

## The Importance of Finding and Creating Demand

By [Harrison Barnes](#)

In 2000, I needed computer programmers in our company more than anything. At the time, however, it was exceedingly difficult to find a good computer programmer. I went through a lot of tough times trying to hire and keep [computer programmers](#). Computer programmers seemed to have their pick of jobs and they would switch employers every few months, as they were offered better and better jobs, more stock options, and other employee perks. One day I hired a programmer and he immediately started working on an important project that I had. He worked for a few hours and then asked me to order him a pizza. He ate the pizza and afterward he worked for about twenty minutes, then came into my office.

"This project is not that interesting," he said. "I think I am going to just go back to my old job."

As hard as this may be to believe now, at that time a decent programmer could easily go back to a job he or she had quit. The reason was that there was just a huge demand for programmers. Programmers could easily move between jobs, go back to an old job they quit, or [find a new job](#)--all in a matter of a few hours. The job market for programmers in California then was absolutely nuts. Programmers would show up to interviews with arrogance and without a care in the world because they knew that they were in control and that the hiring companies really needed them; if they could do the job, they hardly even needed a résumé.

By 2001, the market had turned and programmers were barely in demand at all. There were almost no programming jobs available anywhere. It seemed as if, just as quickly as the demand for programmers had arrived, it was gone. Programming résumés started getting much more polished, and prospective employees were humbled. Suddenly programmers started showing up to interviews in suits and ties, talking about what sort of value they could offer. As the 2001 recession grew on, I started getting cold calls from small programming outfits trying to tell me they could offer this or that service to help our business. Programmers came into interviews with suggestions and ideas about what they could do to help the company.

In the job market and in life, if we are not in demand, we need to either (1) find the demand, or (2) create the demand for whatever it is that we offer. This is the nature of looking for a job and planning to succeed at everything we do. *In order to have the job you want, or the life you want, you need to either find the demand or create a demand for what you are doing or selling.*

**Find the Demand.** When I was in college, I had a professor who was grossly overweight. She taught an anthropology course about Africa. She had spent most of her career traveling back and forth to Africa while writing and teaching about it at the University of Chicago. In the rural area of Africa where she had worked and lived, the characteristic that was considered more attractive above all others was to be overweight. Women drank cream and sweetened milk all day in order to be and look as obese as possible. Carrying extra weight was a sign of wealth and the ability to endure famines that stalked the areas; therefore, someone who could be obese while others were starving was considered to be very, very attractive. The woman told our class that she was considered incredibly beautiful in the part of Africa where she worked.

"If I spent all my time in the United States, I would probably do everything I could to be thin," she told our class.

When I heard this and later read various anthropology articles on this subject, I found it increasingly fascinating. Here this woman was *in demand*, even sought out, at least partially due to her attractiveness in one part of the world due to being obese, whereas she did not nearly receive this sort of attention in the United States. This is how it is with many of our careers. We have goods or services that are in demand. We are just not finding the right place where the demand is highest.

In 2000, a computer programmer, in the middle of a rural state where no technology companies were based, would not have been *in demand*. If he decided to market himself in Palo Alto, California, however, he would have instantly been in demand. My 350-pound professor certainly could not have walked on the fashion runway in New York City, but her weight made her the equivalent of a supermodel in the part of Africa where she was able to find a constant stream of interesting work.

Most people in the job market do not understand how to *find the demand*, and as a consequence, they do not succeed and reach the level they are capable of attaining. I am going to use a crude analogy, but it is a worthwhile one. If you get on an airline flight coming into Las Vegas on Friday afternoon or early evening from small and large towns across the United States, you are very certain to see numerous, very attractive women sitting alone. Since I live in downtown Las Vegas and have heard this from numerous people, I can tell you what a good number of these women do: They are strippers and are involved in other sexually related entertainment pursuits. They work in Las Vegas on the weekend when it is busiest and go home on Sunday. From what I have heard, each weekend thousands of these women come to Las Vegas to work in adult entertainment. Strippers can make thousands of dollars per night in Las Vegas, while their earnings back in rural America would simply pale in comparison. What these women are doing is *finding the demand* that exists in the market for what they do. They come to Las Vegas in order to *find the demand*--the highest demand for their services.

