

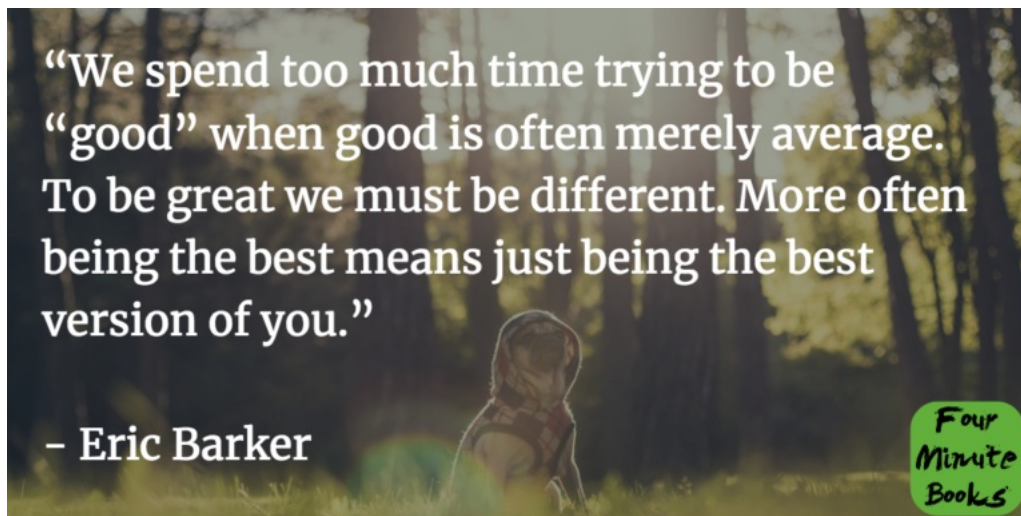
Barking Up The Wrong Tree Summary

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1-Sentence-Summary: *Barking Up The Wrong Tree* turns standard success advice on its head by looking at both sides of many common arguments, like confidence, extroversion, or being nice, concluding it's really other factors that decide if we win, and we control more of them than we think.

Read in: 4 minutes

Favorite quote from the author:



Self-deprecating humor is a great way to start pretty much anything: a talk, a Youtube video, a relationship, a standup comedy routine, and, in case of today's author, even a blog. When Eric Barker studied Japanese in college, he learned on the first day of class that his last name means "idiot." What most would've taken as offense, he took as the perfect icebreaker.

So today, after almost a decade of blogging, the URL of his blog still reads "I am an idiot" in Japanese: bakadesuyo. Eric's writing is rooted in the Stoic principle to learn more about yourself as long as you live. Hence, much of his posts are dedicated to making scientific research accessible to the general public in ways that balances both sides of an issue, like confidence, motivation, extroversion.

One value we can already deduct from Eric's behavior is patience. He waited until 2017, eight years, to publish his first book, *Barking Up The Wrong Tree: The Surprising Science Behind Why Everything You Know About Success Is (Mostly) Wrong*. It's a distilled collection of his biggest and most surprising lessons.

Here are my favorite 3:

1. Good grades often lead to mediocrity.
2. Extroverts make more money, but introverts are better experts.
3. The amount of hours you work matters, it's an undeniable fact.

If you feel lost in a sea of confusing success advice, here's a more balanced perspective that helps you consider your own wants and needs!

Lesson 1: How good your grades are only predicts one of your abilities, and it's not one that matters in the real world.

Most people envy the guy or gal at high school graduation, who gets to give the commencement speech. These people, usually top of their year, are called valedictorians, and most of their fellow students expect them to do well for themselves later on. In reality, that's rarely the case.

Eric cites a study by Boston College, which tracked 81 valedictorians after their graduation in 1981. 15 years later, they worked hard and learned a lot, but not a single one changed the world in earth-shattering ways. Contrast that with the surprisingly large number of college dropouts on the Forbes 400 list, and an idea starts to emerge: maybe being good in school doesn't matter so much, after all.

Eric would certainly agree, as performing well on any kind of standardized test, whether it's in high school, college, a job interview, or elsewhere, only proves one thing: **you're good at following rules**. Our education system turns people into excellent sheep, not excellent thinkers.

So, what *do* you need to succeed in the real world, then? Barker says it's a mix of creativity, passion, obsession, vision, and commitment. Life is messy, so above all, you need a lot of perseverance to see your goals through.

Lesson 2: Extroverts are likely to earn more, but it's easier for introverts to become experts in their fields.

Besides grades, the introvert vs. extrovert debate is a huge topic when it comes to personal success. Some argue that "your network is your net worth," while others celebrate introverts' capacities for single-tasking. So which one is it? As always, the answer is not so black and white.

Both introversion and extroversion have something going for themselves. Extroverts make, on average, slightly more money. For example, people who occasionally go for a drink earn up to 14% more. If you enjoy people's company, you'll naturally form more relationships, find friends more easily, and will end up with a better network.

Introverts, on the other hand, are more likely to become an expert in their field. Why? Since they spend more time in private, it's easier for them to put in the hours they need to develop deep domain expertise. This holds true even for more 'extroverted' activities, such as sports. 89% of top athletes are introverts.

Once again, what matters isn't what's better, but that you know who you are, so you can act accordingly.

Lesson 3: Working more works, there's no denying that.

Like everyone, I have my ups and downs when it comes to work. For the past 18 months, I've worked a lot more than ever before. Naturally, I've gravitated towards telling people to work more, but not just because I see it working for myself. Work has been, and always will be, the one variable you fully control.

How talented you are, how many lucky breaks you catch, what your circumstances are, your impact on these is very limited. Sure, you can move, change friends and switch jobs, but beyond that, what's left? Putting in time. Even IQ has diminishing returns, as Eric explains. In a University of Lausanne study, researchers found people's capacity for good leadership didn't just level off, but actually declined as their IQ went beyond 120 points.

However, **the top 10% of workers in complex jobs create eight times as much valuable output as the bottom 10%**, per another study. While some of this can be attributed to intelligence, being gifted, etc., it is ultimately the result of many hours of work and having learned the ins and outs of the job.

Whether this insight puts a ceiling on your productivity, because you have family commitments, for example, or is a baseline for thriving, as you currently have lots of time, you can now use it to make life's tradeoffs more deliberately – and that's what this book is all about.

Barking Up The Wrong Tree Review

Eric's take on success is very refreshing. *Barking Up The Wrong Tree* is not black and white, considers the latest research, weighs pros and cons, and then arrives at the golden middle. He's dedicated to helping you do *your* best, not push his own definition of success, and you can feel that in his writing.

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What else can you learn from the blinks?

- How much more money the world's richest dropouts earn compared to their Ivy league counterparts
- Why nice guys finish both first and last
- How many words you say to yourself every single minute
- What weird glitch caused chess grandmaster Garry Kasparov to lose against Deep Blue in 1997
- Why too much confidence is a bad thing

- The true benefit of having a mentor

Who would I recommend the Barking Up The Wrong Tree summary to?

The 17 year old high school graduate, who just got done with the first stage of following people's rules, the 42 year old sales manager, who's frustrated by the success others have with networking, and anyone who's used their lack of intelligence as an excuse not to try.