

***The  
Power  
of  
Positive  
Productivity***

***Accelerate Your Success and  
Create the Life You Want***

***Dennis E. Hensley, Ph.D.***

***A Possibility Press Book***

# ***The Power of Positive Productivity***

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Create the Life You Want***

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## ***Dedication***

This book is affectionately dedicated to my son Nathan, in special recognition of the completion of his MBA degree in entrepreneurship from Ball State University. This is also to honor him for all the good he has done and is doing as a United States Marine, a successful businessman, and a member of our family.

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*“I always felt special because my daddy worked at home. I could see him anytime I wanted to, really. Other kids’ fathers were gone all day, but not my dad... having him there felt good.”*

—Jeanette M. Hensley

## ***I Always Felt Special Because My Daddy Worked at Home***

I could see my daddy anytime I wanted to, really. Other kids' fathers were gone all day, but not *my* dad. Of course, there were times my brother and I weren't allowed to disturb him. So my mother ingeniously thought of putting a red circle sign on his door when he needed to be alone; the flip side was green, giving the "all clear" warm welcome we treasured. But just having him there felt good, regardless of the color of the circle. (I fondly remember going into his office and quietly drawing pictures with his colored pens.)

He happily worked all hours of the day and night, but he always pulled himself away to eat dinner with the family. And because he made his own schedule, he never missed one of my school plays or choir concerts. He was always there for birthdays, was a leader in my brother's boys youth group, and even played adult roles in our church's children's Christmas plays.

Dad traveled quite a bit—and most of the time he took us with him! During the school year, we'd spend Friday nights in hotels where he was speaking on Saturdays. In the sum-

mers, it was week-long trips to Wisconsin, Florida, and everywhere in between. Because of my dad's work, I traveled a lot more than most kids my age. And I thought it was great!

Considerable time has passed since then. I am now an adult, and I've taken on a lot of my father's positive productivity-related characteristics. I use my time wisely. I like being organized and enjoy solitude when I'm working. I've also developed his love of travel, having already been to more than half of the 50 states and several other countries. I've taken the teaching legacy from both of my parents a generation further, with my own teaching career. And, like my dad, I love being productive. I just wouldn't have it any other way.

Warmest wishes,

*Jeanette M. Hensley*

*“Just like everyone else, I have my share of challenges. However, I’m different in one respect: I usually accomplish more in one year than others accomplish in three. Why? I’m a positive producer and I love it.”*

—Dennis E. Hensley



# ***Understanding the Power of Positive Productivity***

*“The power of positive productivity, when used to give meaning to one’s life, to serve others, and to provide security and enjoyment to one’s family and self, is something to aspire to every day.”*

—Dennis E. Hensley—

“Hello, my name is Dennis...and I am a positive producer.” And I don’t drink, smoke, swear, or gamble. Now don’t get me wrong. I’m not saying this because I think I’m better or more righteous than anyone else—I’m just busier than most and I have neither the time nor the inclination for such negative habits.

Granted, you could find plenty of people who would look at my life and point to habits of mine which might seem odd. For example, I seldom sleep more than six hours a night. I refuse to go on vacations that last more than five days. And I’m efficient and focused in my business activities—I don’t like wasting time. I can’t seem to do anything nonproductive “just for the fun of it” because, truth be told, my work is my fun!

Choose to be a participant in life, not just a spectator. We’re all here to make a difference, not just sit on the sidelines and be entertained.

Just like everyone else, I have my share of challenges. However, I'm different in one respect: I usually accomplish more in one year than others accomplish in three. Why? I'm a positive producer and I love it.

I left my parents' home in 1970 when I was 22 years old, just after finishing college. Since then, I have served two years in the U.S. Army, earned M.A. and Ph.D. degrees, got married, became a father and helped raise two children, wrote voraciously, including, among other things, more than 3,000 freelance articles, traveled to Asia, the South Seas, Europe, the Caribbean, and across America, became the owner of rental properties and other real estate holdings, was a guest lecturer at more than 60 colleges and universities, made appearances on numerous TV and radio talk shows, served more than 20 years as a church deacon and Sunday school teacher, taught English at the university level for many years, served as a staff columnist for five national magazines, and worked four years as a top-level member of a public relations department at an old-line college in the Midwest. I'm not telling you all of this to brag, but simply to say that I love to accomplish worthwhile goals.

