

From: Self Reinvention
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To: Haley, Nikki
Cc:
Subject: Recently released from prison? You need a break !

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Inspiring the people with the problem to become their own Solution

Recently released from Prison?

You don't need a Job,

You Need a Break!

You're released from prison. Now you need to find a job. In reality, you don't need a job – you need a break.

As I have mentioned in previous Sextant articles, your success at landing employment will largely depend upon you being an open book with no hidden agendas.

Now, how do we create this, no hidden agenda - open book persona? I actually stumbled on it by accident. Let me share my personal experiences.

After I was released on August 7 1980, I spent a solid month canvassing office and industrial parks looking for work - any work.

I was driving along a back access road through Cleveland Hopkins Airport and noticed a row of small airplanes. It was a flight school. I had a curiosity for airplanes, and there was this faint possibility (*fantasy*) that I might go to school for aviation based upon an interview I had with a counselor.

I had all but completely dismissed attending college toward an aviation career as even a realistic possibility. Nevertheless, I stopped, parked my car and started walking around looking at the little Cessna 152's. Admittedly, I also stopped because I was feeling a little beaten up that particular day with the extreme heat and several bombed interviews.

I paid little attention to a maintenance man who was mowing the grass. I figured he would eventually come over and kick me off the premises, but until he did, I just kept looking at all of the airplanes.

Sure enough, I noticed the maintenance guy was mowing a path straight in my direction, and when he was within five feet of me, the engine stopped. He hopped off the lawn tractor and walked up to me, looking like he just crawled out of a 110-degree grease pit full of grass - the sweat pouring off of him.

Unexpectedly, he greeted me with a broad smile and an enthusiastic, "Hi, how are you! Are you a pilot?" I just laughed and said, "I wish!" "Well, this place is a flight school," he said. "If you want to learn, they can teach you."

He reached out his hand and introduced himself, "I'm John Kovach." I shook hands and said, "Hi John, I'm Dave Koch." His voice was pleasant, he was easy-going, and for some reason, he just seemed like he was genuinely interested in me.

"Are you interested in learning how to fly?" John asked. I said, "Well, I have a few limitations." "Like what," he asked. "Well, money for one - it's pretty thin right now," I responded. He rubbed his chin for a few seconds in thought and said, "There are all kinds of student loans and grants, and other programs that can help pay for training, so that can be taken care of."

There must have been something in my demeanor, a look on my face, something that he noticed - that my limitations weren't just about the money. He asked, "What else is holding you back?" I just responded with a shrug of my shoulders and said, "I just don't think my future includes getting a pilot's license."

This man of probably sixty-plus years must have felt something in his gut. He put his hand on my shoulder and in a warm personal tone that felt like it was coming from God, he said, "Tell me your story son - maybe I can help."

We walked over to a couple of chairs that were placed in front of one of the hangers. John went inside and came out with a couple bottles of soda. As he handed me a soda, he said in a really gentle tone, "Tell me your story son."

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John sat and just looked at me - totally silent - smiling and not at all intimidating. As I sat there, sipping the cold soda, I looked in his eyes. His expression was one that made me feel like no matter what I said, he wouldn't pass judgment.

'What the hell,' I thought. I'll probably never see this guy again for the rest of my life. There's no loss in telling him and besides, he just bought me a soda that I couldn't afford to buy myself.

I looked at him and said, "I don't think they give pilot licenses to guys who just got out of the can." His eyes smiled almost as though he knew what I needed to tell him. "Prison or just county jail," he asked. "Oh, it was the real McCoy," I replied, "Both federal and state."

John rubbed his chin for probably a minute as he thought. Then he said, "I don't think that would pose any limitations. I'm pretty familiar with the Federal Aviation Regulations and I cannot think of any that would prevent you from pursuing an aviation career." Then he asked, "What did you do?"

Since I wasn't interviewing for a job, I didn't dance around the question. I just gave him *the full report*. No face down cards - no hidden agendas - I just laid it out and spilled my guts. He listened intently. I saw real and deep concern in his eyes as he listened and rubbed his chin the entire time.

After I finished, John asked, "So, what are you doing now?" I explained that I had been looking for work - a job - any job. "Any luck?" he asked. I just shook my head, no. "So, you're available to work," he asked. "Definitely," I replied.

John looked at me and smiled and asked, "Do you think you could cut the grass?" I shook my head and said, "Sure!" Inside, my first thoughts were, 'geezzz, a job cutting grass? Is this my destiny?'

As for getting a pilots license, I thought that was a pretty far-fetched assertion. But, a job and income sounded good, even if it wasn't the greatest job in the world.

John went on asking, "How about keeping the hangers clean, scrubbing the hanger floors, washing the airplanes, fueling airplanes and keeping the offices clean?" The whole time John was posing these questions, I just kept shaking my head and replying, "Yes, sure,

yes, sure."

John took the last swig from his soda and said, "Good, when can you start?" I was silent for a few seconds and just stared at him. Then I said, "Well, I appreciate that sir, but I wouldn't want to take your job from you." He just smiled and said, "Oh, that's okay, I have plenty of other things to keep me busy."

A little puzzled, I gestured and asked, "Like what?" He calmly replied, "Oh, I'm the president of this company, I own this flight school, and I'm a FAA Examiner." If you're serious about wanting to get your pilot's license, I can help you with that too."

As he was walking away, he looked back at me, smiled and winked, and said, "I know this might not be your dream job, but look at the bright side of it - you're starting out with presidential duties (*pointing toward the lawnmower that he, the president, had been riding most of the morning*). I'll see you next Monday at 8:00 AM sharp."

It turns out that John was also a retired Cleveland Police Officer having served a couple of decades on the force. The flight school was his second passion and career. Perhaps this accounted for his perception that my issue was more than just money.

Looking at this guy, you wouldn't think he had two nickels to rub together. To abbreviate the story, he hired me, and he and his wife helped me with securing some student loans and grants, along with another individual I will discuss later.

I cut the grass, I washed the airplanes, I cleaned the hangers, I pumped fuel, and I learned to fly. This was the beginning of a rewarding career as a captain flying some of the finest corporate jets on the planet.

Think about why the president of that flight school was cutting the grass, cleaning the hangers, washing airplanes and fueling airplanes. It is because those were jobs that needed to be done, but they were jobs that no one else wanted. *Be willing to take that job that no one else wants.* It can lead to great things...

Although this first job may not have been my ideal career choice, I took pride in my work. I never missed a day of work, I was never late, I was responsible and I was accountable.

When I washed an airplane, it looked like it just rolled off the factory floor. I even took the time to clean the instrument faces with Q-Tips. The flight instructors and the customers frequently commented on what a great job I was doing and how good the fleet of training aircraft looked. I took the same time and pride when I cleaned the hangers.

My meticulous work habits paid off. The day I took my FAA flight check ride and received my flight instructor's certificate, the Boss congratulated me and said, "Wear a shirt and tie to work tomorrow. Tomorrow, you're a flight instructor."

I took pride in my work, no matter what the work was, and it eventually led to