

Opinion

The dreaded day job

By **VINCENT DANGOLOVICH** Most of us in the student world know the trouble of working a dead-end job to support our education and expenses. For several summer seasons, I worked with an old time photo group, taking; you guessed it, old time photos of tourists. Later, I earned my way with a local Blockbuster Video. While both were fun, nerve wrecking, interesting, boring, and just about anything else given the right day, day jobs take their toll.

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No one, regardless of career choice, pictures themselves in a no-skill retail/service job for the rest of their life. We all have bad experiences in the jobs we work for student dollars. The trick is learning how to notice when our jobs work us, and how to make our jobs work for us.

While working at Blockbuster, I was pulling resources to transfer to Penn State Harrisburg. Although the management knew my college plans, they repeatedly enticed me to put off education in favor of company loyalty. While it is true, Blockbuster once offered tuition reimbursement, it was strictly for courses toward retail management.

As time passed promotions and extra hours soon turned my focus from schooling to keeping the store. Indeed I let my mind slip from my goal of a better career in a field of my choosing, to making sure all company campaigns were utilized for maximizing store profit. My loyalty was not rewarded.

The company released me and later closed the store. It seems my salary was too high for a store in a slow district. I was without a job and learned no new skills from the company. I had been used with little to show except an added drive to get back into college. My old time photo job was stark contrast.

The seasonal work allowed one to easily avoid the school year. It also thrived on college student participation to fill the busy, temporary positions of mid-summer. Furthermore, it provided opportunities to learn portrait photography while interacting with large amounts of diverse people.

Doing old time photos, you must be a sociable, even entertaining person. After all, you have to get people to step aside from their summer vacations to put on costumes and sell them a photo that they may have for the rest of their lives.

It can be an awkward experience for all involved. Many times the folks waiting for their families to change into costume or for an available camera get hot and start to feel really out of place. You see this most often in children and crying is not an option.

Many solve this problem with small talk and getting to know the clients. Being a semi-professional magician on the side, my solution is to grab some office supplies and do some sleight of hand. Many people rather enjoy it, if only due to the surprise of a photo clerk knowing how to perform magic.

On one occasion an Amusement park magician noticed my interaction with the family waiting on photos. He loved my presentation and immediately wanted to know if I was available to perform for the park. My day job actually got me a better job in a field I enjoy.

Day jobs are a necessary evil. We often take them for the money but they can provide so much more. We can make our jobs work for us and not vice versa. Most day jobs involve your dealing with the general public and any interaction on that level is a chance to promote yourself and learn.

You might not be able to do magic on the job, but you can certainly develop people skills that you can use for the rest of your life. What's more is the chance to deal with the public in a formal setting. Regardless of your career path, it is your business to know people and how to relate to them.

Know their attitudes, their likes, their dislikes, what drives them. Know how to win someone over. Know how to deal with a bad situation, a heckler, or a complainer. They are everywhere. Being able to interact accordingly will stem from your experiences from your dreaded day job.

People will always be at the core of any job or business. It is often said; it is not what you know, but who. With that in mind, make your job work for you and use the experience to generate your contacts and knowledge of the world around.

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