Being a positive producer is a powerful force in my life. It gives me incentive, direction, purpose, drive, ambition, and a friendly competitive spirit. It also earns me recognition, gives me financial security, and provides all the niceties of life for me and my family.

Furthermore, I believe I do good work and that I'm a useful member of society—I contribute to it. I've been told that my writing teaches and entertains, and that my presentations provide hope and motivation. As an author, I do my best to share experiences, new approaches, and improved techniques, and according to the feedback I get, I believe I am helping others. I'm happy with who I am and what I do. I've

even been told that my work is honest, helpful, and practical—and appreciated by others. I believe I live a great life, and you can too.

The world needs more positive producers. Before the age of the push-button society, the ability to work was something admired in a person, even expected. The Apostle Paul wrote in 54 A.D: “If any would not work, neither should he eat.” A millennium-and-a-half later, in the 1600s, Captain John Smith instituted the same law when he and his followers set about to build a colony in New England.

Somewhere along the way, however, this basic belief, among many others, has been diluted. The more entitlement programs there are, the more people there are who will adopt the free-ride philosophy in place of the honest, hard-work approach to success.

In the U.S., a dear price has been paid for this change in attitude. Well-organized, ambitious, creative industrial nations now more competitively provide the world’s steel, automotive, and electronic markets, while OPEC nations control a majority of the world’s oil. Other countries are even providing more of the world’s produce. The U.S. has lost some of its edge in world markets.

While people in the U.S. were talking about the need for a four-day workweek, longer vacations with pay, earlier retirements, and lower work quotas, they lost customers to those who rolled up their sleeves and worked harder. The work ethic grew weak and, as a result, people suffered.

Positive producers, as individuals, however, never suffer. They are generally too independent to be part of a labor union; hence, they seldom lose money because of strikes or layoffs. They are too ambitious to be limited by quotas or have goals set for them by someone else. They set their own goals, and make them high. They then go out and do what-

ever it takes to reach them, and reap the rich rewards and other fine benefits the achievement of such goals provides.

Positive producers are strategists. They make their own game plans in life. They always know the score, too, whether it's kick-off, halftime, or the final play. No one catches positive producers off-guard. They always have a mentor or leader and a support group—people they can rely on—and a proven system of success for themselves and others to follow.

Positive producers are unmoved by and certainly not impressed with polls, trends, indicators, naysayers, or fads. Instead, they are doggedly bent on reaching their own personal goals. Whatever or whomever the masses choose to follow is of no concern to them; positive producers always maintain a single vision of personal direction. They thrive on being unique, influential, purposeful, and productive. Positive producers are masters of their own destinies.

The positive producer is not one to say, “Thank goodness it's Friday,” because one day is as precious, important, and eventful as the next. In fact, the positive producer is always “on” regarding his work or mission. Famed author W. Somerset Maugham was once asked by a reporter how he had been able to write so many plays, short stories, and novels when it was known he spent only three hours a day working. “Young man,” replied Maugham, “I *write* twenty-four hours a day; I only *type* three hours a day.”

Researchers believe that only one person in four is a genuine positive producer. But being an exhausted, worn-out worker is not the same as being a positive producer. Clergymen and psychiatrists hear confessions from so-called positive producers who, in reality, are simply disorganized crybabies. Unfortunately, since the overworked, disorganized person is the first (and often loudest) person to

complain, his or her traumatized condition is often held up as an example of the end-product of productivity. But the genuine positive producer doesn't need to visit a counselor. He or she just wouldn't feel comfortable lying down on a couch in the middle of the day!

Work helps define our sense of self-worth. If we feel we are doing good work and being appreciated by others, we also feel good about ourselves; we have a positive sense of self-worth. But there are many reasons why positive producers might be viewed in a negative way. Some people tend to put down or criticize those who are more successful than they are. Yes, jealousy does exist. And, unfortunately, it can lead to negative remarks from less ambitious people about the positive producer's lifestyle and work patterns. Honest, hardworking people have become such a rare breed that they are often looked upon as suspicious characters. This usually leads to distrust and perhaps even harassment—until the consistency of a positive producer's fine character and success wins the doubters over.

