

Never Get Too Comfortable

By [Harrison Barnes](#)

One of the greatest causes of failure stems from people experiencing success in their careers. Whether it is being given a new title, a raise, a position of increased job security, or other success, people often suddenly decide they have earned the right to relax. Security and comfort are certainly desirable results and may be a significant part of achieving your goals. However, when you focus on your comfort or bask in your success, you stop growing.

[Executives](#) and others who begin to relax or let their guard down may quickly get crushed. They usually end up losing their jobs, or their careers quickly fade into obscurity. When you find yourself in a position that allows you greater comfort and security, you have an outstanding opportunity for further growth. Use this opportunity wisely. People are put in positions of responsibility and given higher incomes because they have shown growth in their current position. You never want to stop growing.

I would like to explain to you a pattern I have seen within my own companies and also among people I have known and worked with in the past as a [legal recruiter](#).

I have worked with many people who have gone to top schools like [Harvard](#), [Yale](#), and [Stanford](#). The talent you need to exhibit to get into schools like these is phenomenal. You need to be academically gifted and have a long history of very high-level achievements. You also need to show talent in areas other than academics. People who attend top-tier schools also have to work exceptionally hard to earn the academic marks and other honors needed to succeed once they are accepted.

What ends up happening to people who attend these elite schools is very interesting to me. A good many continue to work hard once accepted, while others think just because they were accepted, that's good enough. The students who continue to work hard ultimately crush these students.

In the legal field, most attorneys in the top law firms worked hard in college and continued to work extremely hard in law school as well. Their hard work landed them positions in prestigious law firms. The competition to get a job with a prestigious law firm is even more challenging than what one must face to get into a prestigious college or law school.

Once in these prestigious firms, many of the new attorneys are already exhausted from having worked so hard in law school and college. Many believe that, because of their past achievements, they can now rest on their laurels. These new attorneys then end up losing their jobs very quickly, and many even leave the practice of law forever because of this experience.

My career advice is to never let your guard down. Whatever you have done in the past has only given you the right to compete on the playing field you are on now. No one cares about your past successes. If you do not perform your best, you will become expendable.

I have witnessed a very familiar pattern in the work world. People get a job based on their enthusiasm, past employment record, and other related factors. Once hired, they work extremely hard to earn praise and recognition. They are given increased responsibility at the company, more and more tasks, and people to supervise. As these workers earn more responsibility, the company traditionally begins to watch them less closely. At this point, these people have two choices:

1. Step up their efforts and keep improving, or,
2. Begin to coast and let others do the work, keep things the same as they are, relax, buy new things, take more vacations, and take time off.

The latter is what probably 50 percent of people do once they reach a certain stage or accomplish a certain goal in their careers. In my career I have seen far too many go this direction. What ends up happening when people start coasting is generally one of two things: one, the company fires them, or two, the company puts pressure on them to improve, and they simply decide to leave, believing their status does not merit this sort of treatment.

Is this you?

This happens because too many people get too comfortable. You always need to be on your toes with any job.

Look at the headlines in the paper each day, and you will see business tycoons in their 80s and 90s who are winning and losing fortunes. They are still working. You will read about other prominent individuals challenging themselves in different ways. Ted Turner became famous for racing sailboats all around the world. Richard Branson has become known for trying to set records in balloons. These are some of the most successful men in the world. They are not sitting on a beach relaxing. They are challenging themselves in every way they possibly can. They challenge themselves in their work and outside of work.

I live in Malibu, California. Up and down the twenty-six miles of coastline are some of the most magnificent homes you can imagine, some right on the beach. Some of these houses sell for \$50 million or more. Some of the richest and most famous people in the world live in Malibu.

What is so remarkable about these houses is the fact that most of them are empty almost every day of the year. People do visit these houses but, for the most part, the largest and most expensive of the houses do not have families in them year-round and their owners drop in only occasionally.

The owners rarely visit their multimillion-dollar houses, but not because the properties are insignificant to them. The reason these people don't visit their houses is that they simply do not have the time. They are always working. They enjoy their houses for short periods of time and then they are back to work.

The most successful people do not allow themselves to slow down and get too comfortable. Using the old analogy of the world as a jungle, I leave you with this closing thought: animals, fish, and birds are always on the move. Whenever a lion is

hunting, he looks for the weakest animal in the herd--the one that is not moving.

THE LESSON

The most successful people never slow down, and do not allow themselves to get too comfortable. Everyone works to achieve their goals, but failure comes when they decline the amount of effort they put forth after having achieved these goals. When people get too comfortable, they cease to put in the additional effort to progress further and consequently fail. People who succeed in the long-term constantly seek challenges, make room for further growth, and demonstrate their ability to take up further responsibility.

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