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The Working Blog
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I'm thrilled to hear about what people do for work in the same way that escapists are ecstatic to read space operas or runaway stories. I've worked a ton of different jobs myself—from dog kennel management to waitressing, to estimating, to editing and teaching. Ever since I was a teenager, I knew that I was never going to be happy doing just one thing, and even then I knew I wanted to talk to people about what they do for a living.

But it wasn't until the beginning of this summer, during my 29th year, that I finally decided to do something about it. My friend and sometimes boss, Cecilia Tan, once told me, “Write what you are on fire to write,” and in the midst of struggling with my writing blog, *The Starving Artist*, I realized that I could do what Studs Terkel did in the '70s with his book *Working*; I could also interview people and share what they do in the world.

It's been almost fifty years since Terkel wrote his book, and some of these jobs don't even exist anymore. And we have so many new jobs. I want to write the next *Working* book. But I decided to go about it a little differently: I would blog instead of writing a book, at least to start. I would keep the entries to around 1,000 words with an *absolute* cutoff at 1,350 no matter what. Maybe someday, if it gets big, I'll turn it into a book.

So far, five months into the interview process, I have met with the owner of a Bed and Breakfast, a tire salesman, a caretaker, a pet-sitter, a head takeout specialist, the owner of

a craft store, and a couple of others. At first I thought people would be weird about it. I figured I would ask, and most people would shake their heads and say, *No way, not for me!* But the response has been entirely the opposite. Most people are psyched to talk about what they do and share their message, whatever it is, whether it's to pitch in with the community, or advocate for pets, or just work as hard as you can.

I record the entire interview on my phone, and when we're finished, I go home and type up *everything* that the interviewee said. I give it a few days, and then I come back and edit. Editing is the hardest part, because although I try to cap interviews at 15 minutes, they often go for as long as a half hour, and I can have as many as 4,000 words to cut back on. So I edit, looking for job-specific facts and emotions, details that really characterize the person, or very important messages that I can tell the person really wants to share with the world.

I cut off all the fat until I get down to the bare bones, but I try to keep the language the same. I don't cut out any *likes* unless the word count is too high, because I want the post to sound like the person I interviewed. Isn't that the point? I give it another few days, and then I go back and copyedit. As soon as that's finished, the blog is ready for posting, as long as I have a picture—of the person, or of what they do, or even just of something they represent.

It isn't easy, but finally allowing myself to work on something I've been passionate about for as long as I can remember is fulfilling, and people love it. What is your passion that you have always wanted to go after, but have held back from, for whatever reason—

because of money, or fear, or lack of time? Or if you have gone after it, what is it and how does it feel?