The world needs people with spunk, energy, ambition, and a great work ethic, even though some put this down. Many of the critic's ideas stem from the best of intentions. They want to help people better deal with stress or reevaluate their lives, or learn to be less apprehensive about life's challenges. Nevertheless, these ideas often serve only as an excuse from the reality that people generally identify themselves, to a large extent, with the work they do and the things they accomplish.

Consider how introductions are often made. After someone learns your name, that person usually asks, "And what line of work are you in?" or "Who are you with?" This is why some people feel greatly alienated after they retire; they have been separated from their jobs or businesses and their

life's identities. No matter how much we may joke or complain about it, we all need to be doing some kind of productive work. It gives us a sense of purpose and a feeling that we can make a difference. To fail at one's work is to fail at achieving security, recognition, money, respect, and responsibility. Nothing can hide the power of positive productivity.

This book presents a counterargument to those who espouse that steady, challenging work is something negative and needs to be avoided. We'll explode that myth, and you'll learn how you can work at an incredible pace, yet stay in excellent health, enjoy your family, remain highly respected in your community, and be happier about who you are and what you are doing.

Unfortunately, there are people who are so preoccupied and obsessive about their work that they eventually become nervous wrecks. They can't say no to anyone; they are unable to relax; and they are afraid they won't be able to measure up to some obscure standard they believe others have set for them. These people, much like drug addicts or alcoholics, need professional help. They are not normal; and, in truth, they *are* suffering. The harried worker on the verge of a nervous breakdown is not a positive producer.

Positive Productivity is gratifying. It gives meaning to life, a greater opportunity to serve others, and provides increased security and enjoyment for our families and ourselves. And those are just some of the many benefits of being a positive producer.

Take a long, hard look at your own personal work ethic and productivity. If you'd like to improve upon them, this book can help you do so. If you are not happy with your current productivity, you'll learn the tips and techniques needed to change it.

We'll examine the traits of positively productive people and why many of them gravitate toward independent business ownership. We'll also evaluate some of the published commentaries on stress to see if they are accurate about a person's capacity for sustained work.

In addition, we'll also look at the benefits to be gained by becoming a positive producer, and explore ways in which you can maintain your newly established productive pace—without sacrificing any important aspects of your social, family, and religious commitments. If you are at a stage in life where you want to accomplish more, earn more, and be needed and respected more, then this book could be the beacon to guide you out of the storm of just-being-busy frustration.

Working simply for the sake of working is a waste of human potential—just ask anyone who has worked hard and not gotten anywhere. It's all too easy to be busy and broke, no matter what field you may be in. But working for the sake of advancing yourself and the society you live in will have a positive effect on you and those around you. There's a big difference between simply being busy and being a positive producer.

There is a proverb that says, "He who plows and plows but never plants seed does not reap." This book shows you how to plant the seeds of leadership skills, sound work practices, and building positive human relations, which will grow and bear fruit when you invest time in nurturing them. That's positive productivity, and that's what this book is all about.

To gain an overview of the qualities of a positive producer, take a look at *The Positive Producer—At a Glance* on the next page.

# *The Positive Producer*

## *—At a Glance*

- Open-Minded
- Extremely Fair
- Always Learning
- Innovative
- Resourceful

***AMBITIOUS***

***ORGANIZED***

***CONFIDENT***

***CARING***

***EAGER & ENERGETIC***

***SECURE***

***COMPETITIVE***

***MOTIVATED***

***USEFUL & HELPFUL***

***HAPPY & JOYFUL***

***PROGRESSIVE***

***A TEAM PLAYER***

- A Servant Leader
- A Self-Starter
- A Challenge-Overcomer
- A Dedicated Worker



*“Choose to be  
a participant  
in life, not just a  
spectator. We’re  
all here to make a  
difference, not just  
sit on the sidelines  
and be entertained.”*

—Dennis E. Hensley

*“In a free  
enterprise  
system, we are limited only by the size  
of our dreams and  
the amount of work  
and number of  
positive producers  
we put into our  
organizations.”*

—Dennis E. Hensley

# —1—

## ***Developing an Art of Work***

*“People who really dig into their work,  
without being concerned about their current circumstances  
or the outcome, are the ones who later  
reap rich rewards.”*

—Dennis E. Hensley—

**F**or several years I worked as editor-in-chief of a magazine for graduates of a small, mid-western college. From time to time, the editorial board and I would poll our readers to discover what they liked best about our publication—our front-page articles, feature stories, the photographs we ran, our sports reports, or our ads. The results of these surveys always came back to us with the same opening response, phrased in one form or another: “My favorite section of your magazine is the last page, where the alumni news is printed.”

