

## You Need to Be Seen as the Cure

By [Harrison Barnes](#)

Since I live on the ocean, whenever I look out the window the first things I generally see are surfers, people on jet skis, and so forth. After years of watching at a distance, and without my personally having any ability to stay standing on a surfboard, I made the decision to purchase a jet ski in order to start enjoying the water.

The first jet ski I purchased was on eBay and I believe I purchased it for around \$500. The jet ski was an old sort of jet ski that you needed to stand up on and then pull up on, after which it would start going forward. There was no seat; the only way you could use it was standing up. This jet ski is part of a long line of water sport toys that I have purchased over the last few years in my effort to develop ocean-like hobbies, which have all for the most part completely and miserably failed. Suffice it to say, when it comes to the ocean, she and I do not get along.

The problem with my ocean-going hobbies, which I always seem to forget about, is that I work all the time. I work from 6:00 or 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. or so Monday through Friday and also on Sunday. In addition, I usually get sucked in and work at least 5 or 6 hours every Saturday. I am obsessed with my work for various reasons, which leaves me no time for ocean-going pursuits; however, *I like to think it does*. Despite the fact that I live right on the beach, I often go weeks or months without ever going down to the water. If you spend your time sitting at a desk as I do, you like to dream of ways you can *let loose* from time to time. Since I spend a lot of time looking out the window, observing people having fun in the ocean, ocean sports have always taunted me as something that could be a lot of fun.

On the day before Thanksgiving a couple of years ago. I went to a store in Oxnard, California, that sold inflatable boats, and I decided to purchase one. These are the sort of boats you see on television that are launched from larger boats and are usually employed to zoom out to rescue people. They can also be launched from land--*or so I thought*. I spent that day in Oxnard negotiating with the owner of the store and finally, around 5:00 p.m., I loaded my inflatable boat into my pickup truck and started driving back to Malibu. My dream, and the plan, was to keep the boat directly under my house and haul it back and forth to take trips up and down the coastline from time to time.

I will be the first to admit that working in front of a computer all day, doing numerous teleconferences and running several businesses, can make a guy do some strange things. In many respects, I consider my pursuits somewhat healthy. I know a lot of people fantasize about and engage in far more nefarious pursuits to blow off steam when they find themselves working a little too much. I am really no different; however, I do try and keep my non-work-related activities as clean and wholesome as possible.

I was with an assistant of mine that day, and he had been somewhat astonished about our spending the day in a boat store negotiating the purchase of a relatively inexpensive inflatable boat. The negotiations went on for hours, but I enjoyed them. It is always important in my opinion to negotiate everything you can when it is not considered a *crass* thing to do. Negotiating with someone who is offering you a job may not always be the best idea; however, negotiating the purchase of a boat, some clothes, or other retail items can sometimes pay great dividends.

As a case in point, I once purchased thousands of dollars' worth of suits from Macy's for a few hundred bucks. It was one of the strangest--and most strangely gratifying--experiences of my life. After my second year of practicing law, I had decided that I was going to go work for another law firm. The [law firm](#) where I had been currently working had absolutely no dress code, whereas the law firm I was moving to required that I wear a suit and tie. Macy's was having some sort of insane sale wherein they had marked down the cost of their suits by 50% and then for an eight-hour window they would be deducting an additional 50% on top of the 50% off. When I went to the cashier the bill was like \$1,000 for all the suits.

"I'm not sure I want to spend this much money," I told her, sort of mumbling under my breath.

"I have just the thing," she said. She pulled out some special staff coupon that entitled the store's staff members to get 80% off one clothing purchase, and she gave it to me. I ended up purchasing five nice suits for \$200. It was one of the strangest things I had ever seen. Sometimes just speaking up can result in incredible savings.

