



Article of the Week from Harrison Barnes

Five Class-Based Rules That Determine Attorney Success or Failure

Summary: Success in the legal profession is not determined by skill alone. There are also socio-economic and class-based barriers that must be overcome.

One of the largest distinctions—and markers of success for attorneys, and all people, really—is related to how a person thinks about life and work. These differences, in large part, are class based and often have more to do with the expectations the person brings to the “game” of law than with the person’s abilities and what they think is possible.

Throughout my career, I have been very upset by mistakes that very intelligent attorneys make who may, quite simply, be making decisions that are the result of their upbringing and environment.

- It is very common, for example, for me to see members of various ethnic groups raised in poverty (but that perhaps have attended great schools) drop out of the practice of law when they have the abilities, but not the thought processes, to make them successful.
- It is common, as well, to see people from small towns have serious problems. You do not, for example, see many children of farmers at places like Yale or Stanford Law School.

The point is, there are massive socio-economic and class-based barriers that people must overcome to enter the legal profession and remain in it. These barriers also constitute a series of fundamental “rules” that attorneys need to follow to both succeed and rise in the legal profession.



See the following articles for more information:

- **Your Beliefs about Yourself Are Controlling Your Destiny**
- **Change Your Beliefs, Change Your Life**
- **The Quality of Your Life and Career is the Result of Your Habits**

Recently, I went to two high school graduation parties and the differences between the two events could not have been starker. One was in the home of a rich child of famous parents in Malibu, California, and the other was in a small town in rural Ohio. As I thought about these two graduations, I realized that the thought processes that make one attorney successful and another unsuccessful were on display and being played out right before my eyes.

The first party I went to was in Malibu at the home of one of the children of a world-famous talent agent. This party was in a beautiful 15,000+ square foot home that looked as if it could be a college. As part of the party, students were selling various pieces of artwork they had made in art classes at the school throughout the school year.

The art did not seem to be anything special at all; however, I was nothing short of astonished at how much money the students were seeking for their pieces of artwork, including vases, paintings, sculptures and other amateur art. Many of the art pieces were priced above \$5,000. There were very few pieces of artwork that were below \$500 (one of the \$500 pieces of “art” was a matchbox car with some wires sticking out of the window for artistic effect). I spent some time looking at all of this art and could not believe that the children had such high opinions of their work.

The parents of the children were not particularly nice. They were well dressed and, for the most part, they stood around in particular small groups and avoided other small groups. I went up to speak with a few of the adults. Some were annoyed that a stranger was speaking to them and walked away. In the few conversations I did have, it took less than five minutes for people to ask me (1) what I did for a living (“How prestigious is your profession?”) or (2)



where I lived and on what street (“How expensive is your home?”) or (3) where my kids go to school (“Do you have the money to send your kids to private school?”). One doctor took less than two minutes to tell me he had gone to Phillips Andover School.

Parents of graduating children were also very quick to tell me what their child was doing if it was prestigious—“Our son is going to Duke next year”—but if it was not as prestigious they would launch into a long explanation about **WHY** their child was going to a less prestigious school—“He is only going there because they have a very good biology program and he wants to be a doctor. He can graduate from there in three years with the AP credits he already has and start medical school sooner.”

The food was served by men and women in white tuxedos. The hors d’oeuvres were presented to me with French names I did not understand. There were model-like women wandering around with silver trays filled with champagne flutes. There was a group of women playing classical tunes on a harp, violins and cellos. Meanwhile, there were a bunch of new graduates politely walking around speaking with the adults.

What stuck out to me about these kids—all from privileged environments—was the high opinion they all seemed to have of themselves and their work. They were setting the bar extremely high and doing well. Many of the kids were going to great schools, such as Princeton, Stanford and CalTech, and were headed for very promising lives by all appearances.

Back to the art sale: I have never heard of a high school student selling a piece of art for \$5000.

“How did you come up with the prices for these pieces?” I asked a woman who was wandering around selling the art and making me feel very underdressed in my blue blazer, khakis and tie.

“The artists set them,” she said.

“You mean the students,” I said jokingly. She gave me a bit of a nasty look and walked away.

