

Never Focus on the Money: Focus on Your Higher Purpose and Contribution

By [Harrison Barnes](#)

People fail far too often in the working world because they focus too much on the money they earn at their [jobs](#). The money you are paid is generally commensurate with your contribution to something more important, more meaningful, and much larger than yourself. When you focus on what you are doing for the world and the value of this contribution, you become energized. Being energized by your work brings more and better work your way and ultimately leads to greater earnings. The money is a by-product of your contribution to your job. You generally will be paid at a rate matching your contribution to the bigger picture.

What is your particular contribution to the bigger picture? Every job makes a contribution to a bigger picture.

I started delivering papers when I was 10 years old. By the time I was 13, I was getting up at 5:00 every morning to deliver more than 175 papers in a prestigious suburb of Detroit. High-ranking [auto executives](#) lived in most of the houses. When I delivered these papers, I found myself energized by the thought I was providing them information they would be using to help run [companies](#) that supported the American economy, provided [millions of jobs](#), and gave people access to [transportation](#). In a small way, I realized, in this job I was fulfilling a larger purpose.

Some years later, I took a second job washing dishes in a cafeteria. I motivated myself in this job by thinking if not for my work, hundreds of people each night might go hungry. I was also providing people enjoyment when they sat down for dinner, I was helping families spend more time together, and I was making the world a happier place. This motivated me to do good work, and it made me happy.

Whatever you do, there is a higher purpose to your work, and your job is fulfilling a role that is changing the world and making a contribution. Money is just money. When you focus on the money, you lose track of the importance of the contribution you make. My career advice is to find the importance in your contribution and use this to inspire your job performance.

Don't focus on money if you want to do well in your job. In the same way a person must focus on his or her relationship in order to have a successful one, a person must focus on his or her work in order to be successful at it. Focus on your job and your performance--nothing else. If you can do this, the money will follow.

It is easy for me to spot people whose eyes are on the money and not the job. These people are in every profession and they never have long-term success. Having a larger purpose is incredibly important, and money is not a larger purpose.

The issue I see with people who always focus on the money is that they are constantly interrupting their work to consider if they are getting the short end of the stick. They are extremely concerned about their compensation relative to others. They wonder whether or not their efforts are being adequately compensated every step of the way. They are overly concerned about the accuracy of each paycheck. Their focus on their work is perpetually distracted by an interest in the money, rather than the job.

If you were an employer, who would you want to have working for you? Someone who is committed and enthusiastic about the job? Or someone who appears to be doing the work just for the money?

Several years ago, I was speaking with a young [CIA agent](#) and he told me about a meeting he was getting ready to have with a senior agent. The senior agent told him the person they were going to speak with was very dishonest, untrustworthy, and an all-around bad person. However, the agents would be nice and would treat the target nicely. They would only accomplish their assignment if the target were to see them this way. The senior agent said something to the younger agent he thought so profound he remembered it throughout his career:

"Don't ever think something or else you will show it."

Basically, the second you start thinking something, you will begin telegraphing your thoughts. People will begin to pick up on it through nonverbal signals, facial expressions, and body language.

Have you ever had the experience of being able to tell something about someone without speaking to the person? You just get a feeling about something. Who knows how we pick up on it, but we do.

When you are focused on the money, you put your purpose in the job on the back burner in favor of your obsession with how much you are going to make. People easily pick up on this--employers, clients, and others. This is one of the worst things you can do in any job.

At the risk of becoming overly metaphysical, I would like to share a quick side story with you. I was at a dinner once discussing this exact topic of people picking up clues about others through nonverbal communication. The person I was talking with had a background in [engineering](#) and the study of [energy](#), and he too was interested in this subject. He told me there is a gland in the brain--the pituitary gland--that for some strange reason has almost the exact same cellular structure as our eyes. He told me he believes people pick up on information using this. He believed this has something to do with how humans pick up signals from the world around them when they are babies.

This may seem like bizarre thinking, but I do believe when people are more concerned with their salary than their work, the people around them pick up on it. You should push any concerns you have about your compensation out of your mind, and focus on your work and your work's greater purpose. The greater purpose of your work is something that deserves your attention. Regardless of what type of work you do, it has a greater purpose. People will pick up on your passion and will want to work with you.

Every single person I've ever known in our company who is outstanding at what he or she does has always focused on the greater purpose of his or her work. Every single [attorney](#) I know who is outstanding at his or her job has always focused on the work and not the reward. Get into what you do and realize your higher purpose.

