



Soup Nazis, Insurance Investment Scams, Consumerism and Focusing on the Work

By [Harrison Barnes](#)

Several years ago, after I had only been a recruiter for around six months, I went out to dinner with a few people. I will never forget the dinner because at the time I was very caught up in recruiting, and was working seven days a week. In fact, all I could think about were my candidates and the people I was working with. Throughout the dinner, which was on a Friday night, I remember that I even took a few phone calls. I considered each of my candidates to be like close friends, and I made it a point to learn and know everything there was to know about their careers.

I was sitting with my wife, her friend and a businessman, who had been jumping between jobs for years and had had a real average career so far, in all respects.

- He was the sort of guy who was primarily concerned about the things he could buy with the money he made.
- He always drove the hottest new car.
- He always wore the right clothes.
- He always watched and talked about the "in" television shows and movies.
- He was the sort of person who always went to work at 9:00, and was sure to be *out of there* by 5:00.
- He was always talking about how much money he made, and was always on the lookout for a job that paid more.

I am sure you know lots of people like this because they are everywhere. It is a certain mentality that is all about making as much money as possible, being dominated by consumerist messages, and not having a "soul" that is truly connected to the work that one does. This is a product of our consumer culture; for some people the obsession with material possessions becomes all encompassing. I see it all around me and I am fascinated by watching how fads influence people. What is *in* from one moment to the next is anybody's guess, and some people spend all of their efforts keeping up with the trends.

"I hope you are making a lot of money on this recruiting thing, since you are taking calls on a Friday night," he told me. I still remember the exact table I was sitting at when the guy made that comment, which I found to be highly offensive.

"I actually love the work I am doing. Believe it or not, I could not even tell you how much money I have made this year, because I do not think about it. I am too caught up in enjoying the work. I feel so connected to what I do," I said.

"That's the biggest crock of shit I have ever heard! The only reason anyone works is to make as much money as possible. I bet if you could make more money working in a McDonald's, you would. Everything is all about the money, baby...."

This particular comment upset me so much that I got up from the table and went to take a short walk. Unfortunately, I had to spend the evening in the same house as the guy, and I remember that all through the night I felt like punching him. I have very rarely had violent feelings like this, but this guy's comments really offended and upset me. Even at 11:00 that evening I found myself taking a walk with my wife, discussing how crude I thought this man was, and how strongly I disliked this sort of personality.

There are a lot of people out there like this. I have been burned by some of them. Several years ,I bought life insurance from a guy, which was supposed to be a safe long-term "investment". After "investing" in the insurance to the tune of nearly \$50,000, I called the agent after six months, to check my balance in the insurance account. He told me the balance was zero because the entire first year of my insurance "investment" had gone towards paying his commissions.

"Are you kidding?" I asked him. "You told me this was an investment." Incredibly, he then said some familiar words back to me, referring to his commissions:

"It's all about the money..."

This is an episode that has stuck out in my mind to a degree that is hard to believe. This particular [insurance agent](#) tried the same thing with one of my friends, who has since had a vendetta of sorts, for years telling everyone he knows that the guy is a total criminal.

One of the worst things that I see occur time and time again is when people choose their jobs based on monetary considerations only. In speaking with the most successful people in insurance, [accounting](#), [sales](#), law, medicine and virtually any industry, one will find that these people have a deep emotional attachment to their work, and to the people with whom they work. You need to care about the people with whom you are working. You need to care about your work on a deep emotional level. Your focus needs to be on the work that you do, and the meaning it has--to you and to others. You should not be doing something if you cannot speak about it with passion and if it does not get you instantly excited, just thinking about it.

Have you ever seen a really good runner getting ready for a race? Or a really good boxer getting ready for a fight? They both are jumping up and down, twisting around and so forth because they are that excited to start their "work". The race, or the fight, makes these people incredibly exhilarated and focused. They are in an intense and productive mental zone, just from thinking about the tasks on hand.

