



## Appreciate Those around You

By [Harrison Barnes](#)

Back when I was around 21 years old, my best friend Joe Friendmann and I used to hang out in Downtown Detroit on Thursday nights. There were bars that were set up in old river boats, and a ton of other young college students who had grown up around Detroit would head down to these boats and meet up there. It was a lot of fun for the most part and it was always enjoyable to catch up with people I had grown up with. This was something I looked forward to each week.

Detroit has a bad reputation in many respects and it is mostly for good reasons. I remember we would generally have to park at least 100 yards from the boat, and on the walk to the boat from the car, we would generally get accosted by one beggar or another. I have always given money to beggars on the street for the most part, and when I was younger I tended to do much more of this. Sometimes I would even sit down with the beggars and interview them about their situation to see if I could give them any specific guidance.

One day we got out of the car and started walking towards the boat, and a well-dressed man in a polo shirt and khakis approached us and explained to us that he needed money to eat. I am not sure how everything developed, but I sat down with him and started talking to him in depth about his situation in detail for several hours. We never made it to the bar that night. My friend stayed with me and chatted with this poor man about his situation. What might typically have been a 15-second, or at most a 15-minute exchange, turned into a three-hour long discussion. For the first hour or so of the conversation the man drew me in with a well-crafted tale, which made it seem as if everything would be made right if the man just had \$100. He was saying everything I needed to hear, to make me feel as if I should help him:

- He had grown up poor, and as an African American he had experienced racism and this explained his situation.
- He had served America as an officer in the Marine Corps, but had been unable to [find a job](#) when he got out and this explained his situation.
- He could not get a job in the auto industry or anywhere because of layoffs in the sector and this explained his situation.
- He had wanted to go to school but was forced to support his mother, because his father had taken off when he was younger; he never knew his father--and all of this explained his situation.

One after another, the man listed his various troubles, making me feel inclined to help him because of what he had been through. Eventually, I offered him a job and told him he could start work for my asphalt company in the morning. He agreed, but I realized right then and there that he was not serious about it. Deep down I realized this guy did not really want an opportunity to work for my asphalt company. In fact, he did not want to work at all. He just wanted \$100. I told him I would give him an advance after the first day of his employment. He responded by telling me that that was not good enough because he needed \$100 right then and there.

Periodically throughout my conversation with the man, other beggars would come over, looking for money from us.

"Get away, I'm working them!" he would tell them.

This seemed a little unusual but I did not pay a lot of attention to it at the time. Then I started noticing various inconsistencies in his stories. For example, an hour after telling me that he never knew his father, he started telling me that his father used to beat him. A couple of hours into the conversation, I realized it was all bullshit and he really was just "working" me and my friend for money. Every chance he got he attempted to tell me he needed more money. We figured that he was probably trying to get money for crack cocaine, which was very popular on the streets of Detroit at the time.

However, the last thing I wanted to do was tell the guy that I believed he was a drug addict. At some point I decided the best thing to do would be to take him to a store and buy him a bunch of food. If his story was true he would be more than happy to get food. We had been speaking together for the past few hours and the entire time all he could tell me was how hungry he was. He claimed that he needed money for food: he had not eaten for days and needed money to be able to fill his stomach.

It was a surreal experience being in that grocery store with him. I told him he could buy whatever he wanted and he proceeded to pick out a bunch of food. However, I could tell he clearly did not want to be in the grocery store. It was a strange experience because, here I was doing something nice for a person who claimed to be starving, yet I could feel an incredibly hostile vibe coming from the man the entire time we were in the grocery store. Instead of being appreciative, he appeared very, very angry with me.

When we exited the grocery store, the man now had a bunch of food--enough to sustain him for a few days at least. But I knew he did not really want it--just as he did not really want a job. He started to turn mean as we walked toward the car.

"I did not want any fucking groceries, I just wanted the money!" he said.

He threw the groceries on the ground, which scared me. I thought he might turn violent. While he was busy kicking and stomping the groceries, my friend and I got in the car, locked the doors, and quickly put the car into gear. The man ran after us and threw a submarine sandwich at the windshield.

I will never forget that moment. It taught me a lot about drugs, people, salesmanship, and life in general. I eventually became a legal recruiter and a big part of my job became to screen people for various jobs. Where I had once tried to help people in the City of Detroit living on the street, my job now became helping people from all over the United States find jobs.

Lawyers would come into my office seeking help and they were often people I knew I simply could not get a job. Sometimes the people did not have the right personality, other times they did not have the grades or experience, and sometimes they just were people I knew, for one reason or another, would probably not get hired. When I saw someone I knew was going to have a difficult -- if not impossible -- time getting hired, I often would help him or her in every way I knew how. When those

efforts did not work I would offer the person a job working for me.