At some point, I had to use the restroom and walked down a hall and opened a door to what I thought was a bathroom. It was a bedroom with a restroom. As I was walking into the restroom, an 18-year-old young man whose room I apparently had entered sat up in a bed, said “What the hell!”, stood up, stumbled around the room, bumped into a wall and then collapsed on back on the bed. He was dressed for the event but so drunk/drugged up that he apparently was out of it.

“Can I use your bathroom?” I asked him.

“I don’t care!” he said and threw a pillow over his head.

I walked in the bathroom and saw something I could not believe. The boy’s bathroom sink (which was quite large) was made entirely of glass and was an aquarium. I had never seen anything like it in my life. There were all sorts of fish swimming around. Here is a picture of what it looked like:

You’ve got to have a lot of money floating around to make your child’s private sink in his private bathroom a fish tank.



I walked out of the bathroom and told a contingent of women I knew what I had just witnessed (a sink that was made of glass and was a fish tank) and we all proceeded to go toward the room for a first-hand inspection. When we got closer to the room, the boy’s mother emerged from a corner and started yelling at us that we could not go in because the boy was “sick.”

When I got back into the party, I started walking around looking at the art again. I was surprised to see that some of the pieces were selling, even some of the more expensive



pieces. One piece, a poster of Marilyn Monroe that someone had thrown different colors of paint on, had sold for \$6000.

That is a lot of money! It is especially a lot of money if you are a high school student. That is more money than most college students make over several summers. Imagine buying a poster of Marilyn Monroe for \$5.00 on [Amazon](#), taking it to art class and spending 20 minutes or so throwing some paint on it and then selling it for that much money. I guess there is a sucker born every minute, but was something more going on there? Was there a deeper lesson?

There are a lot of lessons from all of this. What I witnessed could not be more relevant to being a successful attorney. In fact, whether it was the parents I met or the art being sold, this information could not be more relevant to you.

I will get to these lessons in a moment after I tell you about the second graduation party I went to. The second graduation party was in a small town in Ohio where about 3,000 people live.

Each year, about 75 senior students start school at the public school in the town. According to one graduate I spoke with, at the end of the year there were only about 65 students.

“Why do they leave?” I asked him.

“It just gets to be too much for them,” he said. “They cannot handle it.”

“Handle what?” I ask.

“The pressure ... It’s too bad too because a lot of the employers around here really expect you to have a high school diploma to work there.”

The first party I went to in Ohio was held in a house that was nothing like the one in Malibu.



The carpet, furniture and so forth were well worn. No decorator had ever been there—but that did not matter, of course. It was simply a different kind of place. It was the sort of home that people around the country grow up in.

At some point, a group of adults were speaking with one of the kids at the graduation. They were asking him where people in his class planned on going after graduating from school. Some were getting jobs locally and many were going to college. As the colleges and college choices were rattled off, it became clear the colleges were all very close by.

“Is anyone going out of state?” my wife asked.

“No, everyone is going to school in state,” he said.”One kid flew out to California and looked at some schools—everyone made fun of him, but he did not get in to any of them, so he is staying here for school. No one is going farther away than I am. My school is two hours away.”

The graduation parties in rural Ohio are a huge deal. Every child has a graduation party and the school distributes schedules of the graduation parties that stretch from May all the way through mid-July. They are inclusive and everyone is invited – all of the parents and all of the children.

The food seemed to be, generally, from Costco or Walmart. There were nacho chips, brownies, hamburgers and cheese dips made from Kraft cheese. One of the nicer parties had soft-serve ice cream that I regret eating. There were ground up candy bars and Oreos to put on the ice cream and a giant “Costco-size” bottle of Hershey’s chocolate syrup.

The adults were, for the most part, quite overweight and didn’t look all that vibrant or healthy. It did not appear that any had undergone plastic surgery (like several of the Malibu parents had). Several were wearing shirts that represented the school’s athletic team. They all spoke with one another and seemed to like each other a great deal.



I felt happier and better about myself at the party in Ohio than I did at the one in Malibu. The one in Malibu was all about high achievement, being part of a certain group and feeling bad for not blowing lots of money on lousy art. The party in Malibu was like a pit stop for people competitive with one another, as if they were getting ready to board rockets going to outer space. The one in Ohio was like a church social where there was bad food, nice people and no expectations whatsoever.

