

# You Can Do Anything: The Surprising Power of a "Useless" Liberal Arts Education

George Anders

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GEORGE ANDERS

*New York Times Bestselling Author*



The Surprising Power of a "Useless"  
Liberal Arts Education

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**George Anders : You Can Do Anything: The Surprising Power of a "Useless" Liberal Arts Education** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised You Can Do Anything: The Surprising Power of a "Useless" Liberal Arts Education:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. an angered and disappointed father might cynically tell his childBy

Ian Mann Not that long ago, an angered and disappointed father might cynically tell his child, newly graduated with a liberal arts degree, Why dont you go down to the anthropology factory? I hear theyre hiring! In the course of this book, author George Anders explains, we will explore all sorts of ways your liberal arts education and societys needs can fit together. Just a few decades ago, this would not have been a reasonable proposition. However, the more we automate the routine activities, the more we create digital solutions, the more essential human judgment becomes. New technology is destroying millions of predictable, task-based jobs that traditionally provided tickets into the middle class. McKinsey researchers estimate that 45% of workplace tasks in modern society are at risk of being automated. The curiosity, creativity, and empathy one usually develops through a liberal arts education is an advantage today. Disruptive change doesnt reduce the value of this type of education: it can actually provide an advantage. From May 2012 through May 2016, 541,000 new jobs were created in the computing sector in the US. In the same period compliance officers, entertainment producers and directors, event planners, fund-raisers, genetic counsellors, graphic designers, human-resources specialists, management analysts, market research analysts, marketing specialists, school administrators, technical writers, and training specialists more than triple the new-job contribution. Most of these new jobs have tiptoed into the U.S. economy with no fanfare whatsoever, notes Anders. And South Africa is not far behind. While it is true that most job opportunities today call for some technical literacy, this can be acquired in just a few months of concentrated effort. It is also worth noting that computer-related fields employ less than 3 percent of the workforce. Job hunting has changed a lot since the 1970s and even since the 1990s. Predictable career paths are rare, and the opportunities to improvise are great. The social philosopher, Eric Hoffer explained, In times of drastic change, it is the learners who inherit the future. The learned usually find themselves beautifully equipped to deal with a world that no longer exists. People with degrees in the humanities and social sciences have risen to the top in fields as diverse as finance, government, non-profits, and the entrepreneurial economy. Companies such as IBM count on sociology majors to explain some of its most complex technology to customers, and leading ad agencies hire English majors, not data scientists, when they want to tell stories with numbers. In 2016 the author surveyed the job ads at Indeed.com. He found more than 5,500 listings that offered over \$100,000 annual pay for work requiring critical thinking. This skill, Anders found to be shorthand for a set of competencies that includes a confident eagerness to take on areas where nobody knows the rules yet. It requires applying imagination to the job, adapting well to new situations and having well-honed analytic methods for finding insights. On demand for high-paying work is the ability to thrive by spotting the less obvious answer. As one gains experience and rises in power, you are expected to synthesize insights and complex decisions. Additionally, candidates are expected to understand group dynamics and other peoples motivations in an unusually deep way. This allows them to read the room, and inspire others. These requirements are commonplace for senior or more valued staff, and replace fact-packed heads that cant analyse well. The Internet can give everyone the facts they need, quickly. This is where a liberal arts education adds value. To do well at the classics, being able to regurgitate knowledge is insufficient. A liberal arts education should develop useful ways of analysing situations and instil an open-minded confidence about exploring the new ideas. It should foster curiosity, the ability to connect the dots, and to filter and distil information. This is what employers as diverse as the movie creators at Sony, the digital-storage technicians at Dropbox, and the thermostat makers at Johnson Controls are looking for. As are FedEx, McKinsey, and PayPal. Reid Hoffman the founder of LinkedIn, and one of the worlds foremost angel investors, has a Masters degree in philosophy from Oxford. PayPal co-founder Peter Thiel, achieved his philosophy degree from Stanford. Regardless of whether youre studying philosophy, English, sociology, or any of a dozen other disciplines, youre being introduced to a wider way of engaging with the world. Payoffs arise later in all sorts of jobs. I recall my own philosophy professor telling us that any society that doesnt respect its plumbers and its philosophers will find that neither its pipes nor its ideas will hold water. With the workplace evolving, and technology becoming commonplace, the value of plumbers and philosophers is replacing the value we gave to high levels of knowledge, rather than practical ability, and mental agility and critical thinking.

Readability Light --- Serious Insights High --- Low Practical High --- Low

\*Ian Mann of Gateways consults internationally on leadership and strategy, and is the author of the recently released Executive Update. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Repetitive but good

By Zachary Guthrie I recommend this read for the author's comments on a blurry subject. Not many people in my past reading have been able to articulate on the value of a liberal arts education in the workplace and give concrete but honest examples of what potential this line of thinking brings to an employer and business. 4 of 4 people found the following review helpful. Essential reading for those launching their career

By Keith We seem to live in a world of STEM ber Alles, where if a young person doesnt learn to code, he or she is condemned to life as a barista or a dog walker. But are engineers destined to rule the world? Perhaps not, just as it isnt the ultra-logical Mr. Spock who commands the Starship Enterprise, but rather the charismatic Captain Kirk. In his new book, author George Anders has done a brilliant job of decrypting todays job market, identifying vast new opportunities for young people with liberal arts degrees. He points out that while the computing sector has created plenty of new jobs, the fastest-growing fields are actually the ones catching the warmth of the tech revolution, jobs like graphic designer, training specialist and research analyst. And in a world where millions of jobs are being created that didnt even exist five years ago, those best positioned to grab them are the ones able to rapidly analyze, improvise and deal with ambiguity. In other words,

those with the skills at the very heart of a liberal arts education. It's true that recruiters still chase candidates with technical backgrounds. Those with a liberal arts degree, especially at the beginning of a career, will need to be creative. And this is where Anders' book really shines - with one inspiring example after another, he shows readers how to find jobs and improvise their way to a successful career. For anyone looking to launch themselves into the world of work, this book is essential reading. Who knows? Someday you could be commanding a Starship of your own.

