



Why Technologists Should Work For Themselves

Mark Beckner

You have the opportunity to make a million dollars a year.

You have the chance to live a more significant life, one which you largely control, and one which allows you to give back to the world and be of value to those around you.

You can determine how your time is spent, how much will be invested in work, and how much in personal pursuits.

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In order to achieve levels of professional success that will challenge you and force you to live at your higher potential, you must take the following steps:

1. **Become independent** in your business. Establish yourself as a structured business entity, and build a framework that will support growth and success.
2. **Be disciplined** in your focus, ethical in your work and communications, and participate actively in all aspects of business, including advertising, marketing, sales, and delivery.
3. **Be creative** in the way you charge for your services and in how you engage with clients. Don't work with every client in the same model, especially not in the traditional and highly outdated hourly engagement method.
4. **Set concrete goals**, think strategically, and use your money and resources to build up yourself, your business, and those around you. Be very liberal and selfless with your money.

Taking these actions within the opportunity-laden environment of the technical industry will ensure that you have a vehicle with which to attain great levels of success. You can achieve your professional aspirations, and in turn support your private dreams and plans.

You will be in control and will be driving the car; only you can steer yourself away from success.

The Opportunity Rich Tech Industry

There are freedoms and opportunities in the technical industry that are not as readily available in other trades and professions. These freedoms and opportunities are left largely untapped by the millions employed in this industry. What are these freedoms? What are these opportunities? The following is a short list of these—they are available to any skilled technologist that has interest, enthusiasm, and drive. What was once available only to the wealthy elite is now available to the common laborer in the technical fields.

1. Instead of making a fixed salary on a yearly basis in a comfortable employed position, you can make substantial amounts of money working largely on your own terms.
2. Rather than working late into the night and on weekends at the command of a boss, you can dictate the terms and conditions of your working schedule.
3. Instead of traveling on a weekly basis to be onsite with clients, you can work from anywhere in a remote capacity.
4. You can create a business that can make valuable contributions to the organizations that you work with, and at the same time support your pursuit of personal goals and ambitions.

Programmers, developers, solution architects, and technical consultants—all of you have the basic skills necessary to become highly successful outside the confines of traditional employment. You will have to take on the activities of a businessperson, but this is easier than it may seem; it is a natural progression from where you are today, and one which will pay immense dividends.

The Importance of Being Professionally Independent and in Business for Yourself

As long as you are engaging in a technical profession, and you are spending time in front of a computer in the pursuit of a living, you should be working to maximize your output and increase your income. If you can spend eight hours in front of your computer and make a few hundred dollars, or you can sit for the same eight hours and make thousands, which would you choose? What is a more appropriate use of your time?

In order to maximize your efficiency and ensure that the time you spend in your office is used to make the highest income possible, you cannot work for an employer—you must go out on your own and create something new.

You cannot become wealthy and independent working for someone else.

How many people have sold their freedom and happiness for a salaried position with benefits? How many have traded time with their families for late nights and weekends at work doing deployments that could have been done during business hours? How many have traded their dreams for a paycheck? Unfortunately, the numbers are high. Fortunately, you don't have to live like this.

As a technologist, you don't have to follow this pattern. Not only do you not have to, it is your responsibility not to. The field is open for you to play a new game, one which allows for your own growth and success, and in turn the growth and success of those around you. You can be in business in order to make enough money to create a life for yourself that allows you to contribute something meaningful to the world while you are here.

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How to Make a Million as a Developer

How can you make significantly more money than the highest paid salaried developers?

How can you create a thriving business hundreds of miles from the nearest big city?

The first steps are very tangible and pragmatic. Alter your way of thinking about business and engage in the following key activities.

1. **Deliver at your highest capacity within the confines of the environment you find yourself.** Many people strive for perfection, and thereby limit their ability to produce. Producing for many different clients at a slightly above average level is far superior to producing for a single client (an employer) at any level of quality. An artist's work is most valuable when it is viewed by the most people. Your work is most valuable when accessible to as many clients as possible. This means you must enable yourself to work on multiple projects at the same time. You must master the ability to multitask, to make forward progress on many things at once. Strive for perfection in delivering above average work for many clients in parallel, and you will have a working environment that is highly efficient and valuable to you and your clients.

