

Written by Allan Besselink
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[!\[\]\(919a2cb85b99741a73c0c31a427236a8_img.jpg\)](https://www.flickr.com/photos/abesselink/52003406664) Everywhere I look, there are signs of normalcy returning to our world as we emerge from our pandemic existence. The word *normal* courses through my mind a lot these days. For many, this means simply returning to life as we knew it before the pandemic. However, after deep consideration, I've decided that I don't want to go back to normal. In retrospect, normal should have never been normal. We deserve so much more.

The Industrial Revolution went a long way to defining normal for us. Come to work, make more widgets, and do so in less time. Over time, we were led to believe that, well, that's just the way things are, and that's just the norm for work in the Industrial Revolution. Now, get back to the assembly line; it's not quitting time just yet.

The Information Age arrived, and we were told pretty much the same thing. Productivity. Think inside the box. Even though you have access to the world via the Internet, you really need to do so from your cubicle - because that's the way things are. Swipe out when you leave, please.

It became normal to put in a 50-hour work week at the office while getting paid for just 40. It became normal for wait staff to work for tips even though the whole point of tipping was supposed to be for exemplary service and not just survival. It became normal to follow the path of least resistance because, well, that's just normal.

Then we were hit with a pandemic. We had to find our way through the storm. As we found our sea legs, we realized that there might be some epiphanies to come from the experience. While many were initially forced to work remotely out of necessity, there was a discovery of the potential for work-life balance. Many challenges were faced during the pandemic, but it wasn't all bad. In fact, many good things came from the experience.

Now, we're faced with the reality of being in a post-pandemic world where the focus has moved to *returning to normal*. For example, Tesla demanded that employees cease working remotely and return to the office - or they would lose their jobs. Funny thing *there didn't* seem to be any complaints while remote workers helped keep Tesla afloat. The restaurant industry complained that they couldn't find enough people to fill the available jobs once everything started opening up again. No wonder - you paid them lousy wages when tips should have been a bonus and not a survival mechanism. Many people took the opportunity to retire from countless industries, leaving many jobs unfilled. But how could that be? Because those jobs were worth retiring from, sadly. And so the story goes.

Should normal have ever been normal in the first place?

We owe it to ourselves as a society to bring forward our lessons from the pandemic. We had our share of death and drama, without question. However, we were also faced with a cultural opportunity during the pandemic - to find work-life balance, to appreciate aspects of life that perhaps had gone unnoticed or unfulfilled, to find better ways of doing things in our careers and professions and personal lives. Hopefully, we didn't just experience that stuff for nothing. As I was once taught, learning has not occurred unless behavior has changed. If we were to really learn anything from it, we should use what we learned to make our world a better place.

Or we could just go back to 2019, I suppose. What would you choose? Or what have you chosen?

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