



Your Degree Is Worthless; Collaborate.

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I've always been a self-motivated learner as well as a free thinker. I was never one to get involved in cliques or social ladders. Despite the fact that I was raised being constantly told that grades were the single most important thing in my life, I could never accept that. So I didn't. I just did enough to get by. I didn't pay attention much in class. I had no reason to. Class was beyond boring. So I'd spend all hours of the night hacking away on my computer, soaking in all I could, and most of the school day sleeping during class when I could get away with it. When there was a test, I'd try my hardest to stay awake, answer the questions as best I could - typically earning a low C in my Honors/AP Classes, and a low B in my "Ordinary" Classes. I found a good balance. Why would I study for 30 hours a week to get better grades when I could get by with 0 hours?

So, I graduated. And I did the next logical thing: I went to college. Ahh, college. The most important decision you could ever make in your life. The time to "make it or break it". Where every young man goes to be become a man. So I went. While high-school never engaged me, I assumed that courses about career-relevant subjects would interest me in a university setting. I was wrong. I was very, very wrong.

College Life

I studied Plato, Homer, and Socrates, Turing Machines, and Single-State-Automata. I analyzed the progression of American Popular Music from the 1920s to today. I learned how to draw, play the marimba properly, and splatter paint on walls. I attempted jujitsu. Wonderful life experience. But what does any of this have to do with setting the foundation of a career? Nothing. At all. Of course, the higher up you go, the more relevant the courses get to your chosen major. But I didn't want to wait. Especially when I was paying \$20,000 a year for this. It was mostly useless information. The average college education in America costs 9 cents a minute. Every minute. Every day. A complete waste. And I was working 35 hours a week as a graphics design intern, working at odd hours of the night, attempting to pay for all of this. It was impossible, and I was unengaged.

The Plunge

So, after totally losing interest in class or anything related to it, I gave up and dropped out. I didn't want to get further in debt. So I moved back home, defeated, and tried my hardest to get my life back in order. I got my high-school job back at McDonald's. I worked harder than I ever have in my life. I didn't have anything else better to do, so I worked as much as I could all the time. I worked one 65 hour week - but that got old really fast. I was again, unengaged.

Then, one day, I quit McDonanld's without notice. Not best practice of course, but I didn't want to spend any more time there. It's strange what a terrible work environment it is. After a few short weeks, you begin to think there isn't anything outside those walls. It was clear that it wasn't getting me anywhere, so I set out with my laptop to try to find something better.

How It All Turned Around

I spent alot of time on some freelance websites, where you bid for odd jobs, usually settling for some ridiculously low amount of money here and there. That didn't last long. I remembered coming across a guy on Twitter from my hometown, Winchester, Virginia, who was quite into the internet and technology.

That's pretty rare in these parts, so I looked him up. What I found was a local cowork center. I went and checked out the cowork, and what I found blew my mind.

In this little building off the historic old-town walking mall was a room. Inside: the COO of a major internet company, tech consultants, graphic designers, writers, author, bloggers, freelancers, and so much more. I met everyone in and around town. I sat in on think tank lunches. People cared about what I had to say. We collaborated.

Collaboration is Everything.

For the first time in my life, I was meeting interesting people with awesome experience, willing to share and collaborate what they have learned with me. And I did the same. I soaked in endless amounts of information. One simple room full of a few people turned on some switch in me that the education system had failed to do year after year after year: teach me something.

I was finally engaged. Fully engaged.

As soon as I realized that, my entire life changed. I started thriving on my own, getting dozens of clients. Suddenly, I had a life with significantly less stress and worry. No tuition fees! I realized how valuable my skills were and how I didn't have to be part of the institution if I didn't want to be. I rose above. I am now a Web Applications Developer at a respectful technology firm. No degree. No debt. Only an open mind. I gain more knowledge and experience in a single workday than I did during my entire college career. I'm in the real world. And I'm loving every minute of it.

In Conclusion

Looking back, I'm comfortable saying that dropping out of college has been the best decision I've ever made. If I would have gone through the entire education program, what would I have to show for it? \$150,000 in debt, a piece of paper, and four years less of your life. No real experience. No connections. Just a piece of paper. And nothing more.

Please bear these things in mind before you decide to spend \$150,000 on a bachelor's degree in a field you're not so certain about. Personally, I'd rather spend that money on something that will actually benefit me: like a house.

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