

It's Not for Them, It's for You

Someone asked me if they should still bust their butt and go beyond the call of duty at their job. It was their last week and they were never going to work with these people or in this industry again. What's the point?

I told them I thought they had it backwards. You don't go above and beyond to invest in the people around you, hoping it brings a return. You go above and beyond to invest in yourself, knowing it will.

Boogie Cousins got picked up by the Golden State Warriors on a one-year deal at a bargain price. He'd suffered a bad injury, so this was his year to rehab and show the market he's still got value. It's pretty clear he won't be back at Golden State after this year, and nobody expected he would be going in. Boogie missed half the regular season rehabbing, then got injured again and is currently sitting out in the playoffs. His future depends entirely on his body getting healthy and his ability to prove it on the court. It would be easy for him to check out on the team and focus on his individual future. He gave them the minutes they expected and played well.

But instead, he's cheerleading, he's hyping, he's standing by his team and fully engaging in the huddle, locker room, and off the court. He's being a great teammate. The business return to him for this is negligible. But you can see the difference in a guy who takes personal pride in making a team better, whether he's on the court or not, and one who checks out. They do better. They have more fun. He's investing in himself.

When you join a company, team, or project, you don't owe them anything but the minimum you agreed to. But you owe yourself the best investment of your time and energy. Building social capital isn't just about returns from others. It's also about returns from within.

Try busting butt and being the best person in the world to work with. Then tell me you don't feel more awesome, confident, and content. Tell me you gain more from doing the minimum. I won't believe you because I know it's not true.

Don't go out of your way to help others out of altruism. There's never enough of that to muster. Do it as an investment in your own personal pride and self-respect.

Some people think they're getting ripped off if they do more work than required. I think you're ripping yourself off if you don't.