

Bullshit Jobs Summary

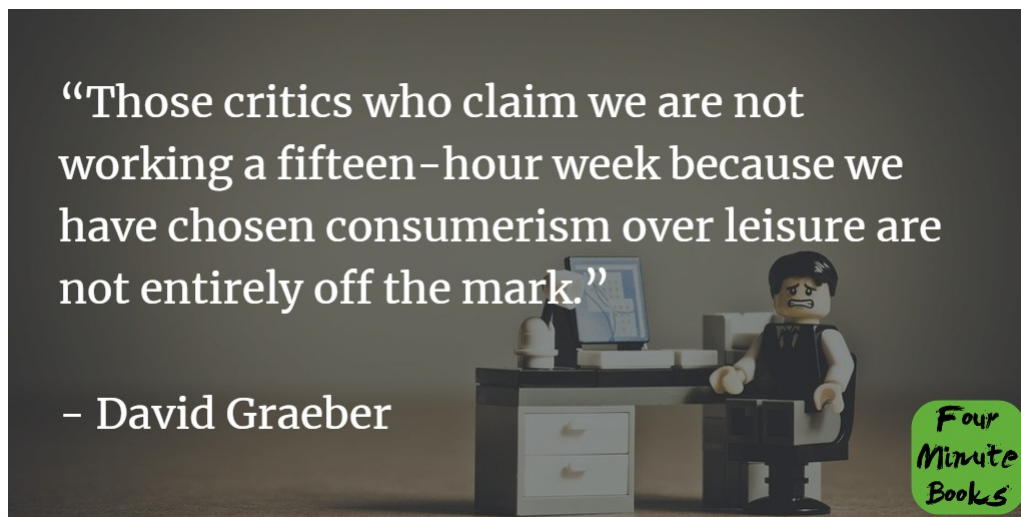


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1-Sentence-Summary: *Bullshit Jobs asserts that roughly two out of every five people are stuck in work that is bereft of purpose, and these workers could suffer psychological damage as a result.*

Read in: 4 minutes

Favorite quote from the author:



People have been saying for years that modern technology, advances in automation and robotics will make countless jobs obsolete. Wouldn't you think in this day and age we'd see a huge decline in employment?

What ever happened to that fifteen-hour work week that economist, John Maynard Keynes predicted would be our reality by the twenty-first century?

According to a report cited by the author in his book, *Bullshit Jobs: A Theory*, the number of people working in industry, farming and as domestic servants plummeted between the years 1910 and 2000.

And why is it that managerial, sales and service jobs have tripled over the years to account for roughly seventy five percent of all American jobs?

Are all these jobs really necessary? The truth is there's something in our political and moral culture and the way our organizations work that are pushing more and more of us into bullshit jobs.

Here are 3 lessons I've learned about these jobs:

1. Bullshit jobs instill a sense of purposelessness that makes people unhappy.
2. The myth of market inefficiency and our political focus on full-time work leads to an overabundance of bullshit jobs..
3. Universal basic income can be our means of escaping the bullshit jobs culture.

When you consider that most of our waking hours are spent working, why does it seem that so much of that time is spent on writing reports that never get read and attending meetings that only lead to more meetings? Let's see if we can't find some ways to dig out of this bullshit mess once and for all!

Lesson 1: While a small percentage of people might be happy in bullshit jobs, most people are unfulfilled.

When I think about the term bullshit jobs, what immediately comes to my mind is the deceptive salespeople who frequently called our office, attempting to unload toner for our high speed printers.

They'd first call our receptionist to trick her into getting a contact person in charge of that equipment. Then they would find out what brand of printers we had in our office.

They would call back later, posing as one of our equipment reps. Since they had a contact name and just enough information about our printers, it was easy to get a naive person to buy into their lies.

How these people can go home at the end of the day, fulfilled in their work, when their measure of success rests on how many people they were able to deceive that day? This is the epitome of a bullshit job!

The truth is, most of them probably are not happy with their job. Falsity is one thing, but what's even worse is the total lack of purpose.

According to a YouGov polling survey, one quarter of Americans think their jobs are meaningless.

There is plenty of real world experience to support this. Consider lottery winners who have no need to work yet feel an urge to do so in order to have some purpose.

Lesson 2: There is strong evidence to support that politicians are actively colluding to maintain a proliferation of bullshit jobs.

According to the laws that govern basic economic principles, bullshit jobs shouldn't even exist. Governments are known to be wasteful, so it seems logical that these types of jobs would be more common in the public sector. But in the private sector it makes no sense. Afterall, why would any business hire and pay people to do nothing?

It's because there exists a strong cultural and political bias at work when it comes to employment. Politicians on the left demand more jobs, while those on the right call for more tax cuts – and thereby putting more money in the hands of the job creators. A political bias towards employment plays a distinct role in the perpetuation of bullshit jobs.

There are clearly dynamics at work to keep these BS jobs in place, despite their economic inefficiencies. But whoever accused businesses of behaving in an efficient manner?

There's a story about Simon who was employed as a "problem solver" for a major bank. Simon created some software to fix a security risk relating to a system error. When he presented the solution to a bank executive and his team of 25 people, their reaction was a negative one.

Why? Because Simon's program was efficient enough to automate the entire team of people. What would the executive do without his team of 25 flunkies. He'd be nothing and appear less important – like a medieval lord without an entourage.

Lesson 3: Employee and employer power can be rebalanced with universal basic income.

If somehow we all had the financial freedom to completely avoid taking bullshit jobs that could work. And there actually exists a policy concept that might enable it.

It's called universal basic income and the idea is to provide all adults, regardless of current financial status, a basic income to cover their basic living costs – this income would be funded through taxation.

So much of today's misery relies on a power imbalance. Managers can make their employees subject to their degrading and ridiculous tasks because they know that employees need the money.

With universal basic income, an employee can say hasta la vista, baby! And they can walk away with no financial consequences. This way people would be more likely to choose work that was meaningful and of more value.

It's conceivable to imagine people who don't need to work to survive, choosing to do something more meaningful like teach pre-school, cook, drive a bus or any number of necessary roles. It's not as easy to comprehend someone with financial freedom doing something completely soul-sucking and mundane like telemarketing.

Would the freedom to choose what we want to do solve all the problems of the work world? Well considering how inefficient and unfair the current distribution of work is today, it's difficult to imagine that it could make things any worse.

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Bullshit Jobs Review

Bullshit Jobs makes some interesting points and I enjoyed it. But what constitutes a bullshit job is not always as cut and dried as the author defines it. I think many fine jobs today have a lot of bullshit that goes along with them, but does that make it a bullshit job? If you don't find your job fulfilling then you are the only person who can change that. And that change can come through attitude adjustment or making a move to pursue a more meaningful purpose for yourself.

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Who would I recommend the Bullshit Jobs summary to?

The 30-year-old cost management administrator, the 41-year-old factory assembly worker, and anyone looking to dig their way out of a bullshit job role.