2. **Communicate promptly and professionally.** Never leave an email unanswered or a phone call unreturned. The more quickly you respond, the more valuable you are to your clients. Think of your clients as people, like *you* would want to be treated. If someone listens to you, and responds to you, and lets you know what they are doing and what they plan to do, what it will cost, and how long it will take, and then sticks to it becomes someone you trust. A person you trust you will keep close, and will continue to turn to on a long term basis. Intelligent, prompt communications will create client relationships that will last for many years.
3. **Do not compete, instead collaborate.** View everyone in the business of technology as a potential partner. No one is taking work away from you, or can take work from you. Together, you can make opportunities that wouldn't be there without the two (or more) of you working in partnership. Partnerships are your key to work. These are the people and companies engaging in the same business as you. View people and companies in your industry as your primary avenue to paid work and engagements. As an independent businessperson, you cannot afford to view anyone as competition.
4. **Market and Sell your services.** One of the most difficult activities for many in the technical industry (especially coders) is to move into a role of marketing and selling themselves. This is based on an incorrect idea of what it means to sell and engage in similar business building activities. It does not mean becoming someone that you are not. It does not mean cold

calling corporations or engaging in sales talk. What it does mean is ensuring that you are relevant to the industry and to others (through skill acquisition, publishing, and sharing your knowledge), that you are actively talking with people in your network (friends, colleagues, previous clients, current clients), and that you are available to work on a variety of project types (go wherever the market leads you).

5. **Price yourself competitively and be creative.** You are in business to help others and make a great income. Don't price yourself out of work, or be concerned with the exact dollar amount you are going to charge. Many developers end up charging high hourly rates (due primarily to ego) and find that they only have one or two engagements at a time, often with lengthy periods of downtime between projects. Your goal is to be actively engaged on as many projects at the same time as possible. In general, you need to work in retainer or fixed hourly models. Come up with a price and an engagement model that is of high value to your client and leads to a long-term relationship. A \$3,500 a month retainer that lasts for three years is worth far more to you than a three month, \$150 an hour project. The retainer is also easier to sell, gives more value to the client, and leads to a longer term, higher quality relationship.

6. **Learn from others who are further up the ladder from you.** Reach out to people in the profession who are where you want to be professionally. In the past, apprenticeships were the norm. Consider an apprenticeship or mentorship. There is a certain amount of magic that can happen when you work with someone else in the pursuit of something specific. There are few things that will have as immediate and transformative an effect on your business as engaging with a mentor.

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While business activities such as these are essential to the strength and success of your independent practice, you will never achieve what is truly possible in your professional life or your income level without two additional key activities. The first is a combination of goal setting and strategic thinking, and the second is a commitment to giving and investing generously.

The Critical Nature of Goal Setting and Strategic Thinking

You can achieve very little if you don't have specific goals identified. You can achieve even less if you don't take time to think about what you are after, how you will get there, and what you will do once you are where you want to be. The importance of goal setting and strategic thinking is so critical to your success that it should be your primary concern on a daily basis. It is of higher priority than the immediate tasks at hand.

In order to set goals, step outside. Put distractions behind you. Go into the mountains or the desert, away from people, news, email, music, and anything else. Seek silence and listen. Look for what you are really after in this life. Write these goals, dreams, and ideas down. Keep things simple, but aim high. The higher your goals, the more unrealistic your dreams, the more valuable they are to you, and the more likely new opportunities will unfold in your professional life to support them.

Don't underestimate the importance of goal setting. This is without doubt the most important thing you can do to grow your independent business. Your personal goals will drive the success or failure of your business.