In a tech-dominated world, the most needed degrees are the most surprising: the liberal arts. Did you take the right classes in college? Will your major help you get the right job offers? For more than a decade, the national spotlight has focused on science and engineering as the only reliable choice for finding a successful post-grad career. Our destinies have been reduced to a caricature: learn to write computer code or end up behind a counter, pouring coffee. Quietly, though, a different path to success has been taking shape. In *YOU CAN DO ANYTHING*, George Anders explains the remarkable power of a liberal arts education - and the ways it can open the door to thousands of cutting-edge jobs every week. The key insight: curiosity, creativity, and empathy aren't unruly traits that must be reined in. You can be yourself, as an English major, and thrive in sales. You can segue from anthropology into the booming new field of user research; from classics into management consulting, and from philosophy into high-stakes investing. At any stage of your career, you can bring a humanist's grace to our rapidly evolving high-tech future. And if you know how to attack the job market, your opportunities will be vast. In this book, you will learn why resume-writing is fading in importance and why "telling your story" is taking its place. You will learn how to create jobs that don't exist yet, and to translate your campus achievements into a new style of expression that will make employers' eyes light up. You will discover why people who start in eccentric first jobs - and then make their own luck - so often race ahead of peers whose post-college hunt focuses only on security and starting pay. You will be ready for anything.

Praise for *You Can Do Anything* "Utterly fascinating and massively important. George Anders peers into his signature crystal ball, and paints a portrait of the future of work that's as compelling as it is provocative." Adam Grant, Wharton professor and New York Times bestselling author of *Give and Take* and *Originals* "Anders' latest book is a must-read for liberal arts students and grads. Packed with relatable stories and role models, it not only inspires you with stories about what liberal arts grads have done with their educations, but also gives you a clear map to find your own path in the world." Laszlo Bock, author of *Work Rules!*, former SVP of People Operations at Google, and CEO of Humu, Inc. "Anders shows us precisely why majors like Philosophy, History, and Anthropology teach the skills employers can't outsource to robots and software... students should feel not only reassurance or permission but an actual obligation to go there, for their own sake, and for the sake of us all." Julia Lythcott-Haims, author of *How to Raise an Adult* and former Dean of Freshmen at Stanford University "I could have used this book several times in my life. When I graduated from Northwestern with a degree in linguistics... and even today, when I'm the parent of high school junior intent on studying poetry and modern dance in college. *You Can Do Anything* will inspire a new generation to greater heights, while delivering a much-needed wake-up call to campus leaders and employers." Daniel H. Pink, New York Times and Wall Street Journal bestselling author of *Drive* and *A Whole New Mind* "The career stories of liberal arts graduates provide the best argument for the value of their education. George Anders, in his thoughtful new book *You Can Do Anything*, tells these stories in a compelling manner, weaving the threads of their education into the tapestry of their lives, demonstrating over and over why employers should seek out these unique thinkers. An interesting read and valuable for any liberal arts graduate or recruiter!" Dr. Katharine Brooks, author of *You Majored in What?* and Executive Director of the Vanderbilt University Career Center "George Anders has provided a compelling and decisive answer to the recurring question, 'What is the value proposition of a liberal arts education?' Students should have this book in their backpack or on their iPads. So should their parents, teachers, and our policy-makers." Frederick M. Lawrence, CEO of Phi Beta Kappa Society "At the present moment... it is only liberal arts majors who have to wonder whether all of the articles and books promoting the marketability of their chosen discipline should make them more or less uneasy about the future. Two additions to this growing field have appeared just in time to try to sooth the post-graduation panic.. [including] *You Can Do Anything*.... [Anders] suppl[ies] useful talking points in support of the financial viability of studying the liberal arts." Timothy Aubry, New York Times Book "Useful guidance for newly minted job hunters" Kirkus "Give this to anyone who is questioning the value of a classical education in today's fast-paced world." Booklist "As another academic year begins... [*You Can Do Anything* is a] salutary reminder... that what is learned on campus should have its greatest value beyond the university." Wall Street Journal "You Can Do Anything is part how-to for humanities types.... Also tells stories about liberal arts students made good.... These are important words of wisdom by a skilled storyteller and a sharp observer of the human condition." Adam Lashinsky, Fortune "While the book is geared toward recent grads, even career switchers can benefit.... Above all, Anders shows that success is rarely a straight line." Book Page "Thoughtful and well-reasoned... George Anders demonstrates the extraordinary way a liberal arts education broadens the career opportunities of new graduates." The Hill About the Author George Anders is a contributing writer at Forbes, exploring issues related to careers, education and innovation.

He is the author of five books, including *Merchants of Debt*, *Health Against Wealth*, the New York Times bestseller *Perfect Enough*, and *The Rare Find*. Earlier in his career, George served as a staff writer for *The Wall Street Journal*, *Fast Company* magazine and *Bloomberg View*. In 1997, he shared in a Pulitzer Prize for national reporting. He and his wife live in northern California. Their two sons are starting their own college adventures.