

Your College Degree is Worthless – The Mission – Medium

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Your College Degree is Worthless

This is not a judgement, it's just a fact.

A degree is information. Information is an incredibly valuable resource in the market. But in the case of the college degree, far better information is available for far less time and money.

The information contained in a degree is flabby and ridiculous

Let's get concrete. Say you want to work for James Altucher. Two candidates apply. Candidate one sends a resume that says, "Marketing Major at Least Common Denominator University".

Candidate two sends examples of copy from three email drip campaigns they created, results of their Shopify store, and the CPC they got on a Facebook ad set.

Which one provided better information about the value they can create for James?

Let's go deeper

Better yet, consider applicant three. She sent Mr. *Choose Yourself* an email describing how she made \$100 one week in Amazon affiliate fees by doing a podcast episode about James' book, a lengthy Amazon review also posted to her blog with an opt-in, and an email newsletter about it. She also noticed he had a 2D image of one of his books on his website, so she sent him a 3D rendering of it he could use for free. She ended by saying she hopes her book promotion and the image are useful to him, and if he wants more where this came from, let her know.

That's some damn good information. She didn't just tell him her status like candidate one. She didn't even stop at demonstrating her value like candidate two. She actually created value specifically for him.

Both candidates two and three sent information ten times more valuable than a degree, without spending five years and six figures sitting in classrooms learning how *not* to create value. What they did is easy and accessible to all. It takes a little courage, hard work, experimentation, creativity, and persistence. It doesn't take any kind of privilege, a trust fund, a GPA, or any other dumb external paper prestige.

But most companies list degrees as requirements!"

Information, my dear, is costly and imperfect. Companies are imperfect too.

Employers use degrees because they've seen a correlation (not causation) between degree holders and minimum threshold of employability over non-degree holders, on average. Not because college does something to make people better at their work. Employers know it does nothing of the sort. They have gobs of info to sort through, and they look for quick easy ways to trim down pools of applicants. It's illegal to use IQ and other measures, so they put together a bag of info that they think is a decent approximation. A degree is one data point in that bag.

They use it in the absence of something better. But if you *have* something better, it trumps the degree immediately. Companies (especially HR departments) aren't always super creative. Sometimes you have to be to open their eyes. Can you provide information that signals your value better than a degree?

I hope so. Because even if you have one, you won't get a job because of it. You'll get the job based on other things that are more valuable. Which leads to the question, why get the degree at all? Once you have those first few awesome jobs on your resume, no one asks about your high school GPA. Similarly, once you have those first few awesome projects or experiences, no one cares about your degree. You're better off skipping it altogether to build the valuable stuff sooner and save some serious dough.

Companies don't require degrees, they require information. With a little creativity and hustle, you can provide better info in better ways. Oh, and as a general rule, the more interesting the company, the less they care about degrees.

If a college degree is the most interesting thing about you, you're boring

Truly. Look around the average college classroom. I'll give you a minute to wait for a few students to pull their hungover heads up from their desks...

Take it in. Now remember, what you're buying is a piece of paper that says, "I'm probably no worse than these people." Pretty thin calling card.

A lot of students agree with this, and say stuff like, "College sucks and the degree won't get me a job, but I'm making it valuable by working and networking on my own and doing a bunch of side projects." That's great, and necessary. But then why are you still paying tuition? It's only slowing you from the valuable stuff and instilling bad habits that actually make you less valuable in the real world. (Why do you think professors are so scared of free-markets?)

Get busy building a track record of skills and experiences that make your degree status the least interesting thing about you.

College is a better value for dumb, lazy people

I told you already, I'm not passing judgement, I'm stating facts. This one is just economics.

Some edumacation types agree that college is over-hyped. But they say it's got too many dumb, lazy people, and only the bright, ambitious ones should attend. From a cost-benefit standpoint, they have it precisely backwards.

Smart, hard-working people can quickly and easily create a more powerful signal than a college degree to demonstrate their value in the marketplace.