This is no different from people with blue-collar skills going to Alaska to work in a fishery and making tens of thousands of dollars in a summer. And this is also no different from a professional basketball player coming to the United States from China because he is more in demand in the United States. Whatever your profession, the most important thing you can do is find the demand. Finding the demand may require a geographic change or it may simply require you to conduct your search for a job, mate, or whatever, in a different way.

Yesterday I was talking with an attorney who works in New York City and has been out of law school for fifteen years. He makes \$110,000 a year working in a [law firm](#). This attorney could be making much more than this. With his background and pedigree, I know that if he knew how to look for a job, he could find a position that would pay double his current salary. I asked him what he was doing to look for a job and he told me he was looking on a public job site and nothing more. Because

I am in this business, happen to know that this guy has many excellent skills that are highly *in demand* in the marketplace. This guy needs to package himself correctly, and instead of applying to one job every few months, he needs to apply for as many opportunities as he can find in New York City. He even needs to get his résumé out to places that have not advertised that they are hiring. In short, this attorney needs to *find the demand* in the market for what he offers in terms of his legal skills. This is an exercise I have been through with countless attorneys and job seekers before; it is all about finding the demand.

If you are [looking for a job](#), or looking for a better job, or looking for a mate, or looking for a friend, or trying to get anything, you need to find the demand. Nothing is more important than finding the demand. Everyone and every skill is in demand somewhere, and the better you do at finding where you are in demand, the more success you are going to have in your job search. If you can find the demand, you will do well.

In Aspen, Colorado, there are a ton of fancy stores selling things like \$700 men's shirts. The first time I looked for an article of clothing in Aspen, I nearly dropped over. Every clothing store there is remarkably expensive. I have never seen such an expensive city when it comes down to simply looking for a shirt. There are a lot of rich people in Aspen. Obviously, these kinds of high-end stores would not go over as well in a place like downtown Detroit, for instance. There simply would not be the demand. The stores that come into Aspen to sell things like \$700 shirts have done nothing more than find the demand for their brand of product. The game is all about finding demand. Businesses understand this and you should too.

Mormons, Jews, Muslims, African Americans, and others all have their own dating sites. It is like this with everything: We go to and tend to congregate wherever we are most in demand. This is a very powerful marketing secret and something that will empower you to get what you want.

**In the Absence of Demand, You Need to Create Demand.** When the market for computer programmers seemed to vanish overnight in 2001, there was simply no more demand. When the economy gets bad, all sorts of professionals such as lawyers and others may see demand seemingly dry up overnight, while employers start laying people off and stop hiring. The demand for what you do may just go away. In such a situation you will need to find a way to *create demand* for your skill. The ability to create demand for something not ordinarily in demand is among the most important skills there are. People with the ability to create demand for themselves, or for a product or service, are typically the highest paid and most successful in any economy.

A few days ago I was walking with my daughter down the strip in Las Vegas when a man came at me trying to hand me a flyer. He was standing in front of Circus Circus and thrusting flyers in the face of everyone who walked past him. It must have been 115 degrees outside, and I am sure this was a very tough job to work at. Since I had been bombarded with various flyers by several other people in the preceding moments (which, by the way, happens constantly throughout each day)--I simply walked by the man without taking the flyer. A few seconds later he started screaming at me:

"Hey, Jack Ass with the stroller! What's wrong with a discount on a Grand Canyon tour in exchange for taking a tour of a timeshare?" I stopped, completely astonished. My wife started yelling at the man and a small altercation broke out. My wife called him an "ass" or something to this effect. I did not get involved because I was so shocked, and since my daughter was with me.