As my assistant and I were driving up the coast, I decided that I wanted to pull over and launch the boat right then and there, and I would drive the boat up the coast to my house. My assistant seemed to think my plan was a good one and told me that it sounded *cool*, among other reassurances. He was a nice guy from the Midwest who had recently relocated to California, and I think he was watching a lot of my antics thinking it was all simply par for the course. We pulled along the side of the road, unloaded, and started carrying the boat toward the beach where we planned to have my inaugural "beach launch." I had remembered the guy at the inflatable boat store saying something about a special class I could go to that taught how to launch inflatable boats from the beach into the ocean. As I soon learned, there is a special skill set associated with this, which is not quick and easy to develop.

The boat was much heavier than I had anticipated and it took us several minutes to drag it from the back of the truck to the waterfront. The boat also had an engine that was on the back of the truck, which must have weighed at least 125 pounds. We set the boat next to the water and I went back to get the engine. By then, my assistant and I were already sweating from all the effort. It took us at least 30 minutes to hook up the engine to the boat. Finally, we had the engine on the boat and I pulled the cord to start the engine. It started right up and the propeller was whizzing around in all directions. We did not really know what to do at that point, and it was very frightening. I pulled an emergency cord to shut off the engine. By this time our legs were covered in water right up to our knees and our pants were soaked. It was also getting dark outside.

"We need to get this thing in the water!" I finally said. The waves were crashing around us and they were huge--as tall as us, as they broke several feet from shore. The water looked pretty frightening and at some point my assistant said something along the lines of "I would not go out there if I were you!"

We pushed the boat further into the ocean, trying to get it to a place where I could jump into it, start the engine, and sputter out to sea. However, no sooner had we gotten the boat out that far than a giant wave crashed over us and filled the boat with water. It then proceeded to flip the boat entirely. We both dove into the water and attempted to flip the boat back over. I am not sure how long it took, but we eventually got the boat positioned so it was right side up again. The problem was that it was now filled with water, and we were unsure of how to drain it. I jumped in the boat and attempted to find some plugs or something to drain the water, and I did, but no sooner had I found these plugs than a great wave knock me right over again.

We had first left the truck and attempted to launch the boat around 5:30 p.m. Two hours later, we were a couple hundred yards down the beach. The boat was filled with water and we were both holding onto ropes attached to the boat, in a heavily labored attempt to keep the boat from being pulled out completely to sea. Each time a new wave would come, the boat would thrash around wildly, and then, once the wave had retreated, it would attempt to pull the boat out to sea with it. Each time a large wave would come, one of us would shout something like: "Oh shit, mother of God!!" and the other might scream "HOLD ON!"

At some point we agreed that the only way to end the struggle would be to deflate the boat and drag it out of the water. So I jumped in the boat and started pulling various plugs, hoping to deflate it. *But the boat refused to deflate.* That is, I had to physically push on the various areas of the boat that were not deflating in order to get the air out. As each wave would come, it would flip the boat and me with it. It was dark; we were on a deserted beach and there was no one around to witness or to assist in our aquatic nightmare. We were shivering in the cold and our hands were wrinkled from the cold water.

We eventually got the boat deflated and started dragging it toward the truck, which was hundreds of yards away by now. Parts of the boat were scattered all up and down the shoreline. The visible casualties from our fight with the boat were the flooring, which we had disassembled, the motor and gas tank, which we had taken off, and various other parts, including a little canopy made to protect the boater from the sun. We had ripped off the protective canopy in all the frenzy. The boat was entirely in pieces, it was dark, and we needed to locate all of the various parts that were hiding along the shoreline. The situation was probably even worse than I can recall now; I most surely have blocked out some of the details.

When we finally got back to the truck we decided we would use the headlights from the truck to track down all the parts of the boat that were missing. This seemed like a good idea, one that would save us considerable time, since there was hardly any visibility. We started the truck and I remember we were both shivering and completely wet. My assistant had gone into a sort of psychological shock, I think. He stared vacantly into the distance and mumbled several things that did not make any sense. When I put the truck in gear we did not move forward. The wheels of the truck just spun in the sand.

