

Focus on Doing - and Stop Talking about Those Who Are Doing

By [Harrison Barnes](#)

Throughout my career I have learned that there are generally two types of people out there:

- First, there are those who are out there doing this or that and making things happen. These people typically put in years to perfect their craft, whether they are lawyers, actors, sports stars, businesspeople—or whatever. These people are actually doing something with their careers and lives. Their sense of self-importance and achievement comes from what they do. They are committed to getting things accomplished.
- Second, there are those who sit around writing about, talking about, and gossiping about those who are doing things in the world. Those who cannot do things or make things happen in the world are generally the ones who are best at writing, talking, and gossiping about those who are making things happen in the world. Writing, gossiping, reviewing, and passing judgment on people who are actually doing things is often a cheap shortcut to a sensation of power for those who lack the discipline necessary to do and create something that has worth. In reviewing, criticizing, gossiping, and so forth about others, the person can experience a fleeting feeling of importance.

When I was eleven years old, in February of 1981, the only television in our Detroit home was in my bedroom, and one time in the wee hours of the morning my mother and my four-year-old sister came into my room and watched Prince Charles and Diana get married. I have vague recollections of images from this wedding coming through as I tossed back and forth, incredulous that my mother and sister were disturbing my slumber all over some wedding spectacle. They both were so incredibly enthusiastic about the marriage.

It seems funny to me that a single mother and her daughter would be watching this in the suburbs of Detroit, thousands of miles away from where the wedding was taking place. The marriage ultimately did not affect them in the least. Nonetheless, there they were, a little girl and her mother, glued to the television and watching a prince get married.

As the years progressed, I would see one magazine after another arrive at our home with Diana on the cover and one rumor or another about her marriage. I would turn on the television and each day there was some gossip show that had a segment about the marriage. From the moment that marriage occurred, it seemed not a week went by wherein I did not hear some *noise* in the background about what Diana was doing. It was incredible to me that people could be so interested in one person. It was ironic, it seems, that Diana was eventually killed while she was in a car racing away from photographers. The public's obsession with Diana is something that ultimately may have contributed to her death.

Even today I see magazines in my house with her picture on them now and again, or I turn on the television and from time to time see a story about her. The public continues to be interested in Diana.

Most of the world figures are never going to be like Princess Diana. Most of the public at large is never going to be an important politician, actor or actress, businessperson, and so forth; instead, what we often do is sit around and gossip, review and pass judgment on the people who are actually out there doing things in the world.

The most popular magazines out there are magazines like the *National Enquirer* and *Us Weekly*: these are magazines that are continually gossiping, maligning, and generally discussing the lives, careers, successes, and failures of others. *Why the intense interest in what others are doing? Why are people so fascinated with what others are doing and achieving in their lives?*

In my career I have seen the exact same thing: There are people out there who are doing and achieving things and, on the sidelines, there are those who spend the majority of their time as commentators on the people who are involved in doing things. This is a pattern that exists in every firm, company, and organization I have ever been involved with. It also is something that I have heard people talk about and have witnessed as a consistent pattern in any organization as well as the candidates I have worked with as a recruiter.

Since I am also an attorney I will share with you some more of my insights into this. Several years ago the most popular legal site on the Internet was a site called Greedy Associates. This website was basically dedicated to associates inside of [law firms](#) who would gossip about people at their own law firms, and would disclose (sometimes maliciously) the financial states of affairs of various firms. Over the past ten years, the websites that have replaced Greedy Associates have all grown popular essentially by spreading rumors and bad news throughout law firms. Lawyers for the most part are not interested in flocking to websites for lots of positive information. Instead, their interest lies predominantly in going to websites where they can read about bad things that are happening to various employers. I started one of these websites myself, [JD Journal](#), and was surprised by how much traffic the site got and by how interested lawyers are in this sort of news.

I hate to say this but it is true: The great majority of people out there are incredibly interested in what others are doing—even more than their own lives. It is much easier to criticize and gossip about others than it is to achieve anything of significance in our own lives. To achieve something of significance requires an incredible investment of time and energy; it requires dedication; it requires risk; it requires believing in ourselves and overcoming obstacles. Conversely, gossiping or maligning others can usually be done very quickly by simply logging onto a gossip site or blog, sending an e-mail, or making a phone call.

I want to also note a fact that is pretty subtle, but is an important one: The people who are most interested in gossip and so forth are most often the people who lack the dedication necessary to achieve anything of significance.

- Inside companies and organizations these people are the ones who feel alienated when they do not do an assignment correctly they are told so.
- They are generally the ones who leave earliest, come to work the latest, and get the least done while they are at work.
- They are also the ones who are most likely to not get promoted because they do not put in a good effort.
- They are the ones who are disloyal and who easily find fault within their organization, and with the people working inside their organization, and with the products or services of their organization.