At first the people would be grateful; however, at some point their gratitude would often wear off. When I was first starting out I often did not take a salary at all, and would pay employee salaries before my own. I remember that I was getting divorced, and as my wife was getting ready to get in the car and drive away for the last time, she was yelling at me that we never had enough money. At that time, I remember, the electrical company had cut off the power to our house because I had not paid the bills. I had paid the salaries of people I had newly put on payroll--people I didn't actually need but had wanted to help, before paying my own electricity bill.

Despite prioritizing my employees and trying to bolster the hopes and dreams of other people, most of them really never knew what I went through in order to help them, and for that reason I am sure most of them never really appreciated it either. More often than not, many people I have helped in the past have not only ever thanked me for the help I gave them, but they were *angry* that I did not give or do more. The people who have done me the most harm in my life, it seems, are paradoxically the people I have helped the most. The worst employees are also often the people who have had the hardest time finding a job before I got involved.

I am not angry about this in the least; I accept it. In fact, it is a rule I have seen proven time and time again with people I have helped: People often do not appreciate when others try to do good things for them. In fact, more often than not people become angry that you did not do more for them. Now, I am not referring to everyone, of course. There are many exceptions to this rule, and there are a lot of good people out there. The point is, however, that a surprising amount of people out there do not appreciate what others do for them.

In my experience, it is rare that someone takes us under their wing on the street, in an employment office, or elsewhere. It is even rarer for the person who offers the help to be appreciated for his help over time. Most of us are quick to forget the help that we receive, as well as the people who have helped us.

In your life there is an extremely good chance that someone at some point in time has helped you. They helped you when they did not need to, and they very easily could have helped someone else instead of you. They went out of their way to help you and offer you assistance. Take a moment to think about those people who in small and large ways have made positive differences in your quality of life.

Several years ago I was interviewing an [older man for a job](#). He was probably in his late 60s. He showed up for the interview, was very professional, and did very well. I had been interviewing a series of Chief Financial Officer candidates for a job, and had probably interviewed around 30 people at this point. When this particular candidate got up to leave the interview he said something I will never forget:

"I would really appreciate being hired for this job. I want you to know that this job is important to me and I would be very grateful."

What made this so astonishing was that this man had retired from another job with millions of dollars in stock options several years ago. He did not need the money and wanted simply to remain busy.

I had never heard someone say something like this in an interview. I still remember his face to this day, and his letting me know he would be grateful for the opportunity really struck a chord with me. Out of the thousands of people I had interviewed over the years, I had never heard this before. And I have never heard it since.

People can say whatever they want but we often know that despite whatever they say, they are not being 100% honest with us. For example, have you ever spoken with a salesperson who said all the right things about a product, and yet there was just something that made you not believe him, so you did not buy the product? In a similar vein, have you ever met someone and felt a connection--and they did not really need to say anything about the product, yet you ended up connecting with them anyway? I have.

It is about honesty and sincerity. The man in the interview was being 100% honest and sincere. I realized that he really would be grateful for the job, and that moved me.

Most people have two versions of themselves.

The first version is the version they walk around with each day. This is their "shell identity" and the identity that they call themselves to the world. For example, people may say "I am an attorney", "I am an important executive", and so forth. This is the person who is most often portrayed in interviews. There is a lack of human connection when interfacing with the shell identity, and it is mostly just a lot of talk.

The second identity that people have is the identity that they really want to be--the "core identity". For example, there are people who want to be [famous actors](#) and actresses, others who want to be sports celebrities and so forth. However, the identity that everyone wants to be is typically a good person, someone who is doing something positive for the world.

You want to be a good person just as I do. I am nothing special and the fact that I have helped people does not make me unique or special.

What the man showed me in the interview that day was a reflection of my "core identity". He essentially set me up so that I would consistently feel like a good person if I hired him. He was tapping into something that we all have, which is *the need to feel like good people and to be appreciated*.

There is nothing more important you can do in your interviews than allow the people who are interviewing you to know you will appreciate them if they hire you. It is equally important to appreciate those who hire you and to make them feel like good people. Be a constant reminder that they made the right choice. And never forget to appreciate the people who have helped you along on your way. You should work to let those around you know how well appreciated they are. When you appreciate those around you, more help will come your way.

## THE LESSON

It is important to appreciate the contributions of those around you. Many people do not appreciate the good things that others do around them. It is rare for people to offer help in any situation, and even rarer for that person to be appreciated for their contributions. The more you appreciate the help that you have received, the more help will come your way.

**Read More About If You Spend Time With Negative People, Your Organization Will Assume that You too Have a Negative Attitude and it Will Hurt You:**

- [Surround Yourself With Positive People](#)

- Plant Yourself in Good Soil
- Self Image
- The People You Work and Associate With Can Either Make or Break You

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