I’ve talked with dozens of other editors of college magazines, and they’ve told me their surveys elicit the same response. Why is this? People simply want to see what their old friends have accomplished in life and learn about the contributions they’ve made so far. Perhaps this will inspire them to do more than they’ve already done.

If you are in the habit of reading your college alumni news, or if you've ever picked up one of those "Where Are They Now?" booklets at your high school class reunions, you've probably already discovered something interesting. Although everyone listed had a similar beginning (same age and graduation year, and many of the same teachers), no two lived identical lives, nor did they achieve the same levels of success and happiness!

For example, you observe that of the two boys who were co-captains of the football team, one is a successful business owner who loves what he does and works long hours at it. The other is a construction worker, who, compared to many people, earns very good money, but he hates the work and, therefore, won't put in the extra hours to move up in his occupation. Of the two girls who graduated at the head of the class, one is a doctor who loves helping people. The other is a corporate manager who's anxious to leave the office every day. Of your two closest friends, one is a disgruntled vice president of a computer company, while the other became a happy piano teacher.

Why are there such vast differences in the outcomes? Why is there such a tremendous variation in the levels of happiness and success? Why would there be such a wide range of achievement?

Sure, all of your friends may be working and supporting themselves and serving society in useful occupations. But how have some of them been able to gain wealth, influence, personal freedom, and happiness, while others seemingly have had to settle for routine jobs and run-of-the-mill lives? Simply put: *Each person had a different attitude toward work, and that's what has largely shaped his or her life.*

We all want to be successful and happy, and some of us want to be more influential, so we can make more of a dif-

ference. “Every human being with a healthy will to live has a natural drive for power, a drive that goes beyond his need for mere survival,” says Dr. Arnold A. Hutschnecker, M.D. “It is an urge to unfold as much of his inert potentials as his courage will allow, and a wish to gain recognition that aims to give back to the world what he has received from it, possibly more.”

However, fulfilling that drive requires hard work. The typical saga is the challenging story of super-achievers—people who were convinced they could accomplish anything if they were given enough freedom in which to do their work. Even folk heroes like John Henry, Pecos Bill, and Paul Bunyan were all people of strength, whether a “steel drivin’ man” or a giant lumberjack. We’ve always admired those who could roll up their sleeves, dig in, get their hands dirty, and achieve the seemingly impossible.

As Dr. Hutschnecker puts it, “...Today’s culture sets a high priority on achievement. The need to excel is a conditioned process deeply ingrained in us from childhood. The philosophy of ‘making good’ is evident as a driving force in a society that has coined the phrase ‘the sky’s the limit.’”

We observe our former classmates and current peers with curious interest and we are eager to know who is making good and who is not. Many times, unfortunately, by comparison, we are also ranking and judging ourselves—probably putting ourselves down, which is only self-discouraging. The question you need to ask of yourself is, “Am I growing and accomplishing more than ever before?” Compare yourself only with yourself.

### **An Attitude Toward Work—*You Need to Love It!***

In a free enterprise system, we are limited only by the size of our dreams, and the amount of work and number of posi-

tive producers we put into our organizations. For example, just walk into the doorway of the Henry Ford Museum in Greenfield Village, Dearborn, Michigan, and glance at the huge photo on the wall. Seated around a campsite are three friends: Harvey Firestone, Thomas Edison, and Henry Ford. Each had been a poor boy with a burning desire and a tremendous love of hard work, while being smart enough to leverage with others. As a result, they all became industrial magnates worth millions.

Men like Firestone, Edison, and Ford had the same natural desire for success and influence that you and I have. They knew what they wanted, and they were willing to work with passion to get it. They were the real-life “steel drivin’ men.” And, thanks to their efforts, many of us were given a better way of life. They certainly gave back more to the world than they ever received from it.

