

Navigate
Forward

Author's Breakfast

Is Your Work Worth it?

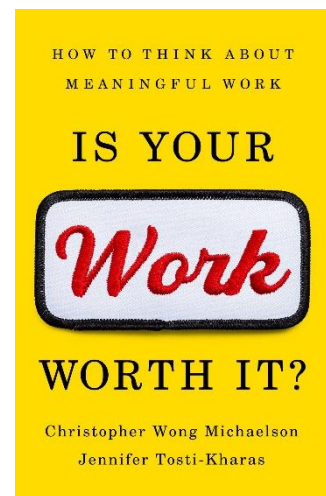
On October 2, 2024, more than 170 executives gathered at the Metropolitan Ballroom and Clubroom for an insightful and thought-provoking morning, featuring acclaimed author and University of St. Thomas Professor, Christopher Wong Michaelson at the Navigate Forward Author's Breakfast.

Christopher Wong Michaelson's book *Is Your Work Worth It?* engaged diverse discussion and encouraged attendees to reflect on the value and purpose of their professional lives. Michaelson did this through captivating stories drawn from his personal experiences and academic research.

Following are insights from table discussions by attendees on three questions posed by Michaelson:

- 1. What is your most worthy work?**
- 2. What worthy work do you still aspire to do?**
- 3. What advice will you impart on the next generation as your legacy?**

It was wonderful to have so many talented leaders gather! Thank you to everyone who made time to participate. We look forward to connecting with you soon and seeing you at a future event!





1. What is Your Most Worthy Work?

Key Trends

Focus on People and Relationships: Many responses emphasized the importance of supporting and developing others, whether through mentorship, teaching, or coaching. This highlights a collective value placed on interpersonal connections and community-building.

Family and Personal Life: Numerous participants noted that their most worthy work involves family, such as raising children or supporting family members. This indicates a strong belief that personal life significantly contributes to one's sense of purpose.

Service and Community Engagement: Many respondents mentioned involvement in nonprofit work, volunteering, and community service. There is a clear trend toward valuing work that contributes to the well-being of others, especially in challenging circumstances.

Transformational Leadership: Leadership roles focused on transformation and empowerment were mentioned frequently. Participants see value in guiding others to achieve their potential, which aligns with broader themes of personal and organizational growth.

Health and Well-Being: Several comments reflected a commitment to health, whether through healthcare work or self-care practices. This suggests a trend toward recognizing the importance of well-being in worthy work.

Diversity and Inclusion: Some responses touched on the importance of diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts, particularly in mentoring and supporting marginalized groups, indicating a growing awareness of social responsibility.

Key Takeaways

1. Worthy Work is Multi-Dimensional and Not Necessarily Tied to Financial Compensation

- Worthy work encompasses various aspects of life, including family, community, and professional engagement
- Participants highlight that impact can be achieved in multiple arenas, not just within one's job

2. Emotional Connections Matter

- Many responses stressed the importance of emotional connections in the workplace and beyond
- Worthy work is often described in terms of love, compassion, and genuine care for others, rather than financial gain



3. The Value of Mentorship

- A recurring theme is the transformative power of mentorship
- Many participants feel that helping others grow and succeed is a crucial aspect of their worthy work, creating a cycle of giving back
- Developing talent and “paying it forward” were frequently mentioned

4. Satisfaction Beyond Success

- Participants indicated that personal satisfaction often stems from helping others rather than traditional metrics of success
- This underscores a shift in how success is defined within professional and personal contexts

5. Recognition of Life Transitions

- There is an acknowledgment of the challenges associated with transitions—both personal (like divorce or career changes) and professional
- Helping others navigate these changes is seen as deeply worthy work

6. Integration of Passion and Work

- Many responses reflect a desire to align work with personal passions and values
- The transition from corporate roles to more fulfilling pursuits is a common narrative, emphasizing the importance of finding joy in one’s work

Overall, the table discussions highlighted that worthy work is deeply personal and varied but generally involves making a positive impact on others and finding fulfillment beyond monetary rewards. Participants largely defined their most worthy work through the lenses of relationships, service, personal fulfillment, and the empowerment of others. This indicates a collective movement toward a more holistic and meaningful approach to both work and life.



Question 2: What Worthy Work Do You Still Aspire to Do?

Key Trends

Focus on Mentorship and Teaching: A significant number of responses expressed a desire to mentor or teach, particularly the younger generations. This indicates a strong aspiration to pass on knowledge and support personal and professional growth in others.

Family and Relationships: Many participants highlighted aspirations related to family, such as being a grandparent, spending more time with loved ones, or helping family members navigate their paths. This reflects a commitment to personal connections and nurturing relationships.

Community Service and Social Impact: There is a clear interest in engaging in community service, nonprofit work, and initiatives that promote social justice, health, and literacy. This underscores a collective desire to give back and make a difference in society.

Personal Development and Self-Care: Several comments pointed to aspirations related to personal growth, self-care, and achieving a better work-life balance. This highlights an increasing awareness of the importance of well-being and personal fulfillment.

