

Work on Your Dreams as If You're Awake

"What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him? Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone." -James 2:14,17

Think about that one thing you want to do for a living.

Now imagine running into someone who has all the power, connections, and resources to put you in the position you've always wanted to be in overnight. Imagine telling them about your passion and how much you long to make a career out of it. After listening to you pour your heart out with great conviction, they casually ask "Can you email me a link where I can see some of your work?"

How do you feel at this moment? Are you delighted by the opportunity to share your github profile or your YouTube channel? Are you nervous about what they'll think of your blog? Or are you stumped because you have nothing to show?

The world is filled with people who dream of a day when they'll be able to do a particular thing full-time, but there's a common problem that plagues many of those who fall in this category: apart from what they say or put on their resume, their talent is a secret. They say they love to write, but you can't find anything they've written anywhere. They say they love to act, but you can't find footage of them anywhere. They say they love to speak or do comedy or review music or whatever, but there's no way to sample their skills.

Why is this a problem? Well for starters, it places other people in the position of having to take your word for it when it comes to what you say they can do. And as nice as it would be if everyone did that, it's a big risk for people especially in a market where your competitors can offer shareable examples of their work. When you can say to potential clients or supporters "Hey look, here's some stuff I've already created," it gives them a low cost opportunity to preview you before they pay you.

More importantly, when you have a portfolio to show, it demonstrates character. It shows that you are the kind of person who's creative enough, ambitious enough, and persistent enough to find a way to do your work in less than ideal conditions. If you're thinking about putting your reputation on the line by recommending someone for a job, would you rather refer the person who seems like the type that gets things done no matter what or the type of person who only works well when they're getting paid?

It takes talent to do something for a living, but it also takes work ethic. And before people feel motivated to pay you to do something, they look for evidence that you're willing to work and capable of working.

Your body of work speaks louder than your resume on any day of the week.

If you want to get paid for something, do it like you're getting paid before someone writes you a check. If you want to do something for a living, find a way to live what you do even if your circumstances make it difficult.

"But what if I do it poorly?" If a job is what you're looking for, nothing fits the description of "doing it poorly" better than not exercising the initiative and courage to do anything at all.

Opportunity doesn't respond to what you say, it reacts to what you show. The world won't crave your talents because of what you wish for. It will only demand your gifts when it sees what you're willing to work for.

If you want the pleasure and privilege of doing what makes you come alive, start working on those things as if you're actually alive.