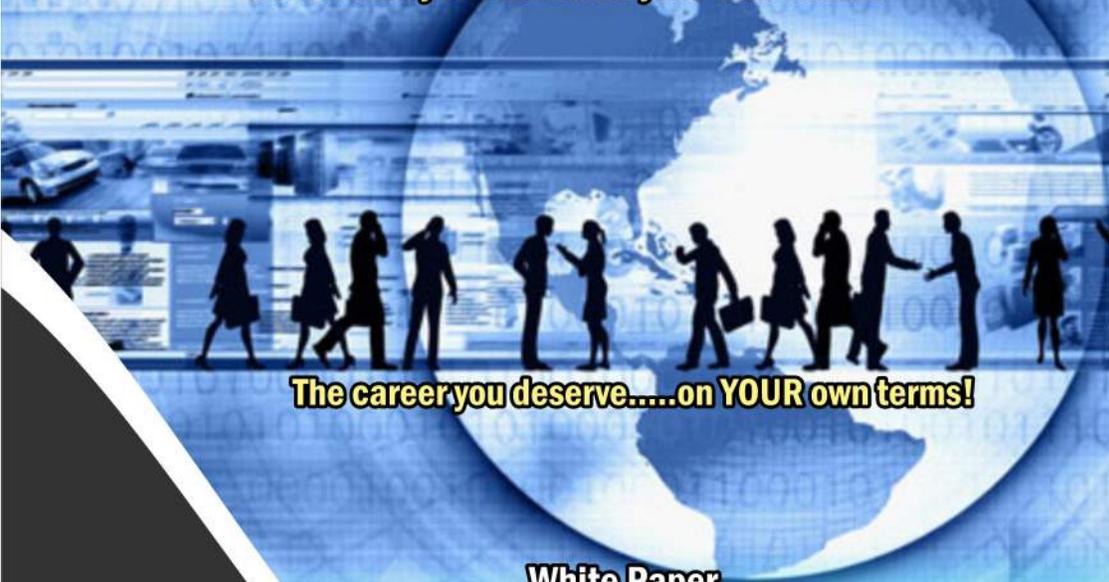




# College Alternatives

## Is it Better to Start a Business?

Discover why starting your own business could be the **BEST** strategy for college students, and how you can ensure your future on your own terms!



The career you deserve.....on **YOUR** own terms!

White Paper  
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## **College Alternatives-- Is it Better to Start a Business?**

Whether we're willing to admit it or not, there are thousands of people out there without college degrees and they are making money. Some of them are making very good money. How did they do that?

A great education—a college degree—or is there something else to consider? The answer might surprise you. Yes, college helps and a solid educational foundation can take you places, but is it always the answer? Maybe not.

We've been preaching it for years--college is the answer to everything. The question is, do we really believe it and is it really the case? If college--even with a smart major that you absolutely hate is the right answer for everyone, why do we have so many teachers and musicians and business majors employed at Walmart and fast food restaurants?

If college was the answer to the job woes of the world, we'd have lower unemployment, better opportunities and the alternatives that are out there wouldn't exist because there would be no reason for them.

Educational costs are rising. In an economy that is certainly not stable, the cost of a college degree continues to rise dramatically. Getting some kind of ROI out of your education today is necessary for everyone. The average student leaves college with about 25K debt. Those debts can't be easily repaid and in many cases the money that you put into college isn't money that you're going to recoup any time in the near future. Do you have alternatives?

## **Is There Value in Education?**

Absolutely there is value in education of every type. That does not mean that it has to be a college education. Everything that you can learn is going to add value to what you do. That means that those life lessons you've taken away from volunteer work and other things you've done may just be the answer to making a living.

That is not to say that a college education is valueless. We simply mean that there may be another way for you. The key is to be flexible enough to know when a college degree is not going to be workable for you. In many cases, you can get a solid education working on a job and you don't need that college degree.

College may not net you the career that you want and it may not be the right answer for all of our young people. Telling them that college is an assurance of a secure career path today just isn't the case.

## **How Did We Get the Idea that College Was Indispensable?**

Years ago a college education wasn't really promoted as much as it is today. In fact, the big deal back then was "graduate from high school or you will never get a job." Today we've merely replaced that with college.

Just as we moved past the requirement for a High School diploma and replaced it with a college degree, are we now moving past that phase to where real experience and real skill replaces the paper? Surprising, yes, it seems that as a society, we are.