It was hard to believe that this was happening to us. I drive a giant "dually" pickup truck. It has four wheels in the back and it is not the sort of pickup truck that one person could push. But we tried. For the next hour or so we made every attempt to push and rock the pickup, to get it out of the sand. We tried digging and putting various things beneath the wheels. Nothing was working. In the end we called for a tow truck. Since it was the night before Thanksgiving, it was not easy to get assistance. I called my wife and she ended up bringing us dry clothes. I did not get home until well after 10:00 p.m. that evening, and I have never tried getting into that boat again. It is simply too heavy to move, plus it bears a certain psychological weight.

The nice thing about the jet ski that I purchased is that it was no more than a few hundred pounds--much lighter than the inflatable boat. With a little effort I could drag it from under my house to the water and back. Unfortunately, I never took the time to learn how to use it. I should have.

The waves in front of my house are consistently so large that the area is called County Line. It is considered one of the best surfing areas in the United States. Even the Beach Boys sung about it. In fact, the waves are so impressive that some people I know from Bermuda are flying all the way over here to stay with us and learn surfing for a couple of weeks over this summer. The main problem I have had with this little jet ski was that, due to the size of the waves, I was never able to stand up on it--not for long. Mostly I would just be knocked right over and get dragged around by the thing. Inevitably the jet ski would be tossed by the waves like a leaf in the wind and then thrown back to shore. Unfortunately, only after making the purchase did it dawn on me that stand-up jet skis are made for lakes--not the savage ocean.

After my experiments with the stand-up jet ski, I decided that the smart thing to do would be to purchase a sit-down jet ski. A few weeks later I found myself at the Sea-Doo dealership. I was with my dad and we sat there negotiating for a few hours. Ultimately I ended up purchasing the biggest and most badass jet ski in the store. It was so powerful you could allegedly take it underneath the water and come shooting right out. The guy in the dealership told me it would do over 80 miles an hour. It was formidable.

Since I was planning on storing the jet ski beneath my house, we discussed doing a beach delivery, whereby we would launch the jet ski from the shoreline a few miles from my house and then ride it directly into the beach by my home. This seemed like a great idea to me and I was very excited about the prospect. The salesperson agreed to assist me in delivering the jet ski, so we went to a public beach. But before we had the opportunity to even unload the Sea-Doo from the truck, a state parklands officer came up to us and told us that we would get a ticket if we attempted to launch the jet ski there. For the next 30 minutes or so we snaked around looking for a launching place, and we finally found a deserted stretch of beach. I got on the jet ski and rode it back toward my house. Then the salesman swam out to take over and rode it at 45 miles an hour. At one point he launched it off a wave and landed it about 20 feet from the house, making the delivery official.

Unfortunately, we realized once the jet ski was on the beach that it was nearly impossible to get it any closer to the house, so that it would not be washed away during high tide. Despite the fact that the salesman had brought a helper with him, we had absolutely no luck lifting the jet ski. It was a complete nightmare. We struggled and pushed for a long while and finally concluded that the machine must weigh more than 1,000 pounds.

At some point I decided that it would be best to go to the grocery store, Howes, down the road, and find a few guys to help us. I recruited about five guys and brought them back to my house. Sure enough, these five guys, the salesman, his helper, and I were able to combine strength to move the jet ski. It worked out great! Over the next several months, each time I wanted to go out on the jet ski I would go to Howes and recruit several guys to take it out for me; then I would beach the jet ski and drive back to Howes in order to get some more guys to come help me move it in. I paid the guys \$5.00 a piece to move it out and another \$5.00 a piece to move it back in.

The tradition was that I would go to Howes and say in Spanish "I need 5 guys for five bucks each for a really quick job!" and the guys would all hop in the truck to help me move the jet ski. One time when we were all heading down the road toward the beach, we came upon an accident that had recently occurred. There was an overturned bread truck and a few cars that had

crashed into a ditch. A couple of people who appeared to have gotten out of the cars were wandering around the wreckage in a daze. The accident looked bad; there were flames coming out of the bread truck. I veered to the side of the road and saw the guys I had picked up from Howes looking at each other skittishly. I could tell they thought this was why I had recruited them for help--at five bucks a piece, no less.

