

## YOU'VE BEEN BRAINWASHED...

**“Years ago, when you were about four years old, the system set out to persuade you of something that isn’t true. Not just persuade, but drill, practice, reinforce and, yes, brainwash. The mission: to teach you that you’re average; that compliant work is the best way to a reliable living; that creating average stuff for average people, again and again, is a safe and easy way to get what you want.” – Seth Godin**

This is an exclusive extract taken from John's 2nd book to be published in 2015

We live in a remarkable time when it has never been easier to create something that matters and put it out there in the world. So why aren't we all doing it?

A big part of my mission is to tell you that you can take control of your work and your life. You've started doing that; you've identified a project that you want to complete, and you're on your way to making it happen. By taking action on your project, you've moved from being just a worker to becoming a Player. A Player experiments, does what draws them, takes responsibility. A Player knows that getting a job isn't the only model of value creation out there.

### LEARNED HELPLESSNESS

The education system followed by conventional employment can engender a subtle form of learned helplessness. Learned helplessness is a psychological condition where a subject finds themselves in an unpleasant situation but doesn't take action to change it because they've learned from experience that there's no point. Think about school; our instinct as children is to be physically active and follow our own curiosity but in school our day is defined by others and we must sit still and ask permission to speak or to leave the room. We even wait for a bell, just like Pavlov's dogs, before eating! On top of this school teaches us to expect to get a job, and that anything we do for fun is a hobby.

When we enter the world of employment we are taught to mould ourselves to a role and hide aspects of our personality in order to get a job that pays enough and is socially approved of. Once in that job, our work is defined by others, we must ask permission to take time off, and ask others if we want to change our role. If they say no, we may not be able to do anything about it until we can quit and get another job. The similarity between school and employment is no coincidence – school was designed during the industrial revolution to produce compliant workers for the factory and the factory has evolved into the modern office. Most factories treat employees like replaceable cogs that do specific tasks under strict instructions and many offices follow a similar principle.



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➤ The result is that unless you have been exceptionally fortunate in your experience of school and work (or you had a positive family influence to counteract it), you have undergone a kind of brainwashing – school brainwashed you for employment and employment brainwashed you to defer to others and ask permission – to become a workerbot.

Given that so much careers counselling in schools is still focussed on jobs and there is so little fostering of entrepreneurial skills, it's no surprise that most of us grow up without considering self-employment or entrepreneurship a possibility.

Interestingly, the single strongest predictor of entrepreneurship is parental entrepreneurship. And that's not any genetic factor, it's simply the child modelling the thinking and behaviour of the parent. After all, if you see that a parent has broken free of employment and thrived, it opens entrepreneurship up as a real possibility for yourself.

And here's the real kicker: Because this learned helplessness and workerbot thinking (looking to others for direction, waiting for instructions, trying to keep your head down and not make a mistake) is the dominant mindset surrounding you, it doesn't even look like you've been brainwashed. It looks like normality. It looks like sanity.

The result is swathes of people underplaying their real value, trying simply to fit in. And worse still, it doesn't even work anymore. Now, if you really are a replaceable cog, just slotting into a standard role, the chances are some well educated person in another country can fill that slot remotely, much more cheaply than you. Or it might even be possible for technology to do it.

## FROM WORKERBOT TO PLAYER

We need to remember that being a workerbot is not our natural state. Barbara Winter, author of *Making a Living Without A Job*, says, "I read about a study that found that nearly all kindergartners are naturally entrepreneurial. They exhibit the very qualities that make for successful self-employment. They're curious, adventurous, and extraordinarily persistent. They regularly come up with creative ideas and are eager to share their discoveries. Sadly, this same study found that only a few years later, by the fourth grade, these qualities had begun to diminish. This wasn't entirely news to me, of course. I've been watching people struggle with their own doubts and fears for decades."

It's time to return to your true nature. You were born a Player, but made a worker. Check if you are holding any of the 5 workerbot beliefs below and try to adopt the Player alternative instead.

## WORKERBOT BELIEFS

**1 WORKERBOT:** It's a lottery. You need to wait to be picked or discovered, or to get permission. You're hoping to get lucky and get a book deal before you can start writing. You're going to try a business idea to "see if it works"

**PLAYER:** Take back control. Don't wait for permission or a book deal or to be discovered. Instead of trying something to see if it works, take the attitude that you're going to do everything you can possibly can to make it work.

**2 WORKERBOT:** You need to work on your weaknesses because you're nothing special so the best you can be is a good all-rounder.

**PLAYER:** Focus on your unique spots of genius, know what they are and make the most of your opportunities to use them. Remind yourself of your strong points - make a list of them if you haven't done that already. Make sure you get to use them in your Play Project.

**3 WORKERBOT:** Don't make a mistake and don't do anything that will make you look silly. If an action doesn't get the result you wanted, you've failed - and you should be embarrassed. So you'd better not do something until you've thought it through properly.

**PLAYER:** The only way to learn and the only way to innovate is to do things you haven't done before (and perhaps no one else has either). Look at everything as an experiment. If you don't get the results you expected, reflect and adapt then try again (see the PlayCycle).

**4 WORKERBOT:** You can solve any problem by sitting and thinking about it.

**PLAYER:** Don't sit around thinking, play it out. Take your best shot, put it into action, and learn from your results.

**5 WORKERBOT:** Don't do anything until you find one thing that can support you just like a salaried job.

**PLAYER:** Most businesses have multiple income streams. You can start your first, grow it, then add others.

It's time to stop asking "Can I really do that?", "Is it OK to do it this way?", "Who am I to do this?" and start doing what you feel is right, with a willingness to learn along the way. Stop finding reasons why the thing you want to do isn't possible ("someone's already done it", "there's too much competition", "I'm not sure it can make money") and start finding ways to make it work.

**Let's play!**

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**“ It's a cultural instinct to wait to get picked.**

**To seek out the permission and authority that comes from a publisher or talk show host or even a blogger saying, "I pick you." Once you reject that impulse and realize that no one is going to select you--that Prince Charming has chosen another house--then you can actually get to work.**

**Once you understand that there are problems just waiting to be solved, once you realize that you have all the tools and all the permission you need, then opportunities to contribute abound.**

**No one is going to pick you. Pick yourself. ”**

**Seth Godin**

