



## Author reminds success seekers: Never Offer Your Comb to a Bald Man

By Desiree A. DiCorcia

Defy your natural instincts. Get what you want by giving others what they need.

Does this sound like the recipe for success you were taught?

Alexander J. Berardi, a renown personal development strategist and business guru, seeks to prove these tenants of success in his best-selling book, "Never Offer Your Comb To A Bald Man: How to Get What You Want by Giving Others What They Need."

Although the title may sound as bizarre as his formula success, Mr. Berardi said he's never been called normal. He is, however, one of the most highly sought after business gurus in the country, having already given over a thousand speeches over a ten-year period to standing-room-only crowds of business, healthcare and trade association leaders across America.

While most people are taught to follow their goal with reckless abandon, Mr. Berardi teaches, through inspirational stories and humorous anecdotes, the pragmatic principles of giving and serving as ways of attaining personal success and satisfaction.

In his book, Mr. Berardi provides examples of what he calls, "servant leaders." He explains these leaders are ultimately the most successful because they lead by serving the needs of others first.

Mr. Berardi discovered these principles through years of experience in the business world and years of research.

As a young businessman, Mr. Berardi explained his management method just worked, although he had "no idea why." Due to the financial success of his upstart business and his non-existent rate of employee turnover, his friends in the business world began to actively seek his advice in running their companies.

Responding to their needs, Mr. Berardi turned his very lucrative business over to his employees and began down the path of motivational speaking.

In addition to his demanding speaking tour, Mr. Berardi spent over seven years performing scientific research and conducting interviews, with people such as Microsoft President Bill Gates, to uncover what he calls "the universal truths" of success.

Mr. Berardi explained that during his interviews and research he looked for people who fit his profile of success. Through all of his interviews, he said his profile of success rang true.

In the book, he uses the interview to demonstrate how success is attained.

Mr. Berardi affectionately refers to humans as "want machines," who focus their energy on wanting what they cannot have.

In order to get what we want, he says, human beings must shed our innate selfishness and begin to focus on the needs of others.

"True and lasting success comes not from what we do for ourselves, but what we do for others. In every reported case, those who have achieved extraordinary success have done so by identifying and serving an unmet need of society," says Mr. Berardi.

This makes sense for both business and personal relationships, said Mr. Berardi, although he originally intended the book be used by businesspeople.

"It [the book] has taken on a life of its own. It has been fun to watch it grow," said Mr. Berardi. "The book was originally targeted for top leaders in business, health care, biomedicine, etc."

However, since the book was published, he has received calls from people saying the book has improved their marriages.

As research for the book, Mr. Berardi said he conducted "a study into success."

One of the breakthroughs for him was a Stanford University research study which showed 97 percent of people who set a goal failed to meet that goal.

Mr. Berardi explains that while financial, mental, physical, and spiritual components affect one's ability to reach a goal, he said an innate, biological drive for self-preservation holds humans back from reaching their true potential at nearly every turn.

Mr. Berardi cites research into survival of the fittest as an example. According to research, animal instincts make people genetically predisposed to self-preservation, or selfishness.

"We are built with an innate drive to survive... Unfortunately, it is precisely this biological predisposition toward selfish self-preservation that leads us away from living the lives and cultivating the businesses of our dreams, and attaining the personal heights that we are capable of," says Mr. Berardi.

He explains that by acting according to our instincts, humans limit their true potential.

"Only when we learned to transcend our natural instincts and look past our own selfishness can we catch a glimpse of the unmet needs of others, and that is where the real treasures of life are hidden, contends Mr. Berardi.

For example, he cites Bill Gate, a man who identified the needs of those using computers. Unlike most everyone else in the computer industry at that time, he was focusing on the needs of the user, not on the hardware.

On the other hand, he cites the historic rise and fall of the dot com industry as selfish business gone bad.

Mr. Berardi explains that early e-commerce wasn't so much geared to meeting the needs of the public, as it was to feed the selfish needs of its founders.

"That is why 90 percent of businesses that open today will fail," said Mr. Berardi of the selfish motivational factor.

He explains that most small business people think by doing something they love they will achieve success, but they forget to factor in the needs of others.

While Mr. Berardi does not think people should forsake doing what they love, he explains that there is more to it. That other factor is, "Will it serve a need that hasn't been met?"

"Once you've found that, you've found the motherload of opportunity," says Mr. Berardi.

So his advice is to find an unmet need in society and tap the resource. By doing that, he says, "you will have to transcend your natural instinct and learn to identify the needs of others."

But identifying the needs of others isn't always easy, he admits. In order to get there, he explains something he calls "counterintuitive reasoning," which means doing the exact opposite of what your instinct is telling you to do.

Through his vast collection of interviews, he says this logic holds true in each case.

In one story, a man being harangued by bill collectors after going bankrupt decides he will free himself from his debt by becoming, strangely enough, a bill collector.

"His odd-approach to an age-old problem totally revolutionized the world's 'second-oldest' professional and, in the process, made him one of the richest men in the country," he says.

Mr. Berardi explains that the ultimate goal is to become a "servant leader," which means to serve yourself by serving the needs of others.

A servant leader invests resources by making those around them stronger and independent.

"These alliances pay us back ten-fold for our efforts, enabling us to achieve the impossible with predictable regularity," said Mr. Berardi.

Mr. Berardi advises leaders to build alliances with those working for them to unleash their own "creativity and talents." The goal for the employer, he thinks, should be to create independent and strong employees.

For Mr. Berardi, his personal success did not come easy. At 19 years old, he was homeless in the streets of New York City, living out of his car, working three jobs, forced to eat out of garbage cans, while trying to chip away at his college degree.

Once out of school, he quickly attained success in the business world, and founded his own medical research company at the age of 26.

Mrs. Berardi says the book took seven years to write and countless hours of research and interviews went into the final product.

In the end, he says he "walked away from the project 1,000 times more of a believer in the capabilities and possibilities of human beings than ever before in his life."

Mr. Berardi is currently touring the country giving television and radio interviews to promote the book.