"The people seem to all get along quite well here," I observed to one of the men I knew there.

"They have to," he said. "They see each other every day."

At the Ohio parties, there were giant displays of the children and what they had done and accomplished throughout the years. These displays took up several tables. There were picture albums, trophies and tons of pictures hung up on corkboards. The most noticeable feature of all of the parties were the giant flag-sized printouts on plastic of each graduate in one of their sports uniforms, whether it was girls' volleyball, football, baseball or basketball.

Each child had a box at the door where well-wishers could deposit envelopes containing cards and checks.

What I realized after I had gone to a few of these Ohio high school parties was that the kids were celebrating what for many of them would be some of the best times of their lives. Graduating from high school was a huge "victory" of sorts. Sports successes and being members of teams represented an extremely important time in these students' lives. In fact, the sense I got from speaking with all of the kids was that leaving school was something that made them sad. High school, for many of them, was a high point of their lives. Most would never leave the town, even if they had decided to attend a nearby college. Most would return to the area at some point in the near future and work in factories, stone quarries and other businesses that supported the town. They would fade into anonymity for the rest of their lives. Now was the only time for many of them to shine.



There was also a sense of profound acceptance. The Ohio children were all being told that they had done well and were good enough. In contrast, the children in Malibu did not feel they were good enough and needed to become something more. The adults and children in Malibu all felt a sense of “lack” and the adults and children in Ohio felt that they were OK and that everything was just fine the way it was.

These parties represented to me two different life philosophies that often determine how successful an attorney will ultimately be. These different philosophies boil down to the following simple points that every attorney should understand and that govern how successful they will be:

1. Attorneys Only Succeed by Setting High Expectations for Themselves and Having Unreasonable Demands for Themselves and Their Clients

This is one of the most important, fundamental points for reaching a state of high achievement. In a small town in Ohio, you do not want to upset other people and you want to be like everyone else. You do your best to be likeable and thought of highly by others. You do not want to stick out, and it is important to you that you are liked by others. Being liked by others means not pushing too hard or being too different. If you try to apply to schools in California, everyone will make fun of you. You look even worse if you fail at this effort and everyone inevitably talks unkindly about it. That is the price for being different.

The worst attorneys out there care about how they look to other attorneys. They want to be liked, they want to participate in gossip, and they want to make people think highly of them, even opposing counsel. If they believe their client is guilty, or in the wrong, they will not be able to take their side effectively and will make their true feelings for their client known. The best attorneys are advocates and will latch on to any chance of winning for their client. These attorneys do their best to make sure their client wins and gets what they are seeking and looking for. The worst attorneys cannot and do not do this.

The group in Malibu set high expectations for themselves and the Ohio group did not.



The fact that the children were seeking over \$5000 for some of their art was nothing short of astonishing. These children had very high opinions of themselves and what they were capable of. They believed that their art was worth these high prices, and judging by the woman helping them sell the art, the adults were not doing anything at all to disabuse them of this or tell them their art was not worth this much.

In addition, some of the art was actually selling for these sorts of prices.

At the Ohio graduation party, I cannot even imagine what would have happened if someone tried to sell **ANY** piece of art for \$5000—much less a student piece of art. There is simply no way this would have occurred. In a town where you can literally find a **NICE** house for less than \$50,000, a student trying to sell a piece of art for \$5,000 would never happen – never.

To be successful in the legal profession, you need to set your expectations very high and do the same for your clients. The higher you aim, the better off you will generally be and do. If you believe you are capable of great things, this makes it possible and achievable. You've got to think high to rise.

Attorneys are used to rejection and it is very common, of course. Nevertheless, you need to believe in yourself and what you are capable of to get anywhere. Your thoughts need to be those of a king and not those of a pauper. In a job search, the most successful attorneys are always applying to a number of firms and getting rejected the majority of the time. But those that do not give up always succeed.

Every attorney comes across other attorneys who demand unreasonable things, behave in an intimidating manner, are critical of their work and try and throw them off course. If you do not think highly of yourself and what you are capable of you are never going to do well. You need to believe in yourself and never stop trying, no matter what the universe throws at you.

