



Take  
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**JOB**  
and

**I**n my opinion, work is one of the best things in the world, and so is rock and roll. So, I've got a few lyrics to make my point. Let's get started: "When ya got a job to do ya got to do it well"...Paul McCartney & Wings, *Live and Let Die*. Likewise, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. said, "If a man is called to be a street-sweeper, he should sweep streets as Michelangelo painted, or Beethoven composed music, or Shakespeare wrote poetry. He should sweep streets so well that all the hosts of heaven and earth will pause and say, here lived a great street-sweeper who did his job well." Not everyone has this lofty perspective of work, of course. For example, Todd Rundgren said, "I don't want to work. I want to bang on the drum all day"...*Bang the Drum All Day*.

For some people, Mondays are the beginning of another monotonous cycle of having to do something they just are not interested in doing. Jackson Browne commented about the repetition of having to pack a lunch and go to work every day: "And when the morning light comes streaming in, I'll get up and do it again, Amen"...*The Pretender*. It's too bad, but Monday morning is a problem for some people. For example, with her angelic voice, Karen Carpenter sang, "Rainy days and Mondays always get me down"...The Carpenters, *Rainy Days & Mondays*.

For lots of people, the first five days after the weekend are the toughest, so it's no wonder that we sometimes have a sour view about having to go to work. But we shouldn't, and Theodore Roosevelt didn't think so: "I don't pity any man who does hard work worth doing. I admire him. I pity the creature who does not work, at whichever end of the social scale he may regard himself as being."

No doubt, work is a lot of work. That's why they call it work. It's good stuff, though. "In the end, hard work is the true enduring characteristic of successful people," said Marsha Johnson Evans, president of the American Red Cross. Nonetheless, millions of people go to work every day, but they really don't want to. Every morning, more than a few of us are probably thinking something like this: "Six o'clock already. I was just in the middle of a dream. I was kissin' Valentino by a crystal blue Italian stream. But I can't be late 'cause then I guess I just won't get paid"...The Bangles, *Manic Monday*.

Some days, we resent having to go to work and sometimes function in the blah gray zone between a grudging tolerance of a job and a serious dislike of it. You may know someone like this. I've noticed that some people work just hard enough not to get fired and get paid just enough money not to quit.

Imagine not having a job. Styx sang about one sad consequence, "I'm just a poor soul in the unemployment line. My God, I'm hardly alive"...*Blue Collar Man*. We're better off working, in spite of what Tom Petty said, "It just seems so useless to have to work so hard and nothin' ever really seems to come from it"...*Here Comes My Girl*. He's not quite right because lots of good comes from work. I've noticed that there are some common denominators among people who thrive on the job.

### 1. Attitude...being mindful of what a good one can do for you:

When the famous architect Frank Lloyd Wright was 83, he was asked which of all his great works he considered his masterpiece. His reply: "My next one." That's a great answer. Even though he had been designing and building tremendous homes and other structures for many years, he knew he could do more and he knew he could

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do better. Wouldn't you like to have people with that wonderful attitude working for you or with you? A good attitude results in commitment and commitment wins every time.

A long time ago, Andrew Carnegie, the famous American industrialist, observed, "The average person puts only 25 percent of his energy and ability into his work. The world takes off its hat to those who put in more than 50 percent of their capacity and stands on its head for those few-and-far-between souls who devote 100 percent."

With a shiny good attitude, you can be one of those few-and-far-between souls because you'll have a bunch of tenacity in your back pocket. Actor Harrison Ford expressed a similar view, "I realized early on that success was tied to not giving up. Most people in this business gave up and went on to other things. If you simply didn't give up, you would outlast the people who came in on the bus with you." This is great advice because, sometimes, it takes years to become an overnight success.

## 2. Awareness...of all the things you get from a job other than money:

British historian Charles Kingsley observed that we learn a lot of life lessons on the job, "Thank God every morning when you get up that you have something to do which must be done, whether you like it or not. Being forced to work and forced to do your best, will breed in you temperance, self-control, diligence, strength of will, contentment, and a hundred other

virtues which the idle never know." A paycheck won't give you any of these things, it just gives you money. Your job, not your money, is more likely what gradually impacts you the most over the years. Often, work shapes you as much as you shape it and here are some of the characteristics you might acquire or improve because you go to work.

- a. **Physical Stamina**...It takes a lot of effort to get up every morning and work hard every day. Because you keep moving you increase your ability to keep moving.
- b. **Emotional Stamina**...You learn to carry out the responsibilities of your job without becoming overwhelmed. You learn how to quickly respond from setbacks and you learn how to get along with people.
- c. **Desire**...You acquire and develop an inherent commitment to influencing people, processes, and outcomes toward the accomplishment of organizational goals. You learn a lot of "want-to" at work.
- d. **Empathy**...Diversity is a wonderful thing, so it's important to develop an appreciation and understanding of the values and perspectives of others. It's helpful to learn about other cultures, beliefs, and traditions. This happens at work.
- e. **Decisiveness**...You learn when to act and when not to act. You learn to take into account all the facts relevant to a situation before making a decision. At work, you grow out of vacillation and procrastination.
- f. **Dependability**...You learn how important it is to do what you say you are going to do and be where you say you are going to be. People need to know they can count on you, no matter what.
- g. **Responsibility**...You learn that whatever you are charged to do, it is your responsibility to get it done. You learn that you can delegate tasks but you can never delegate responsibility. By way of accomplishing things in the face of challenges, you acquire courage, resolve, and credibility.