When you love something and care about the people you are working with and for, you also have that contagious enthusiasm that gets you excited. You can hardly wait to start your work. Since I started in the recruiting and career, I have never been able to either (1) sleep in late or (2) sleep soundly the whole night. By 5:30 or 6:00 am each morning I am awake, excited to start the day. I am brimming with enthusiasm, thinking about all that needs to be done. I need to force myself to go back to sleep, regardless of whether it is a weekday or a weekend. At night, it is difficult for me to go to sleep many times because I feel like I would rather be taking care of some work-related task, connecting with someone regarding work, or doing something else. Some time ago, I was so excited to get to work that I started having staff meetings at 7:00 am each morning.

We only stopped doing this when some of my staff told me they had been working until midnight each night because they too were so enthusiastic about their jobs, and they needed more sleep--or to stop working so late. Now our meetings start daily at 8:00 am.

I am trying to communicate to you that you need to care about your work with a great deal of passion. The people you work with should also share your passion for what you do. If you do not have this passion, your coworkers may grow to resent you.

On the old TV show, Seinfeld, there is a serious immigrant man with a Hitler-like mustache called the Soup Nazi, who is known throughout Manhattan for his excellent soups. The Soup Nazi has procedures that all of his customers need to follow, in order to stand in line, place their orders, and pay. If people do not follow his rules, then he states, "No Soup for You!" and refuses to serve the people. What is so fascinating about this character is that, like all people that are extremely focused on their work, the Soup Nazi has an excellent product and a passion for doing things a certain way. Despite the strictness of the Soup Nazi, he nevertheless has the most sought-after soup in Manhattan. The Soup Nazi is an example of someone with passion for his work, and he demonstrates what this passion can do for you: It can make you sought after. Could you do your job with the same passion as the Soup Nazi? If you cannot do your job with a high level of passion, then you might be doing the wrong kind of work. You should be able to get incredibly excited about whatever work you are doing.

The problem with the guy I had dinner with that night, who was so focused on money, was that this focus was something that will prevent and did prevent him from ever reaching his full potential. Instead of being focused on what he liked to do, and what was truly important to him, he had allowed consumerism and money to dominate his consciousness, completely overshadowing any passion he might have had for his work. Money should never be the controlling focus of what you do: *What you do* should be the focus of what you do.

Employers, and customers, do not care about how much money you want to make. *They care about what you can do for them and how much you care for them.* These are the main things that they care about whenever they come to you. If you do something for them that has tremendous value to them, then they will pay you for it--but you need to create value. You simply cannot create value without placing 100% of your focus on doing good quality work. Also, keep in mind, no one cares about:

- What you say you care about.
- How much you made in your last job.
- Your previous professional accomplishments.
- Who you know.
- Where you last worked.
- Where you went to school.
- How many raises you have gotten in the past.
- How much money you want to make.
- Your house and car payments.

No one cares about any of these things, despite what you might think. All they care about is what you can do for them. If you can give them the best soup of their lives, they will care about this. If you can find them really good jobs, they will care about this. If you can give them really good investments, they will care about this. If you care for them and look out for them, they will care about this.

But at the end of the day, no one gives a crap about how much money or prestige you want for yourself.

Throughout my career, I have interviewed various people [looking for jobs](#). One of the most unusual interviews in my entire career was with a man that was seeking a recruiter position, who lived in Beverly Hills, had a live-in nanny, had several expensive foreign cars and more. I will never forget the long interview I had with him, during which he shared with me how much money he needed to make on a monthly basis in order to pay for all of this. He was not at all concerned with the work he would be doing. When I went through how much money he was generating for his current company, I realized that the company was paying him far more than he brought in. In addition, he was expecting the same of me, if I were to hire him. Recently I looked him up and saw that in the seven or so years since I interviewed him, he has had a [new job](#) just about every single year. He is chasing dollars and has absolutely no interest in what he does.

You need to stay focused on the work--and the work only. The more focused you are on your work, the better results you will achieve.

THE LESSON

You need to stay focused on your work – and only your work – in order to achieve the results that you want. Bring passion to your work, and surround yourself with similarly passionate colleagues. Your coworkers may resent you without this passion. Employers care about how much you care about them and what you can do for them rather than how much money you hope to make. When you offer employers a tremendous value, you will be compensated accordingly.