A few years ago, I ran across a recent [Harvard Law School](#) graduate I was interested in hiring to work on a case I had. He was one year out of law school and had written a few short



articles I found interesting that were related to the subject of my case. Despite working out of his parents' home, I felt he might be a good person to do some briefing on one of my cases and assist with it – he was obviously interested in the subject matter. When I spoke with him further, he told me that he had “moved on” from the sort of work my case involved and was now “doing class actions”—but would help me if “I made it worth his while”.

When we started discussing the financing and rates for the case, he told me that he thought he deserved \$1,000 an hour.

“You are kidding, right?” I asked him.

“No, I’m not. I’ve figured out how much money I am likely to make on the case I am currently working on per hour when it settles and that is my hourly rate now. Plus, I also want 25% of your recovery.”

He proceeded to tell me that his paralegals (presumably working out of his parent's home as well) were “only” \$200 an hour.

I was flabbergasted by this young attorney and told him he was “out of his mind” and to go to hell. I told everyone I knew about this kid and how crazy I thought he was.

A year later, I was thinking about him and did a quick search on the Internet. I learned he had just settled a giant class action against a huge public company for over \$30-million. Whatever I might have thought about his value, he probably did make more than \$1,000 an hour from the work that he did on that class action. He probably made millions. This is how people succeed and make a lot of money—they believe in themselves and set unreasonable demands.

Successful people, like successful attorneys, set very high expectations for themselves and what they are capable of. They are not held back by what others say is “impossible” or “crazy” and push forward anyway. This is something you too need to do for yourself and your clients.



All throughout my career, I have run across countless people who have done incredible things. One guy I know started a legal document preparation service and I was asked to participate in this. I thought it was nuts and a horrible idea. Why would anyone trust someone other than a good attorney to prepare legal documents? I watched this company spread all over the country for a few years and then stopped watching. It was too painful. I was completely wrong. This person had a good idea that seemed impossible to me and made it happen.

It seems to me that the most successful attorneys are the ones who demand the most from themselves. If you demand a lot from yourself then good things happen.

- **See [The Importance of High Standards in Your Life and Career: What High Standards Mean](#) for more information.**

2. Successful Attorneys Do the Work Needed Before Asking for Something

In order to get anything—a client, a raise, a promotion, win a case and more—a successful attorney always needs to do the work. They need to put in the work necessary to be out front and on the receiving end of good fortune. This is a fundamental rule of the legal profession:

- Clients find attorneys who write, get out there and network.
- Attorneys win cases and outperform other attorneys in transactions by working harder.
- Attorneys get raises and promotions by working harder, more carefully and doing better work.

An attorney simply cannot expect something for nothing. Rewards and advancement only come when you provide and show more value than other attorneys. You also need to put yourself in a position to ask for something.

The children graduating from the school in Malibu offered their art and charged a lot of money for it. They were providing a service (a piece of art) and asking as much money as they could



for it. In contrast, the other group was standing by passively hoping that people would put money in a box. One group was willing to work before asking for something, the other just asked.

While there is nothing wrong with graduating high school students putting out a box requesting money from relatives and others, this entire event seemed symbolic on many levels: Some people expect something to be given to them and others provide a service and then set the price for what they want. Many people go through life expecting handouts and advancement without being willing to do the work needed to get even more.

In practicing law and being an attorney, you really do have to provide value before you ask for something. The more value you provide and the better service you provide, the more you will receive. You need to always be trying your hardest to provide as much value as you can, and can never be expecting a handout. The more value you provide, the more you will receive.

Many attorneys wrongly expect that because they went to law school, people should be willing to give them a job. This is not true. The smart attorneys understand that they need to attend the best possible law school to impress potential employers. They also understand that they must also have the best law school grades and then, after that, the best experience—with the very best law firms. The higher the quality of the experience these attorneys have the more employable they will be.

