

# Harrison Ford on ... waiting tables

He always was a hard worker, but it was Harrison Ford's ability to push beyond good to excellent that propelled him into leadership.

For Ford, the level of achievement can't be journeyman's work. He has to take it to the highest plane of accomplishment.

His path:

**He goes for mastery.** In his youth, Ford crewed boats, waited tables and worked as a carpenter. Now he's an actor and a passionate pilot.

"I am very interested in having the respect of the people I work with, but I am not generally out looking to be admired," he says. "I want to be good at what I do, and I want to learn from other people how to get good, be good, stay good."

**He speaks up.** Ford doesn't hang back.

"It has always been very easy for me to say no," he says. "I do have opinions, and I don't mind arguing for my point of view, but I try not to exercise them at the risk of not hearing other people."

He keeps pushing. Beyond mastery, there's excellence. His lodestar is excellence.

"Being a waiter was my favorite job!" he exclaims. "It was so easy to do well, and so few people do it well. Do you just slap the plate in front of them or just wait a second and ... slide that sucker in there? Do you keep your eyes open and know what's going on in your room and know where people are at in their meals? It keeps you busy, and it is so much fun."

From fun and competence, Ford moves on to mastery and greatness.

"When I was a carpenter," he says, "I once worked with this Russian lady architect. I would tell her, 'Look, I'm terribly sorry, but I want to change that a half inch,' and she would say, 'No limit for better.' I think that is a worthy credo. You keep on going until you get it as close to being right as the time and patience of others will allow."

—Adapted from ["Where I Find Peace,"](#) Jane Green, *Parade*.