## 3. Confidence...evidenced by security and determination:

There are lots of skills needed to do well at work and confidence might be at the top of the list. "Your number-one asset is confidence. It's got to be at the top of your own personal balance sheet," said Susan Sobbett, president of American Express. Here's some handy advice about confidence from Theodore Roosevelt, "When you are asked if you can do a job, tell 'em, 'Certainly I can!' Then get busy and find out how to do it." My grandmother had her own version of this for me when I graduated from college, "Be like a Swiss army knife, so versatile and confident that you can do anything." Advice for the world of work can't get much better than that.

Most of the time when we tell ourselves we can't do something, it's just an excuse we made up. I'm convinced that, to a great extent, we can make our work and our lives whatever we want them to be, "We've got two lives, one we're given, and the other



## Questions:

1. Is work a privilege or just something you have to do?
2. Do you like your job or would you rather be doing something else?
3. What's the best job you ever had...why?
4. Have you been shaped and changed by working...how?
5. Everybody decides how much of themselves they will give to their job...what have you decided?

one we make"...Mary Chapin Carpenter, *The Hard Way*. Some of us need to quit living as if the purpose of life is to arrive safely at death. Instead, we need to start playing offense with our lives. The world needs more daring people with daring plans and energy.

Here are two comments to get you jump-started:

- "What does it take to be the best? Everything. And everything is up to you." – Emmitt Smith, leading rusher in National Football League history
- "High expectations are the key to everything." – Sam Walton, founder of Wal-Mart

## 4. Initiative...being a self-starter with lots of gumption:

We don't hear much about gumption anymore, but most of us still know what it is. To me, it's internal motivation, showing the inclination to do things without having to be told or reminded or prodded or begged. Somebody observed, "Too many people are ready to carry the stool when the piano needs to be moved." There's some truth to this and that's why we need more gumption than ever these days.

I've noticed that people who have their fair share of it plan ahead, avoid procrastination, and stay alert for opportunities to help others and get things done. At work, when a person with gumption sees something that needs to be done, she does it. No need to be asked about it or told to do it.

People with gumption don't say "I didn't know" or "It's not my job." People with gumption never leave well enough alone. People with gumption find jobs and dig right in until the tasks are done. People with gumption choose difficult jobs because progress and satisfaction are found in challenges. People with gumption never grow weary of doing what's right. People with gumption have energy that rubs off on others. People with gumption start strong and finish strong.

Tomorrow is a great labor saving device for today, but don't use it. Get started, do it now. Always do what's next.

## 5. Persistence...sticking to your goal, no matter what:

Success in most endeavors is the result of small steps in the right direction, not a consequence of one big stroke of luck. You

can't eat a whole pizza in one bite. You can't earn a college degree in just one semester. You can't go on a long family vacation by just getting to the end of the driveway. Accomplishing anything is often just a matter of hanging on, over and over again. Arriving at a desired destination or achieving a coveted goal is like going down a toll road. If you keep paying the fee you can go anywhere you want to go. Persistence is amazing stuff. That's how the snail reached the ark. Consider these observations:

- "There are no secrets to success: Don't waste time looking for them. Success is the result of perfection, hard work, learning from failure, loyalty to those for whom you work, and persistence." – General Colin Powell
- "Big shots are little shots who kept shooting." – Christopher Morley, writer
- "Talent is never enough. With few exceptions, the best players are the hardest workers." – Earvin "Magic" Johnson, professional basketball player
- "The first time you quit, it's hard. The second time, it gets easier. The third time, you don't even have to think about it." – Paul "Bear" Bryant, college football coach

If at first you don't succeed, you're pretty normal. You can try again. Most of us have heard this advice at one time or another. This simple little axiom is simple and little because that's all it needs to be. We get the idea. And, it doesn't come with any further instructions because none are needed.

Actually, instructions might be needed because many of us don't try again. We try something different, something easier. Instead, we should keep going even though quitting is easier. Persistence is great stuff, and I've noticed that success often comes to those who obsess. "Slow and steady wins the race" – Aesop, *The Tortoise and the Hare*

When I graduated high school many years ago, my dad told me to find a job I liked so I would never have to work. He didn't say this because work is something bad or something to be avoided, like eating broccoli. Actually, I like broccoli, especially with cheese on it. Anyway, work is still work no matter what you call it but it doesn't seem like work if it doesn't seem like work.

Actor-director Warren Beatty put it this way, "You've achieved success in your field when you don't know whether what you're doing is work or play." Ahh, that's what we should be aiming for, a job that is more than a job, a job that is a mission, one that has captured our interests and passion. Work is wonderful stuff because it changes us for the better: "The highest reward for a person's toil is not what they get for it, but what they become by it" – John Ruskin, art critic. §

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Fred Gratto is assistant director, physical plant, at the University of Florida, Gainesville, FL, and the author of *13 Things Rock and Roll Can Do for You*. He can be reached at [fgratto@ufl.edu](mailto:fgratto@ufl.edu).