Lacking the dedication to do good work, the faculties to fit in with their coworkers and so forth, these people instead decide to turn their efforts toward gossip and criticism. When an employer is looking to hire new employees, one of the worst mistakes the employer can make is to bring in people like this. Just a few *bad apples* like this can easily *destroy the whole bunch*. In fact, it is precisely this fact and this attitude that can lead to the destruction of entire companies, governments, and so forth. Good organizations are experts in removing *bad apples*--and keeping the good ones around.

For the past several years I have been involved in the property business, and I rent out office buildings, store fronts, executive suits, beach houses, and also premium beachfront real estate. My favorite business is the one involving premium beachfront real estate. The reason I enjoy this is that the clients I deal with tend to be big names in politics, show business, and so forth. It is not uncommon for a premium property I am renting out to an international celebrity to be surrounded by hundreds of paparazzi, and to have helicopters buzzing overhead all day while a certain famous person is there. Most celebrities do not want this attention and manage to slink into the property unobserved while they are on their vacations. However, there are some who prize this attention and find ways to alert the press when they are there.

I have always been very good about being extremely discrete when a celebrity is staying in one of my premium properties. I never talk about it; I never tell anyone who is there, and I simply allow the celebrity to do his or her thing. However, a few months ago one extremely famous celebrity was staying in this premium beach house and had extreme demands for attention. This person had just finished filming a movie and the studio was putting him up for a one-week vacation. The actor wanted extreme privacy, and the reason was that he and his actor friends wanted to spend the entire vacation in the nude. Now, I do not know why someone would want to walk around nude for an entire vacation with a bunch of other men--but this was what was on the itinerary. The maid was astonished by this, but she simply did her job and reported the nudity to me later. As this man and his friends walked around the house nude every day, I went about my business seeing him on the covers of magazines, on television, and on billboards as I went about my day-to-day business.

On the final day this nude actor and his friends were scheduled to presumably put their clothes on and get on a private jet to go back to whence they came, but the actor declared that he was staying another day and, on top of this, he refused to pay for it because "the maid had worked too much and the gardener had come" while he was staying there. This luxury property requires a lot of gardening, and after the gardener had come for an hour or so one day, all hell broke loose, and we had to get him out of there.

The problem with this guy staying an extra day was that on his "extra day," a bride from England was scheduled to come to the house with various armies of wedding planners, lighting designers, and so forth to set up for a large wedding scheduled to occur there. The actor flat-out refused to leave and got on the phone and told us that there would be "bizarre behavior" if the bride tried to enter the property while he was there. He was referring, we assumed, to the fact that he might be walking around in the nude.

I was a little taken back by this, and the entire episode seemed just a little too much to believe. I had a serious problem on my hands because I knew that if the bride were unable to get into the house I could be subject to multiple lawsuits from her and countless wedding vendors. I finally decided I needed to take drastic action. I called one of the actor's many assistants, who was also on the property:

[pullquote]If he is not out in an hour, I will call the police and every gossip reporter I can find and have him removed from the house.[/pullquote]

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I never would have actually done these things; however, after I made the threat, within fifteen minutes the man left. He knew that the press would have had an absolute field day with this episode if it had gotten out. I ended up letting the man stay an extra night as a courtesy, and the bride was able to get in with all her people at the appointed time. In the end everything worked out just fine.

The reason everything worked out was that the actor was terrified of the press and how things would look to the public. He knew it would be a public relations and overall massive disaster, and people would talk about this the world over. I was able to quickly and painlessly solve the issue just using the power of gossip. It is something I am not proud of, but with my back against the wall I used it to great effect.

I realized that my threat to use and create gossip came from a place of weakness. It was the best I could do and, while effective, it was admittedly pretty pathetic.

The most powerful and influential people in the world are people like the actor I threatened to eject from the rental house, like Princess Diana, powerful businesspeople, and others. These are the people who make things happen and who are actually out there doing things that captivate the public attention. The people who live lives of significance are not the people who talk about and watch those who are making things happen; they are the ones who are accomplishing things. People who feel the need to gossip and malign others are usually coming from a place of weakness. There is nothing strong about gossiping and talking negatively about others. When you are coming from a place of strength this type of behavior is just something you do not need to engage in.

The strongest people out there avoid gossip and avoid maligning others because it detracts from their ability to move forward. *You should be focused on doing and not talking about those who are doing.*

THE LESSON

Focus on what you are doing, not what others around you are doing. There are people to take action towards their goals, and

then there people who sit on the sidelines and comment on the first group of people. People who are mostly interested in gossip and watching others usually lack the confidence and determination to take action themselves. The most successful people go account and accomplish things rather than sit back and watch others make things happen.

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