

**April 30, 2018**  
**By Robert J. Tamasy**

## WHO CARES WHERE YOU WENT TO SCHOOL?

“What kind of work do you do?” This is a question we typically ask someone we have just met, maybe during a business trip or in a coffee shop. It’s a way of getting acquainted. People also ask, “Where did you go to school?” or, “What college did you attend?” Sometimes those questions come up during a job interview. They may provide interesting information, but are not always relevant to job competency.

Before starting my career, I enrolled in a major university’s school of journalism. I earned bachelor and master’s degrees in journalism, but learned more about writing and editing in my first few months as a newspaper editor than I had the entire five years I was in college. Most of the theoretical knowledge I accumulated in school had no practical application for my day-to-day work responsibilities.

As Seth Godin, an author, entrepreneur and blogger, observed, “The campus you spent four years on 30 years ago makes very little contribution to the job you are going to do. Here is what matters: The way you approach your work. What have you built? What have you led? How do you make decisions?... How do you act when no one is looking? You are not your resume. You are the trail you have left behind, the people you have influenced, the work you have done.”

There is much wisdom in what Godin says. Having an MBA from a prominent business college or degree from a prestigious university sounds impressive, but neither addresses the inner qualities needed for a high-quality staff member or leader. We want to know someone’s track record: What they

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accomplished and what experience they have, particularly as it relates to the job they are seeking.

Even more important than what we have done, I think, are how we approach our work and how we behave when no one is looking. The Bible's book of Proverbs has much to say about this:

**Approaching our work with a high level of dedication.** The surest way to build a successful career, or to advance a company's goals, is to work with diligence and determination, responding to opportunities when they present themselves. *"Lazy hands make a man poor, but diligent hands bring wealth. He who gathers crops in summer is a wise son, but he who sleeps during harvest is a disgraceful son" (Proverbs 10:4-5).*

**Working with excellence and effectiveness.** A person who strives to achieve the highest level of quality is rare in society today. Since many people seem satisfied with mediocrity, skilled workers that take pride in what they are asked to do tend to be noticed. *"Do you see a man skilled in his work? He will serve before kings; he will not serve before obscure men" (Proverbs 22:29).*

**Putting a priority on honesty.** Sometimes it seems tempting to misrepresent vital information to gain a sale or win a contract, but as we often read in the headlines or hear in the daily news reports, dishonest practices eventually are exposed and consequences paid. *"Truthful lips endure forever, but a lying tongue lasts only a moment" (Proverbs 12:19). "Differing weights and differing measures – the Lord detests them both" (Proverbs 20:10).*

**Becoming known for commitment to integrity.** Another form of temptation is to behave differently when we think no one is looking, compared to when we know our actions are under scrutiny. A person of integrity, however, is one whose public and private behavior remain constant. *"The man of integrity walks securely, but he who takes crooked paths will be found out" (Proverbs 10:9).*

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*“The integrity of the upright guides them, but the unfaithful are destroyed by their duplicity” (Proverbs 11:3).*

© 2018. Robert J. Tamasy has written *Business at Its Best: Timeless Wisdom from Proverbs for Today's Workplace; Tufting Legacies*; coauthored with David A. Stoddard, *The Heart of Mentoring*, and edited numerous other books, including *Advancing Through Adversity* by Mike Landry. Bob's website is [www.bobtamasy-readywriterink.com](http://www.bobtamasy-readywriterink.com), and his biweekly blog is: [www.bobtamasy.blogspot.com](http://www.bobtamasy.blogspot.com).

## Reflection/Discussion Question

1. When you initially meet someone, especially within a business or work context, do you ask about the kind of work they do, or where they received their college education? What level of importance do you put on that information?
2. In your view, what are the most important factors that should be considered for evaluating whether a person is qualified for a new job, or for greater responsibilities?
3. How would you describe someone that consistently works with diligence and/or with excellence?
4. Do you agree that honesty and integrity are important qualities for excelling in the workplace? Why or why not? From your observation, how common are these traits today - and are they valued?

## NOTE:

If you have a Bible and would like to read more about this subject, consider the following passages:

*Psalm 25:21; Titus 2:7-8; Proverbs 12:11, 12:24,27, 13:4,6, 14:5, 15:9, 20:14, 21:5, 29:10*

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