But in providing all of us a better way of life, these industrial giants also did something subtle, yet monumental, to society’s work ethic. The cars, airplanes, light bulbs, tires, assembly lines, and laborsaving devices they created gave the world something it never had before—easier or more comfortable ways to travel and accomplish other things. And we do rather enjoy it.

In fact, various innovators did all they could to manufacture more creature comforts. Electric vacuum cleaners made broom sweeping a thing of the past; refrigerators did away with handling ice; telephones and the internet allowed for instant communication; and gas and electric ranges and microwave ovens forever put an end to chopping wood for cooking stoves.

Along with the influx of these laborsaving devices, a new attitude was developed about enjoying an easier life. The most frequently heard phrases after World War II were, “It’s gonna

be better for my kid. He's not going to have to work the way I always had to. He's gettin' an education. He'll have 'the good life.'”

And so it was that many of us who grew up in the 1950s—my generation—were *given* way too many things. We didn't work to earn money to buy our toys; we were *given* toys. We got them on our birthdays, at holidays, at school report card time, as rewards for sitting quietly during religious services. And some of us even got our way just because we saw a toy in a department store window and threw a tantrum until our parents gave in and bought it. Before too long, we began feeling that we were entitled to even bigger things.

Back then, we didn't worry about paying for things. We knew Dad worked *somewhere* and he seemed happy; so we let his money pay our way. It was a great life...until we graduated from high school or college and were told that we needed to find a job.

“What! Work?” we protested. “You've got to be kidding! We don't work; we receive. That's what you've reared us to do.”

But told to work we were. And, as always, when we weren't given our toys, or our livelihood, on a silver platter, we threw a tantrum. Back in the mid-to-late 1960s, we marched with signs, tore up college campuses, burned military draft cards, grew our hair long, and called law enforcement officers unkind names. Some of us even ran off to hide away in communes in other countries.

So, what was gained by this rebellion against the traditional work ethic? Where are we now? It's the 21<sup>st</sup> century and we're experiencing fluctuating unemployment, slow economic growth, stock market reactions, and dangerous lows in productivity. By letting our work muscles get flabby, we've allowed others to challenge our championship rankings.

### **Regrouping—*Strengthening the Work Ethic***

According to the dictionary, work ethic refers to a belief in the moral benefit and importance of work, and its inherent ability to strengthen character.

Fortunately, at least in some areas, things are beginning to show signs of swinging back toward an honest day's work for an honest day's pay. Some unions are accepting cuts in their current contracts to avoid further layoffs. Lawyers are advertising their services in direct competition with each other, and some are reducing their high fees to remain competitive. Some young doctors are doing house calls; a number of recently ordained ministers are not charging fees above their salaries for weddings and funerals; and there are teachers who are volunteering to sponsor student activities without asking for a raise or "released" time.

These are positive steps, but they remain more rarities than common practice. A great many people remain who are still depending upon others to watch out for them or to do their share of the difficult work. They've forgotten or, perhaps, never knew how to work hard and be independent. About 25 percent of the people have not forgotten how to work hard, nor have they lost any of their self-respect or control of their personal lives. They are the positive producers. They are working hard, enjoying every minute of it and, as a result, living a better life.

"Enjoying it?" you ask.

Yes, that's right. Not only are they enjoying what they are doing, they are also helping society advance. It's a great system.

"But...but I've heard that people who work a lot are neurotic," some may respond.

You may be aware of the claims being made by some so-called experts in the field who say that hard workers are mentally ill, copping-out on life, or are engaging in an escapist's



fantasy...and any number of other negative descriptions. But what they are really talking about is extremism, or those who might better be called negative producers—people who are frantic and way out of balance—who harm their marriages and family lives because of their obsession with work. Some call them workaholics, which is not a healthy or happy state in which to be. I am not denying that such a condition can develop; my argument, however, is that negative labeling for all people whose habit is to work a lot is both misleading and incorrect. All the successful people I know or have read about are positive producers.

My father founded three companies—an artificial eye laboratory, a contact lens company, and a traditional eyeglasses business—and he was president of all three simultaneously. He certainly didn't do it by watching TV! In fact, he still had time to be our scout leader, coach our ball teams, run the church's orphan care fund, and serve as president of the local Optimist Club. He was a balanced, well-organized, positive producer, but definitely not frantic.