Remember, the degree screams, “I’m about the same as other degree holders.” If you’re better, you need better information than a degree to show it.

But for those without a lot of gumption or sense, a degree is a less-bad investment. Sure, they too can probably find better, cheaper ways to tell the world they’re “meh”, but a degree at least upsells them. If you are below average, a piece of paper that tells the world you’re probably average is an upgrade. You’ve met people like this. HR managers realized too late that their degree was the most impressive thing about them. Oops.

Bottom line, if you’re sharp and have half an ounce of hustle, a degree is a bad investment compared to your other options. But if you’re so lazy and uncreative that you’re incapable of building a better signal, buying the “I’m average” paper actually raises your perceived value.

You’d better hope that’s not you, or you’re gonna have a bad time, degree or not.

But I waited and worked my whole life for this!

(Well, my parents did anyway.)

I’m sorry to be the bearer of such good news, but whether you (or your parents) like it, a college degree isn’t that impressive.

I know, this is very hard to hear for parents who made every sacrifice for their kid to go to college. Maybe they couldn’t afford to, so they committed to busting hump so someday their own children could. For them, college is the apex of parenting success. I’ve heard parents praise their loser, live-in, jobless-but-degreed kid while bashing their business-owning, happy,

successful dropout kid. They became so focused on college as the shorthand for happiness that they don't even hear when you say it's crushing your soul, or that you'd do better without it.

I admire parents' drive for their kids well-being. I get the pressure for prestige. I'm not judging. But factually, it won't do much for them.

I'm not talking about the future, I'm talking about right now

This isn't some far-flung, soon-to-be, if the AI and the internets and the drones and the 3D printers do the exponential thing prediction. This is today. It's already here. College is dead (here I am saying it on a TED talk-like stage, so you know it must be true).

People think the past informs us about the present, but the future is a better source. The day the automobile became commercially viable, the buggy whip industry died. It wasn't going to die, it was already dead. Most people just didn't know it for a while.

The underlying value of the college product (the information signaled by a degree) has been supplanted by something better, available now to any who want it. The entire business model of college is screwed. Any old non-sheepskin holder can now demonstrate their ability, prove their value, vouch for themselves, and create opportunities. Hard times for the Ivory Tower.

The coolest part is that the something better that's supplanted the degree isn't locked behind any door. The something better is you. You are your own credential. Your knowledge, network, skill, experience, confidence, and ability to show how they can help others are your calling card.

This is an important point. It's not some trendy new college or online degree. It's a new mindset, put into action by you, leaving behind a digital footprint that speaks louder than any piece of stamped paper.

Look, I'm telling you this as a friend. My college degree is worthless too. Are you going to mope about it, or are you going to go build something better?

Hold up! A few objections...

You said it's me, not some new program, but didn't you start a program?"

Yep. My company Praxis is not selling our credential, but helping you, if you're ready, to dominate the world where you don't buy a credential, *you are* the credential. We're awakening the world to the possibilities that exist today, helping you deschool your mind, build a valuable signal, and apprentice at awesome companies to get your hands dirty now, not after passing some test.

Wait a minute, are you trying to sell me something?"

Damn right! I'm openly selling you this idea and mindset, and I'm letting you know if you agree and think Praxis could help you take advantage of it, check us out. If I'm right and we're useful to you, we'll make a profit. If I'm wrong and we create no value, we won't. Or heck, just follow the Praxis blog for free and get busy adopting the mindset.

(Professors are the ones who commonly lob the above objection. Because, you know, they don't make any money off of the dominant narrative that college is above cost-benefit examination and everyone must go...)

But the value of the college experience is intangible!"

So. This is a post about degrees. I met my wife on a campus, but guess what? After I flirtily said “Hi”, she didn’t ask, “Are you current on tuition payments?”. You can have every single element of the college experience—including sitting in classrooms—without registering or paying a dime in tuition. No one does, because they’re there for the paper, not the “intangibles”. You want the parties? Move to a college town. You want a cool career? Do some real work.