The success of your independent business has more to do with your thoughts and your actions than it does with any specific business generating work you might do. Instead of attending a

conference in search of work, donate \$20,000 to a charity. Rather than stressing about not having enough work, take a three week road trip with your family and visit every client you've worked with. Take people out to dinner, find out what they are doing with their lives, see if there is anything you can offer them. Approach life with abundance, and pursue friendships and partnerships. Think about what you want, and always focus on the big picture, never specifically on money or material items. You will have more work than you will know what to do with.

“ View the money you make as a vehicle to improve the world, and to create a life that allows you to contribute. Use your money liberally, to grow and expand, to build and improve. The more you push yourself, the more you risk financially, the less attached you are to your income and to the numeric value of your wealth, the more likely you are to have abundance.

Create a Need and Give Generously

If you want to see your fortunes go from mediocre and average to beyond what seems realistic for the work that you do, then be generous in everything. View the money you make as a vehicle to improve the world, and to create a life that allows you to contribute. Use your money liberally, to grow and expand, to build and improve. The more you push yourself, the more you risk financially, the less attached you are to your income and to the numeric value of your wealth, the more likely you are to have abundance.

Money is created. It is not taken from someone else. It doesn't exist until someone does something to generate it. There is not a finite pile of money that all of us are consuming. The money largely doesn't exist until you do something to create it. Money is like electricity. There is no finite amount of electricity in the world. As more people require more electricity, more is generated. It doesn't deplete. It is an infinite resource. However, if no one needs it, then very little is created or available. The demand drives the supply, and it can never all be consumed because it doesn't exist until it is needed. Only the potential exists. When it comes to money, you are the potential for which it can come into existence.

Create a need for money, that isn't selfish and isn't negative, and money will come. If you are giving abundantly, abundance will come your way. Electricity flows when there is a need

for it. Money comes when a valid need can consume it. Buy a piece of land where you can build a home that will allow you to expand your views, your skills, your interests, and your contributions. Give a significant amount of money to a cause or charity of your choice. Invest in someone you believe in, because you want to see their success. Whatever you choose to do, there are only a few simple rules:

1. Contribute at a level that is beyond your comfort level, and beyond what you can afford today. Don't take the advice of financial gurus. Push yourself dramatically in order to see dramatic changes.
2. If you give to a charitable organization, do it with the expectation that you will receive more in order to give more again the future.
3. If you give to an individual, never expect it to be returned directly, even if there is a promise on their part to pay you back. Give with the expectation that you will be repaid via completely unrelated channels.
4. Don't advertise what you have done. These things need to be done for your own reasons, and you don't need to let others know how you are using your resources.

As you take these financial steps, pushing beyond your immediate means, you will see new opportunities open up in your business that will support you. You have to trust the system, and take steps that will appear risky to anyone watching. Risk is what changes your life, and risk is what changes other's lives. No one had an impact on the world of any lasting nature that didn't risk something in order to make that impact.

Take Action Now

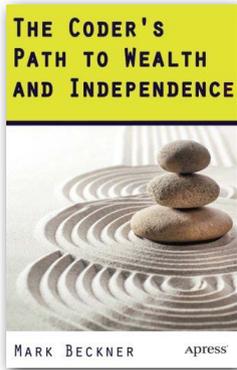
Seize the opportunities that are in front of you today; they may not be there tomorrow.

Don't fear risks—only by taking major risks (professionally, financially, personally) will you push yourself to your greatest potential and allow the doors of possibility to open around you.

Set your goals high, invest in your dreams, support causes you feel passionate about, and go in a new direction.

Technologists of the world, strive for professional independence, attain wealth, be healthy, give generously, and pursue a more meaningful and impactful life! 📌

Info



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ABOUT THE AUTHOR | Mark Beckner is a technical consultant specializing in business strategy and enterprise application integration. In addition to running his own firm, [Inotek Consulting Group, LLC](#), he advises developers on how to launch their own independent practices. His newest book, *The Coder's Path to Wealth and Independence*, offers coders a prescriptive guide to leaving the corporate world and launching independent, successful, and fulfilling careers. For more information, you can contact Mark directly at mbeckner@inotekgroup.com.

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