

Rich Bastard

“Independence? That’s middle class blasphemy. We are all dependent on one another, every soul of us on earth.” George Bernard Shaw

I’m not one to brag, but you should know that I’m filthy rich. By some estimations, I’m the richest man in the world. I usually don’t tell people this because they might think I’m big headed. Nevertheless, sometimes it’s a good idea to share my list of possessions and talk about how many people I have working for me, sort of as my way to inspire you to be rich yourself. So as I’m going through this list, it’s not my intention to make you feel bad; I just want to share with you my secret to great wealth.

Let me start by telling you about the things in my bedroom. The bed I sleep on is made from a special foam that NASA scientists spent years in the lab creating for me. I didn’t necessarily direct them to work on it, but as you’ll see, I don’t really have to do much to get people to work for me. The sheets that cover my NASA-invented foam bed are made of cotton grown and harvested by several hundred of my farmers in Egypt. Possibly thousands of Chinese people labored so that I might have soft, comfortable blankets to cover myself as I lie on my space-age foam mattress. And get this: I paid each of these folks much less than a dollar. Probably pennies or less—if any of the money got to them at all.

When I wake up in the morning, I walk into my kitchen and am assaulted with the work of my people, probably a hundred million of them if all is told. I open a refrigerator that is comprised of metals, plastics, electrical equipment...hundreds of parts. All of those parts were designed, mined, and built by various groups of people, and it took hundreds if not thousands of others to put them together and deliver the fridge to me just to keep my favorite foods nice and fresh until I’m ready to eat them. In that refrigerator, I see fruits, vegetables, eggs and meats that were all grown on my various farms around the world. I make an effort to employ people closer to my home town, but I can’t always do that. The food was packaged by my packing companies, hauled to my local stores by truckers who work for one of my shipping companies. The list goes on. I use a toaster that is the result of thousands of people, from the person who invented it, to the bank that financed it, to the company that made it, to the store that sold it to me. Quite a bargain for the twenty bucks I paid for it.

After breakfast, I hop on a computer that is the result of a combined effort of literally millions of people who have worked for me for several generations. I read the news that my reporters write, I look at pictures that my photographers take, and I do a little work of my own. When I need to know something for my work, at my fingertips, I have the ideas, thoughts, opinions, and advice of possibly a billion people, all via the Internet. (No. I don’t own the Internet, silly.) Whatever advice I need or question I have, I can log on and find the answer, most of the time. If I can’t find it, I call my librarians to help me out. Can you believe I have people who studied library science for four years working for me? I get a lot of benefit from their years of study, and I pay them close to nothing!

Sometimes, it seems I don't pay them anything at all. I just say "Thank you," and they're happy. Weird, I know, but sometimes, a kind word can be a nice payoff.

After working on the computer for a while, I begin to feel hungry. So I reach for some snacks that my people made for me. Now, really there is an endless selection of snacks to choose from, but the one I reach for most often is chocolate. You'd think the richest man in the world would love caviar or something more expensive, but good old chocolate is my favorite. And I'm not a chocolate snob. Some people turn their noses up at milk chocolate, but I don't. I can eat Hershey's just as well as Godiva. Though I own the chocolate companies, I take a hands-off approach to management. I never visit them or make demands of the managers or workers, and it seems to work well. I always have delectable chocolates whenever I want them. Honestly, if I worked hard at micro-managing these factories, I doubt the chocolate would be any better. So I content myself to getting my chocolate in much the same way as you, at the grocery store.

After my snacks and a bit of a stroll, I watch a TV on which thousands of people are working hard to entertain me, enlighten me (a small percent of them unfortunately), and engage me. Mostly, they're trying to sell me something. One of the reasons I'm so rich is that I seldom buy what they are trying to sell me. Heck, what could the richest man in the world want with anything more?

So far, I haven't told you my really favorite items; I've only talked about what my people make or do for me, but the truth is that the things I like most in life are the natural ones. I've got a park not far from my house, a five-mile area of land where I can go biking or just sit on a beach and look out at the Puget Sound. It's all paid for. I make no monthly payments or pay any property taxes. A number of people work there to keep it clean for me, and I let others, including you, use it because that's the kind of person I am.

Giant old trees line the park, and it's odd to me to think that I, or any human for that matter, could ever actually own them. I can cut them down, and I can tear up the land, but I never really own it. My body will go back to it, not the other way around. No. I won't cut them down. I just sit sometimes and admire them. Aside from the trees, there is also a zoo in my park, and my very intelligent zookeepers work hard to maintain it for me. I agree to pay them one small price every time I go in to see the animals. I haven't told them this, but I think they're getting the short end of the stick.

After romping through my park and zoo, I get hungry again. So I take a turn back into town in my car—which also took millions of my people to design, build, test, and ship—on roads that thousands of others conspired to build. As I drive, a plethora of dining options greets me. Whichever of my restaurants I should choose, a whole platoon of my people have been up since dawn cleaning and cooking just so I'd have something good to eat. Sometimes I go to my hamburger joint, and other times I visit my noodle shop. My employees are all so humble and treat me with the greatest of respect, even though I barely pay them anything. I pay all of the people at the Pho Vietnamese noodle restaurant only about fourteen dollars a month. Really! Hard to believe I can get the work of so many people for just fourteen dollars a month, isn't it? It's probably also hard for you to

believe that I have the hard work of several billion people who are responsible for the security of my food supply, my air supply, my water supply, my health, and my family's health.

I know you're wondering where I get all of my money. "How come he's so rich?" I hear you asking. All of these billions of workers require only a very small fraction of my fortune as recompense. They are my people, and they work for me quite well without complaining for higher pay from me. I've had no complaints as a boss. In fact, I don't recall any one of them complaining directly to me or asking for a raise.

The trees do not ask me to do anything for them. The birds who dance outside of my window don't need me to clean their cages; I don't need to squeeze my heart to get it to beat, nor do I have to turn a rake to grow my own food. I don't have to get out and fix my own roads when I want to travel, or write my own music when I want to hear something beautiful, or write my own novel when I want to read. It's all there for me.

Indeed, maybe I am bragging, but on the salary of a community college instructor, I'm one rich bastard!