As we ran across the road toward the bread truck, a portion of the truck exploded, shooting flames at least 20 feet in the air. We all turned and ran back to my pickup as the truck exploded again. Since my truck was pretty close to the mess, I jumped in and sped it forward, far away from the explosions. The workers I had hired ran toward me, then hopped into my pickup when it finally came to a stop.

As we sped away in the pickup truck, several police officers came roaring up to the scene and blocked off the road. Since I had not witnessed the accident, I decided to leave. When I looked at the guys, they were all drenched in sweat and looked absolutely terrified. They thought that I had brought them to the accident site for a rescue mission, and we had all almost been killed in an explosion.

I heard one of the guys say in Spanish something to the effect that this was the hardest \$5 he had ever made.

After some time, it got pretty old having to hire and round up day workers every time I wanted to take my jet ski out. I hoped to find a solution whereby I could take the Sea-Doo out all the time without having to hire some guys. I did all sorts of research online and I eventually discovered a contraption that the owner claimed was designed to move the jet ski in and out of the water.

The first one of these I bought I got on eBay. It cost a few hundred dollars and was delivered by some specialized shipping service because it was so large. It ended up not working at all. The problem was that, after I got the 1,000-plus-pound jet ski loaded onto the device, it would sink into the sand, immobile. I would sigh and have to drive to Howes. Another problem I had at the time was that I rarely carried cash around. Therefore, I would find myself driving around frequently in uncomfortable an wetsuit looking for a cash machine.

I continued searching for a solution to my problem and eventually I discovered a guy in Florida with a tool he claimed could solve my problem easily. According to him, his company had solved the problem of jet skis sinking in the sand with special tires, which looked like two basketballs welded together. The thing looked like some bizarre moon contraption, and once I had seen the pictures of it and had spoken to the guy, I was more than happy to pay \$1,100 for this incredible device. I thought that my prayers had been answered.

One day while waiting for my special contraption with the lunar tires to arrive, I went downstairs and discovered that the small stand-up jet ski I had purchased online had most likely been washed out to sea by a series of large waves the night before. The larger jet ski had been moved a little; however, its massive weight would have required much more than common waves in order to move it. The problem here was that the jet skis needed to be stored beneath the house, which is on stilts. This results in them coming into contact with waves every so often, when there are storms. The old jet ski had frequently been washed down the beach a few houses or so during various storms, and this latest episode was proof positive that I needed to make a change.

The solution to this latest problem, I reasoned, was for me to build a special ramp beneath the house that could be lowered and raised. I would need to be able to roll the jet ski up and down the ramp on a little trailer to safely store it and to take it out to sea. For this project, I consulted with an engineer who specialized in designing these types of systems for sailboats. He was able to verify that the foundation of the house was strong enough to support the jet ski, and he designed this ramp with a series of complex pulley systems that could move the ramp up and down. The entire project was extremely complex and took several weeks; however, I felt the investment was worth it in the long run, and by the time it was complete, it was an absolute masterpiece.

The engineer, also a carpenter, was very proud of his work; when he was done he called me on the phone and requested I pay him several thousands of dollars extra because the project had been so much more work than he had anticipated.

When the specialized jet ski mover arrived from Florida, it was yet another disappointment. It worked somewhat as promised and did not get stuck in the sand, but the jet ski was so incredibly heavy that it still required at least two guys to push it. In addition, the beach sloped away from the house. While one person could easily get the jet ski going toward the water from the house, it was very difficult to get the jet ski back to the house without extra assistance.

I puzzled over this issue for quite some time. I could not understand how someone could live right on the ocean and not be able to use his own jet ski. Also, I had become increasingly annoyed with my neighbors, who seemed to think that I was fighting a losing battle. My objective was now to show them that I could conquer this problem once and for all.

One day I finally came upon what I thought would be the perfect solution: an ATV. Not just any ordinary ATV; a serious ATV. I figured that an ATV with a massive winch attached to it could easily pull the jet ski into and out of the water.

