



## Love Your Work and the People Who Give It to You

By *Harrison Barnes*

From the time I was 19 until I was about 27, I spent a good portion of my summers doing asphalt [work around Detroit](#). That included asphalt sealing, hot tar crack filling, and asphalt patching. It was seasonal work and most people in Michigan only seal their asphalt once a year.

"Around Detroit" is a blanket term because I was working in three counties and in an area encompassing hundreds of miles. Essentially, I would travel to areas where people could afford to maintain asphalt. Seven days a week, I would get up as early as I could and go out to start the day at one of my jobs. Sometimes my drive was about an hour. Sometimes it was 15 minutes. Most of the time, I drove about 30 minutes.

I made this drive each day because I had work to do. Every day I had work to do was an extremely exciting day for me. Once I got to a work site, I would count on the people around the area – neighbors, other businesses, and passing traffic – to see the work I was doing. I would stop cars and tell them I was in the neighborhood and willing to work. If I was in a residential area, I would knock on doors and tell them I could do work for them. I would do everything within my power to get work, and I always got business. I worked seven days a week. I worked so hard some of my employees would quit the job from exhaustion only after a few days. There were, however, people who lasted.

In addition, while doing this work I maintained a profound respect for the people for whom I was working. I did everything in my power to do the work to the absolute best of my ability. I took the work incredibly seriously. I loved my job.

The worst thing that could happen to me was not getting work. I knew if I did not do a [good job](#) one year, the next year I would not get the work again. I knew people talked, and the better I did in one area, the more work I got. I remember one year I showed up at a house in a certain neighborhood where I'd worked for several years, and a widow answered the door. She told me her husband had died and she could no longer afford the service. Although it was a nice house in an expensive neighborhood (where I normally could have earned a good amount of money), I really liked her husband a great deal and wanted to help her. I did her driveway for free that year and the next year as well. I wanted to work.

I simply would not take no for an answer. I remember a very nice man who owned a Chevy dealership in Warren, Michigan. He also owned a rundown mall in addition to the dealership. I really wanted to resurface his dealership, but he didn't have the money either. I told him I thought things would one day pick up for him. I offered to do work for him at his rundown mall on days I did not have any work, doing hot tar crack filling for the cost of the goods. He let me do this and, over a couple of months, I worked there for seven or eight days when I did not have any work. I never ended up resurfacing his dealership, but I was glad for the work he had given me. He did not take advantage of me and was a very nice person.

Why would someone work for free? Because you need to fall in love with your job. You need to love what you do. And work attracts work. There is absolutely nothing wrong with doing something good for people. The right people out there will never take advantage of you.

Having work is a privilege. Work deserves to be cherished and held in the highest possible esteem. Work is your lifeblood. Without work, everything stops.

When I was younger I needed to get up each day and drive to go do my work and to find new work. I needed to impress each person I met each day, or else I knew they might not let me work for them the next year. For me, having work was extremely important in all respects. With work I was able to support myself during the summers and school year. In addition, work provided me the knowledge I would always have something to do no matter what happened in the world.

The best opportunity you can ever have is when someone gives you work, because this work can lead to more work.

One of the stupidest mistakes people can make is being suspicious of those who give us work. There are people who measure every single hour of their day and make sure they never under any circumstances give their employer too much of their time. There are people who cheat their employers. There are people who disrespect their customers and clients. There are people who resent being given more work. There are people who feel they have too much work.

Work is what supports your family. The people that give you work to do are the people who are giving that support. You need to respect them and you need to get work at all costs.

The only way to advance is by doing a good job with your work and exceed expectations. The more incredible your work is the more people want to work with you. The more work you are given and the more you do, the more you are seen as someone who is promotable, someone who is an expert. The best supervisors are the people who have done the work they are supervising.

In law firms where I have worked, when someone stopped getting work it meant they were not doing good work. If someone is not doing good work, they are generally in trouble. What bad attorneys do is move around from firm to firm for a while until eventually people stop giving them work and they cannot get a job.

