in order to really experience the level of satisfaction you want out of a work relationship. What you put out comes back to you.

One of the most interesting questions I have when I'm asking someone who is unemployed is, "We really need someone to start right away. When can you start?"

I've seen that this is a very powerful question over the years, because it tends to flush out those who want to work from those who don't. It also immediately shows how important it is for various people to contribute versus those who are seeking a one-sided relationship. There are other ways of figuring this out but I believe this is a pretty good one. The answer to this question shows a lot about how someone will be once hired.

Here are some possible responses to this question:

- "Would it be okay if I checked back with you on that?"
- "I have a trip planned and I would like to take the trip, and then after that I have been hoping to organize some things around the house. I can definitely start within four to five weeks."
- "I am in the middle of restoring an old car but I can put a lot of the parts away and start by the middle of next week."

- "I can start on Monday."
- "I can start tomorrow."
- "I can start today."
- "I can start right now."
- "I can start right now and if you need me to I will work all night. It looks like you have a lot to do."

The more someone seems eager to start now and begin work immediately, the more likely I am to want to hire this person. This is not some rule I've simply pulled out of thin air or read in a management book. Instead, I've learned that the answer someone gives to this question is likely to determine their commitment to their job and work going forward. It's a pattern I've seen over and over again, and in the course of having hired hundreds of people and placed hundreds of people in jobs. I know the more eager someone is to start work, the more likely they are to be committed to the job once they start. Hearing that an employer needs help immediately and *wanting to help and contribute now* is an important characteristic.

There is a psychology out there that certain employees and people in the workplace have that's focused on providing results to others. It's an idea in business, as well, of giving something of value before you expect something in return. It's also a psychology of responding to someone else's needs before you worry about your own.

The more people hesitate before starting work, the more likely they are to hesitate when they get into the job as well. In the answer to this question, there is also a push and pull between someone's dedication to their job and other things. Obviously, most employers want people who are dedicated to what they do and not the other way around. Most employers are seeking and looking for people who will go forward and get one job or another done. When you are applying for jobs and interviewing, you need to put yourself in the shoes of the employer and not the other way around:

- Put your employer, or potential employer's needs, first and not your own.
- Try and be selfless and focused on your employer's needs.
- Find out what your employer (or potential employer's) needs are, and tailor your approach to them.

By putting your employer or potential employer first, you will be able to get jobs and hold onto them in almost all economic climates. Not always, but more often than not.

The psychology of putting the needs of your employer first and understanding their needs may seem overly simplistic and obvious, but the truth of the matter is failing to do this is the reason most people don't get jobs and the reason others lose jobs. CEOs of major corporations lose jobs when it becomes clear they care more about bonuses than the company. People lose jobs when they're off doing something personal instead of attending to a corporate crisis. Clock watchers are fired and laid off when the economy gets slow because they're more concerned about what they can take (money) than what they can give (time and extra work). People who are [applying for jobs](#) and appear eager to work are most often hired. People who are taciturn and don't seem eager to work hard aren't hired as often. People whose loyalty is to other employees, and not the company in general, more often lose their jobs and aren't promoted over those who aren't.

We respect loyalty to institutions. It is bred into us. Soldiers have gone off to fight and risked their lives for thousands of years out of loyalty to their institutions. Loyalty and contribution to an "institution" rather than any specific individual, for example, is almost universally respected. When you work for a company or any other sort of institution, you need to look at your relationship and determine what you can give. The more you can give and the more you can contribute, the more the organization will ultimately fulfill your needs as well.

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