A few moments later, the man broke into an argument with another woman. He called her a "stupid bitch" when she did not take one of his flyers, and she started fighting with him. I could not believe this guy. He was literally starting fights with everyone who passed by and was not taking his flyer. He seemed to be a really angry guy. He was angry because he did not have the ability to get people interested in taking his flyers. Plainly put, he could not *create demand*. He was in the wrong racket. The thing is there are people like those guys who really do have the ability to *create demand*, and who can interest people in taking their flyers. This guy was just not one of them...

When my wife and I went to Hawaii for our honeymoon several years ago, no less than twenty people tried to sell us timeshares. One time we were walking down the street and saw an advertisement for a \$200 flight in a helicopter over a volcano, and when we stopped and expressed an interest, we were told that we could go on this excursion (regularly priced at \$600 per person!) if we would agree to spend three hours taking a tour of a timeshare property.

We elected not to do the timeshare tour, but there were so many people trying to sell us timeshares on the trip that I started joking with my wife that it would be really funny to scream in public: "Hey, does anyone know where we can buy a timeshare!" The image that I have of Hawaii and most vacation destinations is that screaming this in public would result in a hoard of salespeople coming toward me, attempting to immediately sell me a timeshare.

Whether you are in Hawaii, Florida, Las Vegas, San Diego, or even Disneyland, there are likely to be scores of people attempting to sell you timeshares. These people are all over. Unsuspecting families and couples find themselves walking down the street and they suddenly encounter someone offering them a free gift of some sort in exchange for a many-hours-long, high-pressure, guilt-inducing tour of a timeshare. I have never been on one of these timeshare tours; however, I hear that they are unlike anything else. Even the most stoic and resistant of people often end up buying a timeshare after the tour. The timeshare tours are expertly programmed and orchestrated to lead to "buying behavior" amongst the people who go on the tours.

The thing about timeshare tours and timeshare sales is that no one goes on a vacation with the idea of purchasing a timeshare. In fact, this is not something that people generally *ever* seek out. In most instances, a timeshare is a horrible investment or purchase that makes very little economic sense. For example, a typical timeshare may cost \$50,000 for the right to use a property for one week per year. Then you will receive a bill for \$2,000 each year for *taxes, maintenance, and so forth*. Once a timeshare is sold out, the facilities are typically not upgraded very often. Most timeshares are run by hotels and the timeshares are on the worst part of the property. The craziest thing about timeshares is that a one-week stay in the same-size room in the hotel is actually usually cheaper than the "taxes, maintenance, and so forth" charges for the timeshare property. In addition, the average traveling person who stays at the hotel for a week does not have to pay \$50,000 to stay in the hotel the same week every year, stay on a less desirable part of the property, and deal with older furnishings, which the timeshare owner frequently is left to deal with.

Nevertheless, these aggressive salespeople in vacation destinations all throughout the world sell countless timeshares each year--despite the fact that purchasing one makes very little sense. The reason the timeshares are sold is that the people selling them are able to *create a demand* in the marketplace.

This is among one of the most important lessons you will ever learn, and it is highly relevant to your career and life: The ability to create a demand where demand does not naturally exist is one of the strongest skills you can possess. Creating a demand for your products or services where it does not naturally exist is an extremely valuable skill. People who are

consistently employed, businesses that are consistently successful, people who are consistently successful in everything they do--all have the ability to constantly *create a demand*, even when one does not naturally exist.

I would submit to you that in the case of timeshares, there is no such thing as a natural demand. The demand is entirely fabricated by expert executive strategists and sales teams.

If you go to any state fair in the United States, or these days even to a Costco, or Sam's Club, you will generally see someone with a table set up and a small audience gathered around, who is demonstrating some sort of product or service. It may be a nonstick frying pan, or a juice maker, or a certain type of food. The people giving the demonstrations will typically have an audience around them of maybe several people--who all look mesmerized by the demonstration they are witnessing. At the end of each demonstration, if the person is talented enough, he or she will generally sell one or two of these things.