Most high schools offer young people platitudes when it comes to college majors.

One high school student explained it best like this "Our teacher said that the people with the "smart" majors would be secure. What if the smart majors aren't the things that I'm interested in? Does that mean I have to work a lifetime at something I don't like to be secure? I'm pretty sure I don't want to do that." Smart kid. Most people don't want to spend their entire life doing something that they don't enjoy to assure they can make a living.

### **Are We Giving Our Kids the Best Advice?**

Many parents today—and by extension their children, believe there is no way to compete in a job market without a well-defined career path. In most cases, they believe that means a degree that leads them directly to that specific career. The problem is that those degrees are a great deal more common than they used to be. Once we see a plethora of a given thing, once the market is flooded with it, it's far harder to use it effectively.

With so many college graduates today it's far more difficult to differentiate yourself from another college graduate. The simple truth is that not every job requires a degree and a degree is no guarantee of a good job.

More than 40 percent of those who pursue a degree don't complete it in a timely way today. Of those, more than 40 percent are holding a job in a career field that has little if anything to do with their degree. Many graduates get a degree and find that they don't need it to get a good paying job in their field. What is far more telling is that in many cases those who did have a degree lost out on jobs to people who did not have one but had sound experience in their career field.

## **What are the Alternatives?**

Today, given the plethora of unemployed college graduates, starting your own business may be a very viable alternative for young people as well as those who have been displaced on jobs. If you've always been good at graphics for example and you can impress someone in the gaming circuit with your graphics, the odds are good that you're going to walk away with a job. Your experience and your skill will show and they count. In many cases they count more than a college degree.

In a regular 9-5 college degree required job, you may not get the credit that you deserve for the things that you know. The same isn't true of beginning a new business venture.

Youth and inexperience are not something that counts against you when it comes to beginning a new business venture. In fact, quite often it can be a huge bonus because you're seeing things very differently from the rest of the world. You know what customers are looking for and you know how to package it.

Here are a few examples of people who took their passion and turned it into a business that rocked the world:

Andrew Perlman, of GreatPoint. He left Washington University to begin Cignal Global Communications, an Internet communications company at just 19 years of age.

Anne Beiler, high school dropout was the co-founder of the multimillion dollar company, Auntie Anne's Pretzels.

Ashley Qualls, renowned for Whateverlife.com, dropped out of high school at 15 and by 17 was worth a million--literally.

Ben Kaufman, 21-year-old serial entrepreneur, founder of Kluster. Ben dropped out of college in his freshman year.

These are of course not ordinary, everyday examples, but there are others--a bit more modest probably, but still very worthwhile.

Many small businesses have been born from someone who knew and enjoyed a given hobby and parlayed that into a company. One good example of this is NeedAnArticle.com, a writing and content creation site. Not only does the owner not have a college degree, he doesn't have a high school diploma, yet he was experienced in marketing and in content creation for his own site and using that know how, began a small company that creates content for some of the largest sites on the internet.

Displaced workers today are getting on the bandwagon as well. Several people who lost their jobs when Cisco began layoffs on a grand scale took their knowledge of security and networking and turned it into a network security consultancy that allowed them to work from home rather than to seek out another office job.

### **Exploring the Options:**

There are even some major companies getting on the bandwagon to help to people start new businesses. They offer viable alternatives for people who do not want to go to college. One great example of this is Peter Thiel's "20 Under 20" Fellowship. In this arena, very bright and ambitious young people enter a

competition to bring new ideas to live. If they win they are given \$100,000 to skip college. They then focus on their work, research and self-education and are mentored by very successful entrepreneurs.

The internet has changed a great deal. There are no long as many barriers as there once were when it comes to starting a business. You can go global in an instant and you can offer your services to anyone, anywhere. You can start a business online for literally no outlay if you're beginning a service based business. It is easier to reach out to mentors, other entrepreneurs, and to approach and interact with potential clients. You'll find that if you start a business today even very young people have a high chance of success due to a whole new buyer viewpoint.

If you're not sure that college is right for you, then maybe you need to take a second look at what is available and at what you really enjoy most. It could be that you're not right for college and it isn't right for you. Explore your passions and what you know and love. If you're really serious about starting a new business, but you'd like to hedge your bets, give it a try and take your college classes at the same time.

You can start a business at any age and you can make a living at doing something you love. Knowing that, why settle for anything less?

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