Most attorneys exist almost day to day. They are entirely dependent upon people continually giving them work. If clients do not like an attorney's work, they will stop giving the [attorney work](#). If lots of clients stop liking the attorney, the attorney will be left with nothing whatsoever to do. Once the attorney has nothing to do, his or her career is over. This happens to more people than you may think.

I have given a lot of thought to the concept of doing "good work" over the years because I think it is so crucial and important to our lives. When you do not care about the work you are doing, there is no reason for the person paying you to have you do it. When you do not care, whoever is paying you can always find someone who does. It is very easy to find someone who cares about the job he or she is doing.

You need to make each day at work the most important. You need to respect the work you are getting and you need to fall in love with it. Work itself is a wonderful thing.

If you have ever been without work for even a short time you know how hard this can be. It is never good to be without work. Being without work means your skills and value do not currently have a place. People without work are depressed and wallow. You need to make sure that you always have work.

I want to tell you a couple of stories that you may think are sad; however, they are also about two people whom I respect immensely.

I sometimes spend a good portion of my day reviewing the resumes of people who are applying to various jobs being recruited for by [BCG Attorney Search](#), one of our recruiting firms. I have seen some pretty dramatic things happen to attorneys. In a down market even attorneys are at risk of losing their jobs. Conditions can become very, very brutal. When attorneys making \$200,000+ a year lose their jobs, they often have a very hard time finding another one. In the middle-class world, from where I hail, there is a belief you should never accept a job that pays less than your last job. The idea is once someone has paid you a certain amount to do a job, that is your worth forever, and you should never take a job that pays less.

This particular belief is so prevalent that all over the United States there are people sitting on their rear ends all day doing nothing because they are waiting for a job to come along that pays as much as their last one. I cannot tell you how many careers have gone down the drain due to this philosophy, which is incredibly short-sighted.

One day I reviewed the [resume of an attorney](#) who had lost his job after about 10 years with a major [American law firm](#). I am confident the job he lost paid more than \$200,000 a year. He'd lost his job about six months earlier and, instead of doing nothing, he'd taken an entry-level job in a customer service call center. During this time, he'd actually won some awards. He was doing the best he could. When I reviewed his resume I could see he was someone who refused to give up when the going got tough. I respected him. I could see his optimism. He knew the importance of work and did not give up.

For the past couple of years, about once a week on average, I've gotten a massage from an older woman who comes to our home to do this. When the economy began to slow I stopped getting regular massages because work was so busy due to the number of people losing their jobs. When the woman did come by, I asked her how the economy had been treating her. It used to be you needed to schedule her at least a week in advance because she was so incredibly busy. One day things were different. She showed up with some information about a spiritual topic she knew I was interested in. She'd never brought me anything like that before. In addition, during the massage she wanted to make sure I was going to get a massage again the following week, and I could sense the desperation in her voice. I started asking her about her business and she told me it had really slowed down. She told me she was going to start doing more marketing. I asked her what she meant and she told me the following:

"I like to go and sit out in front of fancy restaurants with a sign and my massage table. People come up to me and ask me for my card."

This is how this particular woman was finding work in a recession. Is this pathetic? No. This is someone who was staying busy and doing the very best she could in a tough market. The same goes for the attorney. He was also doing the very best he could.

I am in the [career business](#) and I see people take jobs that are beneath them every day. I have seen first-rate attorneys end up on the street after losing jobs, addicted to crystal meth and walking around barefoot. I have seen shocking things happen to people who did not have any work. Work is the absolute most important thing you can have.

My hope for you is that you will make the most of whatever job you have and give it your all. If it does not work out, give your next job your all, whatever it is. You need to put your heart and soul into everything you do. You are a special person and the world will realize this, but you need to keep moving. Never slow down. Keep working. The harder you work, the higher you will climb.

**Read More About Try and Concentrate on Doing the Work You Enjoy and Are Best at and Avoid Things You Do Not Do Well At:**

- [Try to Only Work in the Best Target Audiences for Your Skills](#)
- [Love What You Do](#)
- [You Need to Enjoy What You Are Doing](#)