John Drake, author and work ethic consultant, perfectly describes today's frustrated worker. He says this person is working for someone else; he or she is someone who never leaves the office on time and has incredible feelings of anger built up inside. Drake confesses that this was a profile of himself until he resigned from his job at a giant human resources consulting firm, moved to Maine, and started his own business.

Yes, being a positive producer working for someone else can, indeed, be a frustrating experience. It doesn't give the worker a chance to control matters, increase personal income beyond a certain point, or change lives to the magnitude an expansive business owner can. However, this does not imply that hard work, in and of itself, is bad. Quite frankly, I would

have quit Drake's job and gone out on my own too. I admire him for that.

The 25 percent of people who qualify as positive producers would probably feel the same way I do. A positive producer is someone who believes in a positive work ethic. That person's foundational belief is that hard work is good for the individual, his or her family, and the society in which the producer lives and to which he or she contributes.

Some researchers have actually discovered that hard work is something that helps keep people healthy. In a feature article titled "Bored to Sickness" in *Psychology Today* magazine, it was noted that men who worked 55 or more hours a week were in much better health than those who worked a standard 40-hour workweek. For example, physicians who worked 55-70 hours a week were far healthier than unionized assembly line workers who put in only 40 hours.

"Despite the burden," reported *Psychology Today*, "doctors were most satisfied with their work. They ranked low in depression, anxiety, and irritation, and reported few cases of poor appetite, insomnia, or similar stress-related physical problems. Assembly-line workers were at the other extreme. Most of them worked normal hours at a regular pace and had little responsibility. Yet, they were the least satisfied with their workload and they complained about depression, poor appetite, insomnia, and other physical problems."

The article cited research done by the University of Michigan which proved that, more important than workload, pressure, and other external factors, job satisfaction appeared to be the key in keeping workers healthy. The positive producer is healthy, whereas the person working at a monotonous job is a more likely candidate to be wearing the label "neurotic."

If these researchers are correct—and I'm convinced they are—we then see that the key to a good work record is job sat-

isfaction. And the keys to good health and personal happiness are linked to job satisfaction too.

But how do we know whether we are satisfied with our career or business? If we earn enough money to emulate the people seen in television commercials, doesn't that imply we are satisfied? The people in the commercials seem to be satisfied; and since we brush with the same kind of toothpaste they do, drink the same brand of coffee, wash with the same soap, wear the same watches, drive the same cars, and sneeze into the same kind of tissues, shouldn't we be as satisfied as they seem to be? Well, if you think so, there's an "oceanfront" property in Arizona on which I'd like to quote you a good price!

No, career or business satisfaction cannot be measured simply by income. In fact, the variables that determine satisfaction are so diverse from person to person that only you can judge for yourself how satisfying your career or business is. So sit down with a pen and a clean sheet of paper and make an analysis summary of your current career or business.

### **Analyzing Your Potential—*for Success***

The 16 questions below will help you begin seriously evaluating both yourself and your attitude toward your career or business—whether you work for someone else or yourself—and your personal development. You can think of more personalized questions to add to the list as you go along.

1. Are you staying current in your field? **Yes No**
2. Do you anticipate and plan for change? **Yes No**
3. Do you accept constructive criticism? **Yes No**
4. Do you have a personal work ethic? **Yes No**
5. Are you a disciplined worker? **Yes No**
6. Do you use common sense in making decisions? **Yes No**

7. Do you keep expanding the inventory of your personal skills? **Yes No**
8. Are you confident in all that you do? **Yes No**
9. Do you maintain excellent health? **Yes No**
10. Are you ethical in your business practices? **Yes No**
11. Do your colleagues respect you? **Yes No**
12. Have you made a contingency plan for your income development and long-term family security? **Yes No**
13. Are you making use of all available resources to advance your career or business? **Yes No**
14. Do you continually challenge yourself with new dreams, goals, quotas, objectives, and career or business targets? **Yes No**
15. Have you learned what kinds of incentives you need to spur you on to work harder? **Yes No**
16. Can you handle pressure by facing up to challenges and then overcoming them in a systematic way? **Yes No**

If you answered yes to nine of the questions, you are about average; if you said yes to 12 or more questions, you are well on your way to enjoying a successful life and career or business. By being honest with yourself, you will learn why you may not be giving that extra effort or why you are not measuring up to your performance potential. In some instances, you may discover that you lack the right kind of motivation, don't have big enough dreams and goals, or that you are too complacent in your willingness to give it your all. These are all "curable" challenges. But before you endeavor to repair the individual *parts*, you first need to evaluate the *whole*; namely, your basic concept of a work ethic.