Inside of law firms, attorneys cannot expect raises or to be advanced just because they are doing the work. They need to provide greater value—more hours, higher quality work, and more clients—than other attorneys they work with. It is a fierce competition and never ends. Partners are expected to provide a ton of business and work to their firms. If all they want is to do work, they are expected to provide even more work (hours) than if they provide business. Value is relationships and connecting with others and being likeable. Value is impressing clients and getting out and doing things in the community for the firm.

Legal careers often come to an end when attorneys expect more money, prestige and



other benefits than the value they are providing. You cannot just expect stuff to come your way without providing value. The more value you provide the better. This value and the requirement of providing value before receiving something never ends—and you always need to be providing more and more value.

See the following articles for more information:

- **You Will Succeed in Your Job and Your Job Search When You Are Concerned with Giving and Not Taking**
- **You Need Relationships Before Transactions**
- **Take Incremental Steps**
- **The Importance of Creating and Maintaining Value**
- **Don't Be Dead Weight-Contribute More than You Take**

3. Successful Attorneys Surround Themselves with the Most Successful People Possible Because They Know They Are Likely to Advance with This Association

Being surrounded by successful people gives you numerous important advantages. When you are in a major law firm, you get access to more successful and important clients who can pay high rates. You get access to better work and can do more important work. You get better training and you become a better attorney. Every attorney should do their best to be around and surround themselves with successful attorneys and people.

Being around people who can afford to pay \$5000 for a piece of your art is something that surely helps if you are trying to sell something. However, and more importantly, when you are around very successful people they help you aim higher, see the world from a new perspective and advance and grow. They have high goals and know what is required to achieve those goals. They will tell you:

- That a 3.0 is not good enough to get into a good college.



- That a certain score on your SAT's or ACT's is not good enough.
- That you need to apply to more than one good school.

When you are around people like this and they are talking about their goals and what is required to reach those goals, you too start seeing the world in a similar way and you set higher expectations for yourself. You start demanding more of yourself and start achieving more than you might otherwise did you not share those goals or thought patterns.

My father went to Harvard for college and was an admissions representative for the school. When I was growing up, all I heard about were the SAT scores I would need, how I would need outstanding recommendations from my teachers, how I would need to take a bunch of AP classes, how I would need to be the president of this and that club, and how I needed to have a bunch of varsity sports on my applications.

So I tried like hell and worked hard all through high school, studying often into the wee hours of the morning. Then I went to a prep school to increase my chances of getting into a better college in 10th grade. When I went to a prep school, I was then surrounded by a bunch of kids who were all talking about how they were going to take over the world and were certainly working toward that. Even today I receive calls and updates from my former prep school classmates, and the conversations all seem to revolve around how successful everyone is. They are still competitive with one another.

See the following articles for more information:

- **Never Measure Yourself against Perfection**
- **The Universe is Structured to Have Inequalities**

When you are surrounded by successful people, they **PUSH** you to become better and do as well as possible. There is no profession where this concept is more clear or evident than in the legal profession. Here, if you end up in a lousy law firm, it is perfectly acceptable to



turn in work with typos, not work a lot of hours, miss important legal issues in your work and cut corners. Generally, the better the law firm, the more intense the hours and the better the work product. When you are surrounded by good people, the quality of work you do often improves—you get better and better and become a more effective attorney.

I hear firms tell me all the time they will not take people from certain firms:

“Do not under any circumstances send us any labor and employment attorneys from **Jackson Lewis**,” many firms have told me throughout the years.

“Why?” I ask.

“Because they have bad work habits and do not think through the work they do. They think typos and other mistakes are acceptable.”

Blanket statements like this are, of course, not true. I am sure there are some **EXCELLENT** attorneys at that firm, but the message of this is clear: Attorneys can pick up bad habits when they are not around the best, highest-performing people.

In the entire legal recruiting realm, I always have had a good sense of where people will end up because I know the firms that will hire certain attorneys and those that will not. Certain firms will only hire people from the best law firms and they do this because they expect the people they are hiring to have certain expectations for the quality of work that they do. Attorneys who go to certain firms simply pick up bad habits, and bad habits are something that the best firms are not interested in. They want people with certain expectations for the quality of the work they do.

When I was in college, there were a couple of students I knew that quickly dropped out of school. Both were from small towns and had been the top student in their high school classes. When they got to college, they suddenly were getting all C’s and D’s and not able to keep up with the work.