The ATV I finally located was extreme. It was one of the most powerful ATVs ever built. Boasting 800 ccs, it had a very serious motor. It had seating for two on the back and best of all it had a winch built onto it. The winch was the real kicker; I knew it would enable me to move the Sea-Doo in and out of the water with ease.

The first time I used it, a guy from Chicago who was renting my neighbor's house had come out to speak with me:

"Dude. I have been living on the water for years and I also grew up with ATVs. I just want to tell you that there is no way what you are contemplating doing is going to work."

I proceeded to hook the winch up to the Sea-Doo and to drag it right out to the water using the ATV. Seeing the look on that moron's face was great. Another cool thing about the ATV was that if you got stuck in the water all you had to do was put on the four-wheel drive. The ATV was an absolute miracle worker.

As well as the ATV worked, the third or fourth time I used it, the cable on the winch snapped and went flying back at the jet ski. Alas, I was forced to revert to Howes to search for eligible day workers.

The dealership where I had purchased the ATV was highly sympathetic to the situation and they tracked down a special supplier who made really, really strong ATVs and supplies, and ultimately I was able to solve the problem with the winch cable. However, within a month or so of getting that fixed, the ATV's electrical system had become corroded from coming into contact with too much saltwater. It stopped working.

It was back to Howes, as you might have guessed.

After this episode, I decided to give up trying to keep the jet ski on the beach. A year or so later I moved to a different house.

Now I keep the ATV (which goes unused) in my driveway, and I store the jet ski (which I use very rarely).

A couple of months ago, I was backing up my car during a bad rainstorm and I had the radio on. I thought I heard something outside the car but was not sure. Moments later I realized that the ATV had scraped up the entire passenger side of the car. The dealership explained that the damage sustained by the aluminum car body was more of a "10-foot gouge" than a scratch and that they could not just pound out aluminum like they could another metal. The estimate they gave my insurance company for repairing the car was \$24,000. The car has been in the repair shop for the past few months.

Now I am sure you are asking yourself, and you rightly should be, "*What does any of this have to do with my [job search and life?](#)*" Believe it or not, this particular series of events has an incredible amount to do with you and your career. In fact, these particular episodes teach some of the strongest lessons about getting and keeping a job that you may ever learn.

When I purchased those five suits from Macy's on that fateful day, I had a serious problem at hand: I could not go to work without those suits. I owned only one suit at the time. The new suits were a cure for one problem. Then there was the issue of price; even with the double discount the total at the cash register had come to \$1,000--more than I wanted to spend on those five suits. Yet somehow, right then and there, that Macy's employee came through with a solution, a *cure* for my problem.

When I called the tow truck to extricate me from the sand, I had no other options available. Whatever price the tow truck driver had charged, I probably would have paid. He held the *cure* for my problem.

When I went to pick up the guys at the market to help me move my jet ski all of those times, I had no choice but to use them. There was no other way that I could have moved the jet ski. They were the *cure* for my problem.

When one of my jet skis washed away and I needed someone to design and fabricate a complicated ramp with a series of pulleys and so forth, I needed to call someone familiar with this sort of work. There are not a lot of engineers out there who specialize in boats and who are also carpenters. The guy I hired for this had the *cure* for my problem.

When I needed an ATV powerful enough to pull the jet ski in and out of the water, Bombardier supplied the most powerful ATV available, with a winch on it. This was the only logical *cure* for my problem at the time.

When the cable on the winch broke, the dealership tracked down a specialized company that made heavy-duty winch cables, and this company too had the *cure* for my problem.

When I backed my car into the ATV and destroyed the side of it, the only company that had a *cure* for my problem was the company that manufactured my car because they were the only ones who sold the body panels that needed to be replaced.

Employers are constantly facing a barrage of new challenges and problems. Being at the right place at the right time, to which we often attribute success, really means offering the right *cure* for the right situation. Become the cure--not the cause of your employer's struggles. If you are the best candidate for the job, you are the cure for the situation. Let this be known through your words, and let it be seen in your actions. Then marvel as you watch your destiny unfold.

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