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## Jobs Are Not an End. They are a Means.

by Keith F. Luscher  
Author, *Prospect & Flourish*

Most of our parents, regardless of their pursuit or education, grew up counting on eventually landing jobs or beginning professions in one place and remaining there for twenty, thirty or even forty years. Today, we all know that's no longer the case.

This mind-set came out of the post World War II era, when American companies could afford to promise near-lifetime security for their workers. The same promise was true for those who entered the professions, when becoming a doctor, lawyer, or teacher meant lifelong security. Get a job. Keep it forever.

What an unrealistic expectation! Yet it was common back in the 1950s, when the United States, virtually the only industrial nation not ravished by World War II, was producing half of the world's goods and facing a time of glowing affluence. Those abnormal times in global competition are hailed as an era of great economic prosperity for our country.

Unfortunately, that era also set an unrealistic standard that people began to expect. Both American business and government, in the wake of growing global competition and reduced revenues, became less able to meet that standard.

But global competition and cyclical patterns are not the only reasons American companies adopt the strategy of downsizing both blue- and white-collar positions. Technological changes have changed the need for workers. Many professions such as law, medicine and education are dealing with changing needs due to a shrinking or graying population, as well as varied supplies of qualified practitioners.

Can we blame American business institutions or government? Personally, I don't think so, at least not entirely. After all, in the case of business, all exist to make a profit. That's why they hire employees. If there are no profits, there is no business, hence no jobs at all. And fewer jobs are better than no jobs.

In today's rhetoric, we so often hear about "job creation" to improve our nation's standard of living. This attitude completely misses the point.

Believe it or not, our quality of life does not get better with more jobs being created. A higher standard of living can only be accomplished when we create solutions to problems, and serve needs through projects and achievements of individuals, groups, institutions or businesses.

Building a road to nowhere merely to keep paid workers occupied is ridiculous. The questions to ask are, "Where should that road go?" or "Do we need a road at all? If not a road, just what do we need?"

We should decide on our needs first and look at jobs, by which we employ our nation's human resources, as a means to fulfilling those needs.

That is why jobs are not an end. They are a means.

Likewise, businesses exist to make money by selling a product or service and meeting community needs. Jobs—hence your employment—are simply by-products of this process.

Does that mean jobs are less important than profits? On an overall economic scale, of course not. One cannot exist without the other. In order for a business to have sales, it needs customers with the income to spend. Fewer people with jobs means fewer customers, so it really is a self-supportive cycle.

While I'm no expert in economics, I hope you have a general idea of where jobs stand in economics. Business managers, however, look at the bottom line—not how their decisions will affect the overall economy. They "buy" employees the way most of us ought to shop: by seeking the greatest value at the lowest cost.