“I never did homework in high school,” one told me.

Not having been around people with high expectations and conditioned in this environment, they did not do well when they got into high-pressure environments that put real demands on them. They never learned these skills.

Being at the very top of your game means that you need to surround yourself with the most successful people possible – and then when you get to that level – you need to work as hard as humanly possible to keep up with them and do your best to compete at that level as well. The higher you go, the harder you need to work, and it never stops. If you stay and do well in a prestigious law firm, you can move to a better firm and then to an even better one. This is how I make my living, of course: Moving attorneys to better and better firms. But your ability to move to a better and more prestigious firm is always going to be controlled by how prestigious and well-regarded the firm you are coming from is.

None of the kids from the Ohio graduation were going out of state, or to prestigious, well-regarded schools. The class valedictorian was going to a local nursing school. My guess is that—even if some of these kids tried to go to the most prestigious schools—they would be met with a cold reception for the most part. The best colleges and graduate schools want people from the most prestigious high schools in the best areas possible. They know that the kids from these schools are likely to do much better because they have grown up with and been surrounded by kids with the highest expectations for themselves as well.

See the following articles for more information:

- **Surround Yourself with Positive People**
- **Be Around Those with High Expectations of You**
- **The People You Work and Associate with Can Either Make or Break You**



4. The Best Attorneys Are Exclusionary and Not Inclusionary

The kids and parents from the Ohio high school seemed very happy, for the most part. The parents seemed to enjoy each other – incredibly, the students all invited each other to their high school graduation parties and the lists were distributed to all of the students in the class.

There were a few high school graduation parties at the school I went to; however, these parties were, for the most part, exclusionary affairs. One of my friends who drove me to school sometimes kept his invitations in his car for weeks and sent out only a few each day.

“Why are you doing that?” I asked him.

“Because I do not want everyone I am inviting to automatically think they are invited,” he told me.

The psychology behind such mind games is understood by the best attorneys.

The athletes had their own parties, the nerds their own parties, and so forth. It became a popularity contest to get invited to various parties. Moreover, the parents were not exactly welcoming to other parents – people were in their own competitive and somewhat exclusionary social circles. One of the parties I went to was hosted by one of the top two or three executives of [General Motors](#). There were a few other parents there, but they were only the most successful parents as well – their counterparts at other automotive companies and people with a hell of a lot of money as well. They likely were trading barbs and sizing one another up to see who was better than whom at the moment. Certainly, none of the parents of middle- to lower-class children would be invited – mine certainly were not.

The parties in the small town involved all of the parents of all of the children. The people all socialized with one another and appeared to do so happily and enthusiastically. I am certain all sorts of issues exist with these people as well, but this group was **INCLUSIVE** and not **EXCLUSIONARY**. This is an important point and something that is profound, meaningful and



a characteristic of high performing groups of people: The highest performing groups of people exclude rather than include. The **POWER** of the highest performing groups of people comes from **EXCLUDING** and not **INCLUDING**. Anything that is exclusive and hard to be part of naturally creates envy, and envy drives people to improve so they can be part of something they are not currently part of.

The Malibu party-goers took the event with all of its nuances very seriously. They got dressed up and did their best to look good to others. There were all sorts of social games and dynamics I was aware of – who wanted to be friends with who, which person was famous and holding court with others trying to gain their favor and so forth. These social games are a part of all systems, of course, but they result in making people that do not feel included feel unhappy—and they are competitive in nature. This added another level of competition to what was already a very competitive situation.

“What was up with the kid in the room who was wasted during the party at his house?” my wife asked a family who knew his parents.

“Other kids do not like him. He was probably upset that they were hosting a party at his house.”

The pressure to be part of a group that is exclusive is too much for some people and they do not like it. There is safety in being part of an environment that is more inclusive than exclusive and where you are accepted for who you are. People who do not feel part of something that is exclusive and feel excluded often feel safer where they are from.

