You’re Right, the ‘System’ Is Rigged Against You. Here’s How to Hack It.

Have you ever spoken to someone who believed that their misfortune or lack of accomplishment was a result of the “system” being rigged against them? Or do you believe that that system is rigged against you? You may actually be right, at least to some extent, but once you understand how a system works, you can find ways to exploit it in your favor.

According to the 2017 Edelman Trust Barometer, approximately 75 percent of people worldwide believe the system (i.e., government, culture and other establishments) is untrustworthy. Positions of authority are especially distrusted, with only 37 percent of people believing CEOs are credible and just 29 percent of people trusting government officials.

So how is the system truly rigged against you, and how can you take advantage of it?

Socioeconomic status.

At the risk of striking up a heated political argument, the reality is that there’s a vast discrepancy of both wealth and opportunity in the United States. Between 2008 and 2014 (a period of economic crisis), the top one percent of American earners made somewhere between $2.3 trillion and $5.7 trillion per year.

To put that in perspective, the entire budget for social security, Medicare, Medicad, SNAP, WIC, earned income tax credits, supplemental security income and temporary assistance for needy families combined was less than $2 trillion in

total. On top of that, about 90 percent of this money was held in stocks, secure investments, and real estate – which means it wasn't going to create jobs, as trickle-down economic theories would suggest.

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Meanwhile, America's poor and middle class students suffer worse education conditions and lower graduation rates. And despite increased efforts to provide advanced educational opportunities to lower economic classes, federal surveys suggest almost no change in the college enrollment of lower-income students.

How can you hack this system? Realize that everything starts with education.

If you can find a scholarship program to get you into a better college, exploit it. If you can take cheap classes at a local college until you can make more money, do it. If you can simply talk to successful people and learn what they did to become a success, do it. Read as much as you can, especially things written or recommended by successful people. Everything you learn puts you one step closer to success, even if you started out several steps behind everyone else.

Are the socioeconomic challenges in the United States as simple as trying harder and finding new opportunities? Of course not. But it's one way for individuals to fight back and win against a system that's rigged against them.

Nepotism and cronyism.

Some people suggest that 70 percent of new jobs are found through networking, and others suggest the number is even higher, at 80 to 85 percent. Accordingly, as many as 80 percent of new jobs never even get listed, since they're

filled internally, or are filled by connections of connections.

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For new job seekers and people trying to build a new career, this information can be disheartening. The adage “it’s not what you know, it’s who you know,” rings true here, as nepotism and cronyism seem to fill the vast majority of open positions, leaving few – if any – possibilities for fresh blood to break into an industry. Chances are, your resume’s going to be thrown away before it’s even seen.

But therein lies the secret to “hacking” this part of the system. You know that the vast majority of jobs are filled by mutual connections, so become that mutual connection. Attend networking events regularly and meet as many people as possible. Build and maintain a rolodex of contacts, and make yourself as visible as possible through personal branding.

Appearance and salary.

Do you ever wonder if pretty people make more money than their less-attractive counterparts? They do. It’s true that it’s illegal to discriminate against people based on their outward appearance, but that doesn’t mean a correlation doesn’t exist.

For example, a University of Florida study found that every inch of height could add about $789, on average, to your salary, and George Washington University found that obese employees are paid far less than their normal-weight counterparts – $8,666 less per year for women and $4,722 less per year for men.

And it isn’t just about height and weight; workers rated low in physical attractiveness overall can expect to make 5 to 10 percent less than average-looking people, and average-looking people can expect to make 3 to 8 percent less than good-

looking people.

Short of plastic surgery, there isn’t much you can do about your genetics, but you can boost your chances of landing that job or getting that raise by improving your appearance in controllable ways. For example, you can start working out. In fact, one study estimates people who exercise regularly make 9 percent more than people who don’t.

Practice impeccable hygiene, buy clothes that fit you perfectly and make a keen impression on new people.

Related: 5 Ways to Overcome the ‘Beauty Bias’ That Can Hold Your Career Back

If you can’t beat ‘em, join ‘em.

The system isn’t perfect. Hell, in many ways it’s downright unfair. But even committing yourself to changing the system full-time, you still have to live and subsist in it today. While you fight for change, it’s in your power and your best interest to turn the system to your advantage in whatever ways you can.

Instead of resenting it, learn it, and make it work for you. Then, when you find yourself in power, if you still don’t like the way things are, you can use your power to start changing it.