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# Book Review

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Erik Baker, *Make Your Own Job: How the Entrepreneurial Work Ethic Exhausted America*. Harvard University Press, 2025.

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Erik Baker's *Make Your Own Job: How the Entrepreneurial Work Ethic Exhausted America* (2025) takes a deep look at how the modern entrepreneurial mindset has changed work culture. Through history, social analysis and economic insights, Baker explains how the focus on self-reliance, hustle and flexibility has reshaped jobs today. This book makes readers think about what work, success and financial security really mean in today's world.

One of the book's key ideas is 'ungraded learning', where people gain skills on their own without formal training or certification. Baker argues that today's workers must constantly learn and adapt without any clear recognition or reward. While freelancing, gig work and entrepreneurship offer freedom, they also encourage unpaid labour in the form of self-improvement, networking and job searching. Baker criticises how this shift puts too much pressure on individuals rather than on companies or governments that should provide stable opportunities.

Baker's book focuses on several important themes:

- **The Myth of Self-Sufficiency:** The author challenges the idea that people can 'make their own job' just through hard work, emphasising that economic policies, social conditions and historical factors play a big role in success.
- **Overwork and Job Insecurity:** This book explains how workers, especially in creative and knowledge-based fields, often work too much due to job insecurity and the hope of future rewards.
- **The Commodification of Passion:** Baker explores how encouraging people to 'follow their passion' has led to workers accepting poor pay and unstable jobs because they love what they do.



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- **Economic and Technological Changes:** This book discusses how declining job stability, automation and the gig economy is shaping today's job market.

Baker supports his ideas with historical and modern examples. He traces the origins of the entrepreneurial mindset to the Protestant work ethic and examines how economic policies and technology have shaped today's job culture. He uses examples from tech startups, academia and creative industries to show how people internalise and respond to these pressures.

This book also looks at government policies that have shifted jobs towards freelancing and gig work. Baker explains how deregulation, fewer worker protections and the rise of digital platforms have made job security weaker. He highlights real-world examples, such as Uber drivers and freelance journalists, to show the downsides of a work culture that values flexibility over stability.

Baker's arguments connect with ideas in books like *Bullshit Jobs* by David Graeber and *The Gig Economy* by Diane Mulcahy. He also builds on sociological studies like Richard Sennett's *The Corrosion of Character*, which examines the emotional effects of unstable jobs. His historical analysis is influenced by Max Weber's *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, which explains the roots of today's work culture.

*Make Your Own Job* is a powerful book that questions modern work culture. By exposing the problems of self-sufficiency, overwork and passion-driven exploitation, Baker encourages readers to rethink work policies and job expectations.

For Indian readers, this book is especially relevant in a fast-changing job market. India's growing gig economy, driven by digital platforms and startups, faces many of the same challenges Baker discusses. While entrepreneurship is often promoted as a solution for unemployment, the lack of social security and job stability remains a serious issue. This book highlights the need for Indian policymakers, businesses and workers to balance entrepreneurial ambition with fair wages, job security and worker protections. *Make Your Own Job* is an essential read for anyone interested in the changing nature of work in both India and the world.

In today's world, where the pressure to succeed can feel overwhelming, *Make Your Own Job* offers valuable insights for young professionals and students. It challenges common beliefs about work and success and encourages readers to think critically about their career choices. This book is a must-read for young minds looking to navigate the evolving job market wisely. By understanding the realities of modern work culture, youth can make informed decisions, advocate for fair opportunities and contribute to a more balanced and secure workforce. Let this book be your guide to making thoughtful career choices in a rapidly changing world.

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