For some time, I have taken private yoga lessons several times a week from a nice girl from Iowa who came to Los Angeles to try and be an actress. Like many people before her, she found Hollywood incredibly difficult—if not impossible—to break into despite what she had always believed were strong talents in the small town she came from. After concluding she was unwilling to keep trying to become an actress, she became a yoga teacher. She read endless motivational books, went to various seminars and struggled to pay her rent and keep up in an incredibly competitive, demanding, materialistic city.



“I’m going back to Iowa,” she told me last week. “I’m going to be several hours from my parents, but there is no one that teaches yoga like I do there. I think I will be more successful there. It’s hard to make friends and meet people here.”

Like many people before her, she concluded that a big city is exclusionary and not inclusionary. Her lack of ability to make great amounts of money frustrated her—first with acting and then trying to start a business. After several years, she simply gave up and is returning to where she feels included.

Most attorneys practicing inside of large law firms are not happy—and are participating in an environment with lots of secrets that is, for the most part, exclusionary. They are playing a game that is never pleasant and frustrates them at practically every turn. They are playing a game where they are never “fully happy” unless they are part of the most successful and exclusive group. I make no qualms or representations that this is a good way to think—but it represents the way things work at the highest levels of the legal profession. The highest levels of the legal profession are exclusionary, create stress and are not pleasant for everyone. If you want to be a good attorney, you need to play and understand this game and, potentially, even enjoy it.

5. The Best Attorneys Always Believe That the Future Holds Something Even Better Than Today

The kids in the school in Ohio were celebrating a major achievement in their lives—high school graduation. Their sports and other achievements were put on full display for everyone to see. Everyone was celebrating a great time in their lives and it was something meaningful, special and that they would always remember. Following graduation, they were going to local schools, and most would be returning to the area where they would be working in various blue collar-type jobs. Their goals were somewhat “aimless” and they were not sure what they wanted to be doing a few years hence.

In contrast, most of the kids I met from the school in Malibu were gunning for aggressive futures of high achievement. They were seeking to become something greater and better.



They were scattering all over the country and talking about doing big, important things. They wanted to be more successful and were defensive about why they were not doing even better than they were.

“I’m going to the University of San Diego because it is a ‘science school’ and respected by medical schools. It is the best way to get into a good medical school,” one girl in Malibu told me. I do not know if the University of San Diego is a good school or not, but she seemed to be defending it for some reason.

“I’m going to the Paul Mitchell School in Columbus,” a girl in Ohio told me. She was genuinely excited about the fact that she was going to be a hairdresser.

The best attorneys are always trying to do everything within their power to improve, become better and improve themselves. They are eager to learn and never stop trying to better themselves, never stop learning and never give up. This is an important characteristic of attorneys—the ability to be an advocate for both themselves and others.

If I call a good attorney working in a prestigious law firm and tell that attorney I have an opportunity at the most prestigious law firm in the city they are in, an attorney who is wired like a good attorney will nearly always jump at the opportunity, almost without question.

A good attorney will also constantly be extremely hungry for new information and anything that can possibly help win a case, or do better at whatever that attorney is seeking to accomplish. The best attorneys want information, because the more information they have the better off they will be and the more they can achieve.

See the following articles for more information:

- **The Importance of Being Well-liked in Your Job**
- **You Job is a Game - Make Your Opponents External**
- **Builders and Destroyers**



ATTORNEY SEARCH

*The Standard in Attorney
Search and Placement*

Conclusion

There is a stigma in American society about talking about things like class, race, socio-economic backgrounds and other things that ultimately determine whether or not someone will be successful. What I do know is this: People who strive to be better, rise higher and achieve more – and surround themselves with like-minded people who will inspire them to set even higher expectations than the already high ones they have – do better in the profession of law than people who are content to settle with being mediocre.

This is how it is and it is something I see again and again. There are so many attorneys I have worked with who do not understand these simple rules illustrated in these two high school graduation parties. As a consequence, they are not reaching their potential and are failing.

See the following articles for more information:

- **Learn Something from the Upper and Lower Class: Do Not Become Paralyzed by the Opinions of Others**
- **Your Strength is Your Ability to Control Your Internal World**

[Click here to contact Harrison](#)

Our mission is to meet or exceed every attorney's expectations for their job search and ensure they are succeeding and winning with BCG Attorney Search