Exploration and Creativity: Participants expressed desires to explore new opportunities, travel, or engage in creative pursuits. This suggests a yearning for experiences that enrich life beyond traditional work environments.

Entrepreneurship and Innovation: A number of individuals aspired to start their own businesses or projects, indicating an interest in entrepreneurship and creating impactful ventures.

Key Takeaways

1. Legacy and Impact

- Many responses reflected a desire to leave a meaningful legacy, whether through personal relationships, community service, or professional accomplishments
- Participants want to be remembered for their positive influence on others
- Many responses focused on leveraging professional skills for a broader impact

2. Diverse Aspirations

- Aspirations vary widely, from specific goals like writing a book or starting a podcast to broader ambitions like improving community health or supporting affirmative action initiatives
- This diversity indicates that worthy work is highly individualized and can take many forms



3. Reflective Aspirations

- Some participants expressed uncertainty or a need for reflection on what their worthy work should be
- This indicates that many are still in the process of discovering their passions and how best to contribute

4. Interconnection of Personal and Professional

- Responses often blurred the lines between personal desires and professional goals, suggesting that many see their aspirations as interrelated and mutually beneficial
- The desire to mentor, teach, or lead often connects back to personal experiences and values

5. Support for Vulnerable Populations

- A recurring theme involves aspirations to support vulnerable populations, whether through mentorship, nonprofit work, or advocacy
- Participants recognize the importance of empowering others and contributing to societal change

6. The Importance of Community:

- Many responses emphasized building community and fostering connections, whether through formal nonprofit work, mentoring relationships, or personal networks
- This reflects a recognition of the importance of collaboration and support in achieving worthy work

Some participants were still in the process of discovering their “worthy work.” They expressed their need for more time to reflect, the acknowledgment that they are challenged by having too many interests and ideas. But, all seemed to recognize the importance of staying open to possibilities.

In aggregate, the responses reveal a rich tapestry of aspirations centered around mentorship, family, community impact, personal growth, and exploration. There is a strong desire to leave a positive legacy, support others, and engage in meaningful work that resonates on a personal and societal level.



Question 3: What Advice Will You Impart on the Next Generation as Your Legacy?

Key Trends

Emphasis on Kindness and Relationships: Many responses stressed the importance of treating others with kindness and building meaningful relationships. This highlights a universal value placed on compassion and empathy.

Pursuit of Passion and Authenticity: There is a strong emphasis on being authentic and pursuing one's passions. Participants encourage the next generation to trust their instincts and find work that aligns with their interests and values.

Importance of Continuous Learning: Lifelong learning is a recurring theme, with many participants advocating for curiosity and growth throughout life. This reflects an understanding that personal and professional development is a continuous journey.

Balance and Self-Care: Several responses highlighted the need for balance in life—between work and personal interests, between ambition and self-care. This underscores the significance of mental and emotional well-being.

Flexibility and Adaptability: Many participants emphasized the importance of being flexible and open to change. The advice encourages resilience in the face of shifting circumstances and the ability to pivot when needed.

Legacy of Contribution: There is a strong message about the importance of giving back and making a positive impact on others. The idea of "paying it forward" resonated throughout many responses, suggesting that the next generation should strive to uplift others.

Powerful Advice Shared by Participants

1. Personal Growth and Authenticity are Critical

- Be curious and keep learning
- Grow, learn and become better every day
- Don't let others define you
- Trust your gut and be authentic



2. Balance Your Career and Work Life

- Pursue your passions and interests in your work as you'll spend more time at your job than anything else
- Balance your life and work to include what matters most
- Don't look for purposeful work—find purpose within your work
- You are more than your job
- Take care of your family, take the time to tell them you love them

3. Relationships and Kindness Matter

- Develop relationships and make connections
- Be thoughtful of how you treat others
- Express gratitude
- Pay it forward and do something kind every day
- Be good to people, be the reason someone shows up tomorrow

4. Importance of Personal Well-Being

- Take care of yourself to enrich others
- Pay attention to what gives you energy
- Balance your life and work to include what matters most

5. Community and Connections

- Pay attention to others and take the time to learn another's story
- It takes a village; curate yours carefully
- Think about who you should emulate and who you should avoid

6. Be Fully Present

- Live in the moment and be present
- Later is not guaranteed
- Time is finite so discern what matters most to you
- Legacy is created as you are living



7. Take Action

- Be flexible and open to unknown paths ahead
- Take risks and don't be afraid to fail
- Rise and go! Chase your dreams and never stop
- Don't talk about it, model it

The collective wisdom shared in these responses emphasized kindness, authenticity, continuous growth, and the importance of relationships. Participants aspire to impart a legacy of empathy, resilience, and purpose, guiding the next generation to navigate their paths with intention and care.

About Navigate Forward

Navigate Forward provides highly customized support to senior executives who are currently in career transition, planning change in the future or seeking board service, helping them find their passion, their path and their place in the business community. Since our inception in 2008, we've worked with more than 2,250 clients and 450 companies across the country and around the world. We are proud to be a certified women-owned business.

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