



Is There Anything Wrong With “Easy Street”

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Would you rather win a lottery worth \$20M or win the wisdom to make \$20M for yourself? If you're like most people, you'd rather get the \$20M free and clear. No hassles, no work, just give me the money, right? But is that really what is best for you, particularly over the long term?

After winning the big prize, most lottery winners wish they had never won. As a group, their statistics paint a gloomy picture. Many file bankruptcy with estimates being as high as 75 percent. Many of their marriages turn into divorces. What they thought was a blessing ended up being a curse. Why?

Sustained success only comes through knowledge, experience, and drive – not luck. Long-term success is earned. It is the journey, not the destination that builds skills and wisdom. Without the journey, you miss out on the development. Without the development, you lack the ability. You won't know what to do with your instant abundance of resources, not to mention how to keep them, or to appreciate them, without the journey.

It is only through experience and education that we build the foundation needed to be successful and sustain it. Responsibility and expertise are learned behaviors. Unfortunately, many people don't want to make the investment. They want it handed to them on a silver platter. The unfortunate few that get it that way suffer for it.

There is a prevailing mindset of “good enough” and “soon enough” where people work only to the point of what is minimally required of them and at the last possible moment. As a result, our government policies, workplace procedures, automobile safety features, and “idiot proof” consumer products are geared to do our thinking for us. The problem is that we are being conditioned to turn off our brain and sense of responsibility.

I see the impact of this in my own profession. Many contemporary business speakers, consultants, coaches, and authors have very limited knowledge of the “how-to” of remedying something with most of their content focused on the “what” of the problem and the “why” of its existence. I just finished a book that allocated 240 pages to the “what” of a modern day business issue with only two pages allocated to the solution, which was a theoretical one at that. I have to ask is this because fewer and fewer people really know the “how-to” of accomplishing something? No wonder many believe that we only use a mere fraction of our cognitive ability. It is true.

Consider that there is little more important than your development. Take it seriously. Get off the hamster wheel of “business as usual” and spend more time and energy on improving yourself and those within your circle of influence. Don't settle for good-enough or soon-enough. Aspire to rise above mediocre norms. Seek to learn more than is minimally required. Don't just meet, but rather exceed the expectations of those for whom you work.

Consider spending up to 20% (or about eight hours per week) of your spare time outside of your normal workday in self-improvement activities. If you are a manager, encourage your employees to do the same.



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Spend time in the following areas:

1. Read non-fiction books. Or listen to them on CD during your commute to/from work.
2. Attend professional courses and seminars in both your domain and in general skill areas, e.g. time management.
3. Take college classes.
4. Request wise counsel and help from others who have achieved what you aspire to achieve.
5. Ask for feedback from others on how you might improve in the areas that are important to you.
6. Volunteer for special assignments at work to broaden your experience.
7. Seek opportunities to teach and mentor others. No one learns more than the teacher, coach, or mentor.
8. Look for new experiences that give you new perspectives.

Next time you wish for instant wealth, or any quick-fix, consider that it could be the worst thing that ever happened to you. If you are out of work, consider it an opportunity to learn new skills. If you're not making much progress against your goals, consider it a call to learn a new way to approach them.

Invest in yourself. The investment you make will provide a lifelong return on investment unlike any other you can make.

Article written by Mike Hawkins, award winning author of *Activating Your Ambition: A Guide to Coaching the Best Out of Yourself and Others* (www.activatingyourambition.com), and president of Alpine Link Corporation (www.alpinelink.com), a consulting firm specializing in leadership development and sales performance improvement.

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