### **A Personal Work Ethic—*You Need One to Win in Life***

It's obviously ethical to do good work. Conversely, to accept payment for a job or business activity which is done in a slipshod manner could actually be cheating or stealing and, thus, unethical.

Accepting full payment for a halfway effort puts one into a position of bilking his or her employer, associates, or clients. But have you ever considered how it may also be cheating the cheater as well? I'll illustrate this by sharing an ancient Arabian fable:

Three riders were crossing the desert one night when they lost their way. They came upon a dry riverbed and began crossing it, when a mysterious voice from out of the darkness sternly announced, "Halt and dismount!" So, cautiously, the riders climbed down. The voice then ordered them to reach into the sandy riverbed to dig out some stones and place them inside their saddlebags. Each man reached down and picked up a few stones, following the orders.

The voice then said, "Now, ride away. Tomorrow, when you recall this event, it will be both the happiest and the saddest moment in your lives."

The riders remounted and dashed away. At dawn, they reached an oasis where they drank water and bathed. Feeling refreshed, they went to throw the dirty rocks out of their saddlebags. To their amazement, they discovered the stones had miraculously turned into diamonds!

The men leaped for joy and began dancing around ecstatically. Then, suddenly, one man stopped. His face turned grim. He held up a hand for silence and said, "Why are we joyful, brothers? We are fools! Last night we had a chance to scoop up many pounds of stones. We could have filled our saddlebags. Instead, we settled for these few stones in our hands. We have missed a chance to become rich beyond all comprehension."

This fable has much to say about life and work. People who really dig into their work, doing the best they can, without being concerned about the current circumstances or attached to the outcome, are the ones who later reap rich rewards. Positive producers are always digging up as many stones as they can, by reading positive books, working more, meeting new people, prospecting new business, and helping others. In time, those “stones” will become “diamonds” like career advancement, business expansion, public recognition, and financial gain.

The eagerness to work first and then look forward to rewards later, stems from a personal work ethic that defines the natural value of work. As with analyzing yourself and your attitude toward your career or business, analyzing your work ethic also needs to be determined on a personal basis.

Perhaps you’ve always assumed you had an understanding of your own work ethic. But this may not be entirely the case. Instead of just assuming this, go ahead and take a moment now to write down what you really think a fair and *honest* work performance would be. After that, define a job or business that would enable you to best contribute to society, while making your dreams come true. Next, explain how you feel the *value* of your work needs to be determined and evaluated. Finally, make a note of the opportunities available to you that offer you chances to fulfill the work ethic standards you have just set.

### **Establishing a Stronger Personal Work Ethic**

Begin by completing the following four sentences.

1. To me, honest work is work that....
2. To me, respectable work is work that....
3. To me, valuable work is work that....
4. To me, my ideal career or business offers me....

Once you've established a stronger personal work ethic, you will start living up to it and excelling more. The moment you do, you will have taken the first step toward a life of positive productivity. The things you accomplish will be symbolic works of art. You will have developed *an art of work*.

### **Living a Truly Rewarding Life**

Some people may appear to be competitive, want you to think they are the stars of the class reunion, and pretend to have the good life for themselves and their families—often based on a heavy debt load and intense dissatisfaction. Unfortunately, many of them have forgotten that being truly happy and successful requires work—sustained, do-whatever-it-takes, persistent effort. Living a truly rich and rewarding life and achieving financial freedom doesn't come for free!

In my parent's generation, there was more of an emphasis on hard work. But the more advanced society became, the more complacent its people seemed to become. And they distanced themselves from understanding the need for continuous hard work. As a result, this laxity has caused some economic and social challenges.

The solution lies in a rekindling of the work ethic worldwide and it all begins with you and me on an individual basis. We need to rekindle it for ourselves and be sterling examples for others to follow. So let's get started!