

Gravitate Towards People and Organizations That Appear to Have Good Luck

By [Harrison Barnes](#)

The Rothschilds have another maxim: "Never do anything with an unlucky man or place." That is to say, never have anything to do with a man or place which never succeeds, because, although a man may appear honest and intelligent, yet if he tries this or that thing and always fails, it is on account of some fault or infirmity that you may not be able to discover but nevertheless which must exist. --P.T. Barnum

I have spent a large portion of my life [finding jobs](#) for people. In this career, I have gradually come to realize that there are some people and organizations out there that simply have what I would call *bad luck*. Something seems to go wrong with everything these people or organizations get involved in. Others appear to have *good luck*--everything they touch seemingly turns to gold.

One of the keys to your success in your career and life is avoiding the people and organizations that seem to have a never-ending streak of bad luck. Generally bad luck is not the real cause of failure. Instead, an almost unfathomable variety of complex and numerous factors are probably the cause.

- From the moment successful people get up in the morning until they go to bed, they are doing a variety of things too numerous to count that make them successful.
- From the moment unsuccessful people get up in the morning until they end their day, they are doing a variety of things too numerous to count that make them unsuccessful.
- Successful businesses do things a certain way that involves so many variables it would be difficult to count.
- Unsuccessful businesses do things a certain way that involves so many variables it would be difficult to count.

All people and organizations work the way they do for various reasons. Try as you might, you will never understand all the reasons one succeeds and one does not. In your career and life, you are just better off avoiding what does not succeed. When you spend your time working in businesses or associating with people who do not succeed, you are apt to pick up bad habits. You will not succeed if you hitch your wagon to the wrong star.

I used to spend most of my days interviewing attorneys for law firms and then getting these [attorneys jobs](#). I would see people with the most incredible records who had lost one job after another, found themselves unemployed, and were having no luck whatsoever getting a job. When you look at the résumés of some attorneys, it is hard to imagine why they are not employed. They appear to have done everything right. I would look at these records and decide that there was something horribly unjust about someone being unemployed even when he or she had done so well in the working world, had gone to the right schools, and gotten the right jobs.

Sometimes I would be amazed that the person might be in the middle of a major city and unable to find a job. He or she might have been unemployed for weeks, or even months. I would spend considerable time working to understand this person, and do everything within my power to find him or her a job. I would eat, sleep, and drink getting this person a job; it would become my mission. When I commit to something, such as finding someone a job, it becomes the most important thing in the world to me.

The skill of finding jobs for people is much like hitting a nail with a hammer. When you first start doing it, you get a lot of resistance; however, after some time, it gets much easier. You know how to hit the hammer correctly and you know how hard and when to hit it. When you focus your attention toward any job for a long period of time, your mind will constantly be suggesting improvements to your approach, which would not appear if you were busy doing different things. This has been my experience with being in the business of finding people jobs. This is why I have consistently achieved better and better results over time.

When an attorney found himself having zero luck in getting a job, I would often end up relocating him to another city, repackaging him, and taking the time to really bring out his strengths in a way that others may never have thought of. I would work very, very hard at this, and generally within a relatively short time, I would have gotten the person an excellent job. This is something that I played out over and over again. I loved working with the attorneys that looked great, but for one reason or another they were having such a difficult time finding a job. It made me feel as if I were doing something positive for the world and really making a difference.

While in some cases I was really making a difference, I quickly discovered that in most cases I was not making as much of a difference as I thought. In the case of many of these attorneys, as it turned out, there was generally a reason they had been unemployed, which I simply did not see.

Within about six months to a year after I had gotten these people jobs, bad things usually started to happen. For one reason or another, they would almost always end up losing their jobs. This occurred time and time again. There would generally be one specific reason or another--but it happened almost like clockwork; in fact, it became very predictable. In some cases the attorneys would just quit their jobs with various criticisms about their new employer. In other cases the attorneys would simply get fired. Sometimes the law firms who had hired the attorney would go out of business. It was as if these attorneys I sought out and worked so hard to help were somehow pursued by *bad luck* wherever they went.

I witnessed this phenomenon so many times that I began to think there was something more to it. While it is not a pleasant truth to admit, the truth of the matter is that there are simply some people out there who *are* "bad luck" and therefore *have* bad luck. One year, several years ago, I had some bad experiences with four or five of my employees. A couple of them stole from our company, and the rest engaged in various transgressions that were bad enough to warrant my firing them on the spot. I was very upset about all of these incidents because the people I let go were all very talented attorneys in many

respects, and I had spent a lot of time with them. Most of these people had sought me out originally, and asked for jobs. I was sympathetic to their situations at the time and had hired them.

I felt personally violated, but more than that, I also felt that I had put my trust in the wrong people. Unfortunately, it is never easy letting someone go from a job; it is among the hardest things that anyone can do. When you let someone go from a job, you are basically altering the course of that person's life. Moreover, most people remember the bad things that happen to them throughout their lives much more than the good. When you let someone go, you are putting out some negative energy and it never feels good to put out negative energy. You may also be making an enemy. It has always been difficult for me to hurt someone--even if that person has hurt me.

We have a wise old recruiter in one of our companies, who has been recruiting for around 40 years and has seen it all when it comes to recruiting. One day, he was talking to me about all of these previous employees and he said something to me I will never forget:

"All those people were fired from their last jobs, right?"

"Yes"

"Well, there you go..."

I remember thinking about this statement for some time because there was a lot of wisdom in it. The wisdom was very deep and I did not fully understand it at the time, but after a while I did. What this recruiter was saying, in effect, is that there are some people out there who are just *bad news* and, try as you might, you are often unlikely to see them coming or to know the reasons why. As I thought more about this, I realized that most of the people that I have had problems with in my companies over the years were people who had been fired from previous jobs. This was not something I had strongly considered when I had initially hired the employees; however, I was starting to see a definite discernible pattern. In fact, in almost all incidences where there had been a problematic employee, that person had been fired from at least one previous job.

Regarding *bad luck*, I am sure you too have met people throughout your career who have had a big dose of it. The person cannot hold a job for very long; perhaps every organization he or she has ever worked for, for one reason or another, ends up having problems of one sort or another; the person's department gets downsized; the person's boss gets fired and he or she gets asked to leave as well; or the person's employer goes out of business.

When you consider a career history like this, the story reads like a bad soap opera. Nevertheless, the person may appear to be very good at what he or she does.

It is not uncommon to see a seventh- or eighth-year attorney who has worked at 10 law firms in this period of time. He or she may have gone to a really good law school like Cornell, Berkeley, or Stanford, and may have worked at the very [best law firms](#). When you examine the person's résumé and speak with him or her, you learn that an incredible combination of circumstances has led to the person's having had so many jobs in such a short period of time.

Truth be told, there is generally no such thing as good and bad luck. The results you achieve in your career are generally related to what you do *right*, what you do *wrong*, and how you do everything that you do. This same thing goes for companies. A company will get results generally not because of luck but because of what it is doing right or wrong.

A key to succeeding in your career and life is to avoid the people and organizations that appear to have had bad luck, and do your best to gravitate toward the people and organizations that appear to have had good luck. You do not need to understand why they have good luck--just that they do. If you see this concept and use this career advice, you are likely to be successful in everything you undertake.

THE LESSON

There are many people and organizations who, for a variety of reasons, seem never to succeed no matter what they do and experience perpetual bad luck. Do not waste time analyzing the causes of ill luck; simply avoid people and businesses who seem to have it, and instead associate yourself with those inclined to growth and development to achieve your goals.