If whatever was being demonstrated was just sitting on a shelf, the odds are slim to none that anyone would purchase it. The demonstration of the product or service is what ends up selling it. The people inside the store are *creating a demand* for what they are offering. The ability to stimulate demand for something people may not even really need is a very advantageous skill. It is one of the most important skills in marketing, and having the ability to do this can make or break your career in your chosen profession as well.

One of the biggest trends I have noticed recently is Israelis working at the malls across the United States. I do not care whether you are in Ohio, Los Angeles, or Las Vegas, malls are crowded with Israelis selling all sorts of things. It could be little electronic cars, face lotions, or other sorts of things. Almost everything these Israelis sell in their mall carts is, in my opinion, junk. Here is a video I took earlier this year of some Israelis in the mall: [Israeli Cart Videos in the Mall](#).

A December 3, 2008, article in the *Wall Street Journal* relates:

At malls across the country, shoppers are being besieged by a determined crop of salespeople: young Israelis who man mobile carts and have a no-holds-barred selling style.

Amid the grimmest holiday season in years, these workers are approaching passing mall shoppers or calling out from their stations, pitching body lotions, irons, toys and knickknacks. They demonstrate their wares by flying remote-control helicopters, steaming shirts and applying makeup. Instead of charging American-style fixed prices, they harness the culture of the bazaar and often quote numbers based on what they think a customer will be willing to pay.

It's a far cry from the selling style of many of their fellow cart vendors who tend to be more passive and let customers come to them.

"We're Hunting!"

"We're not selling here--we're hunting!" said Ms. Guembes's Israeli vendor, who gave his name only as Yaniv. Working 12- to 14-hour shifts for commissions of 20% to 30%, the Israelis can take home \$500 a day during the holidays.

What these Israelis are doing is *creating demand* where one would normally not exist. Their unique approach is to set themselves up in a mall and start selling products that people would normally not have much interest in. This skill is so rare here in the United States that the people who are best at it are usually not US-born: Americans are not typically taught to be this pushy, nor do most Americans have this ability. According to the same *Wall Street Journal* article:

Wholesalers say cart operators have tried hiring Americans to staff carts, but they lacked the art of the hustle--too polite to move the merchandise, especially for 12 hours straight.

"Israelis are natural-born closers" on the sales floor, says Steven Malkin, marketing director for Vancouver-based Relaxus Products Ltd., which supplies slippers, toy airplanes and other items to cart operators.

Probably the greatest skill anyone can have out there is the ability to sell a product or a concept to people. In order to sell a product or a concept you need to interest people in the product or concept and create a demand. If there is not a demand for the product, it will not sell.

Going about looking for a job is no different from selling a product of some sort. There are many cardinal errors that people often make when looking for a job, which are really no different from the errors that marketers make--and the greatest one is *failing to create demand*.

My greatest skill, I believe, is being a [legal recruiter](#). Many people go into this business with the idea that it is just about getting an attorney's résumé and forwarding it to a law firm or other hiring organizations and getting paid. However, to me, the skills involved in being a legal recruiter are actually far more involved than just doing these things. My success as a legal recruiter has largely involved my ability to *create demand* for a candidate where one might not otherwise exist.

For example, if an average recruiter has an attorney candidate who speaks Russian, the recruiter will probably gloss over this unique fact and will simply send the candidate along to whichever law firms are hiring. An exceptional recruiter, on the other hand, will look at this candidate and will package an otherwise ordinary candidate to the law firms as an "exceptional opportunity" for the law firm to gain Russian clients. The recruiter may talk about the candidate's ties (deep or not so deep) in the American Russian community and may even send the law firm numerous articles about American law firms going over to Russia and experiencing great success. The recruiter may even provide other articles about the growing need for American law firms to provide attorneys with knowledge of Russian matters. Instead of packaging the attorney as just another attorney, the recruiter packages the attorney as an opportunity. A good recruiter knows how to *create demand* for his candidate.

In the job market, and in your life, you either need to *find the demand* that already exists in the market, or *create the demand*. Having the ability to create a demand where one might not ordinarily exist is an exceptionally valuable skill. If you can *create demand*, you can open the door to limitless possibilities.