

# Forbes

## John Tamny Explores The Expanding World Of Doing What You Love

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“It was the best of times, it was the worst of times,” said Charles Dickens of France before the Revolution, although he could have been talking about anytime, anywhere. John Tamny makes a case for the former in *The End of Work: Why Your Passion Can Become Your Job* (Regnery Gateway). Over time, the U.S. economy has become more and more centered on services rather than goods. In 1950, services were about 40% of personal consumption expenditures. Today, they are over 65%, and if economic growth continues, services’ share of the economy in the future is likely to be higher even than that. From sports to video gaming to restauranting to professional dog walking, that means more and more people can do things they love to do – things they are so excited about that they don’t even seem like “work;” and because they are so excited about it, they are happy to spend enormous amounts of time and effort developing mastery and expertise. If it's something that excites you, probably it also excites someone else enough that they are willing to pay you for your skill. A little bit big-picture investigation of recent economic trends, a little bit self-help guide, the cheerful and breezy book provides a window onto the increasingly common practice of doing something you love to do.

Those who follow Tamny’s writing knows that he loves sports – loves it enough to make it interesting even to people who don’t like sports, like myself, who generally bundles sports along with reality TV and the weather as things not worth paying attention to. Tamny begins with the argument – Tamny loves to tweak peoples’ noses -- that top-level college football players should major in college football. In addition to its obvious physicality, the game has become intensely cerebral. A new player for a top college program (already among the best high-school players in the country) has to memorize and understand a playbook comparable to an encyclopedia, and then make use of this in a real-life situation. Top college players face an even bigger hurdle when they join the National Football League. The game at the NFL level is so advanced that these players, after four years of book study of football at the top college level, typically face another three years of book learning before they master the game at the NFL level.

All in all, it is a course of study comparable to a PhD or medical school. Plus, you also have to be good at football. But what about those who don’t get into the NFL? They are now experts at the business of football, which ranges from a whole hierarchy of coaches and scouts (many making very good money at it), to people involved in the business of football at every level, to

commentators on ESPN – all sectors of business that have expanded dramatically, both in terms of headcount and salaries, over the past couple decades.

For me, the most affecting chapter was Chapter Seven, “My Story,” in which Tamny tells his story. Tamny was, by all appearances, destined to write columns and books like this one. He started, after college, as a salesman for a company that tested underground gasoline storage tanks for leaks. He was very good at this: He built up the business around the headquarters in Houston so much that he was sent to Chicago to build up the Midwest business. A few years after graduation, he was national sales manager. He went to business school, was “pretty hopeless in finance and accounting classes,” and got a job at premier investment bank Goldman Sachs. One thing led to another, in which Tamny figured out that what he really loved to do was ... write columns mostly about economic topics, for organizations like the Cato Institute, the Reason Foundation, and his present home, Freedomworks. It’s a little bizarre – I think public policy people tend to be that way -- but the result was “The End of Work” for Tamny, which, in practical terms, meant that he worked on the weekends because he was having such a good time.

He was able to do this in part because of the broader economic health of the economy. Economic prosperity creates the resources to pay for what some might call the more frivolous parts of the economy – NFL football, for one – and thus finance the not-like-work professions that this book describes. This includes the nonprofit sector: a booming economy results in big contributions to orchestras, museums, various kinds of schools, and also policy think tanks of the sort that have provided Tamny a home.

Tamny finishes with a look at people who have made a career – in some cases, a big career – from professional video gaming, poker, dog-walking, and golf caddying. Golf caddying, at the highest levels, is serious stuff, and can pay seriously well: the typical caddy’s commission is ten percent of gross tournament winnings. When you are Tiger Woods’ caddy, as Steve Williams was during Woods’ legendary winning streak, that adds up. The caddy’s intimate knowledge of the course, and also the players’ strengths, can add up to a meaningful advantage. According to one expert opinion, Williams’ advice saved Tiger Woods two to four strokes over two rounds at the 2008 U.S. Open at Torrey Pines. The abundant economy that drives big television audiences that drive big cash prizes for golf tournaments trickles down into a whole network of professionals that can now make a nice living from golf, without actually playing golf, from caddies to coaches to commentators, agents and business managers.