



ROAD SIGNS FOR SUCCESS[®]

Your Weekly Guide on the Road to Maximizing Your Potential • August 27, 2008

By Gerald Daniels

Labor Day has finally arrived. Some people mark it as the end of summer. Others see it as the last three-day holiday weekend of the year. No matter our view point, everyone can agree that Labor Day is one of our most anticipated holidays. It makes no difference if you are a blue collar worker who works outdoors or a white collar worker who works indoors — even the astronauts in outer space look forward to the big three day weekend. The first Monday in September is officially observed as Labor Day. “It is a creation of the labor movement and is dedicated to the social and economic achievements of American workers,” according to the U.S. Department of Labor. “It constitutes a yearly national tribute to the contributions workers have made to the strength, prosperity, and well-being of our country.”

America is strengthened each day by its labor force. From the military to the sanitation worker each person contributes to what makes our country strong. We all know of the slackers at work who don't pull their own weight, who constantly complain but somehow feel they deserve a raise. Let's overlook those people for a moment and focus on the workers who truly deserve a national holiday that honors their individual and collective contributions to business and industry. Let's also clear up the misconception that labor is a thing to be avoided or that laborer is a degrading word. Noah Webster best defines the word labor as physical or mental exertion and Mr. Webster knew a thing or two about physical and mental exertion. There is no reliable definition to be found that describes labor as a bad thing. One of our nation's greatest strengths has always been found in the American workers' limitless abilities and our can-do spirit.

America is a prosperous nation due in large part to our labor force. From the short order cook to the insurance agent, each worker contributes in their own way to the blessings we enjoy. In 1862 the first Labor Day parade was led with a banner that read: “LABOR CREATES ALL WEALTH.” If we can view our employment with a company as a service that creates our wealth and not just the company's wealth we are a lot more likely to prosper at what we do. I view the owner of the company I work for as a person who is working on behalf of the employees. Whether we are negotiating a contract, preparing a design, solving a human resource problem, or completing an installation, the work is completed by some form of labor.

America's well-being is directly connected to our labor force. From the ditch digger to the doctor, each worker contributes in their own unique way. The quality of life that we hold so near and dear has been criticized by some while being emulated by others. You may be the one who strives for excellence as you labor, while others around you settle for the status quo. You may feel like the unsung hero of your company. You may be a school teacher who sees things getting tougher year after year. You may be the business owner who toils over the books after hours to ensure your employees' future along with their families. This holiday is for you and for each and every person who labors, in whatever capacity your jobs require.

So, let's enjoy our extra family time over the holiday, maybe grill some burgers and hotdogs with all the trimmings, watch a parade or rodeo, or perhaps plan a trip to the lake. But let's not forget what Labor Day is about — celebrating the American worker and the values many of us still believe are the foundation of this country.