



## Pearly Gates

**By Stuart White**  
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Hustler, proper noun, no defining article, is a monthly, hard-core pornographic, heterosexual men's magazine published in the United States, founded and owned by Larry Flynt. Here in Botswana Hustler is not welcome on the Exclusive Book's shelf to be read by beer-guzzling, low-class horny bar flies. By contrast, a hustler, common noun, indefinite article, is the name given to a self-made man who has a desire to succeed, make it big and capitalise on opportunities. They are all around us - on the streets, in workplaces, scheming, and making things happen and - yes you got it - hustling. Now hustling is almost never a complimentary word and rarely conjures up a positive image, instead it makes us think of swindlers, scams, schemes and cons. So you will see the humour when taking a job spec this week when my client said "I'm looking for a hustler, not a graduate."

We have so many graduates out there I explained that for the position he was looking for it seemed senseless not to go for one. "I would never employ graduates" he said "there's something missing with them." He was quite emphatic that he wouldn't touch a graduate with a barge pole and went on to enlighten me about the difference between them and hustlers.

Here's how it was explained to me. There are a number of characteristics of the Botswana Hustler. Firstly they claim to be able to do anything. Of course they can't but that's neither here nor there. The hustler will make a plan, figure it out or learn along the way. Driven by their will to succeed they will make a plan. And this is not a case of over-promise and under-deliver. The Hustler delivers - it's just that when they make the promise to they don't always know how they are going to but they figure it out. The graduate, by contrast, think they know it all, but in actual fact are hindered by theory, models and not knowing what they don't know.

The Hustler's view of the world and their place in it is quite distinctive. She or he often has a humble disposition, believes that the world doesn't owe them anything – and has a 'you don't get out of life what you deserve – you get what you negotiate' attitude. The graduate on the other hand acts with arrogance and thinks entitlement. With a belief that they are better than others (especially the less than educated) they view that piece of paper that they are holding in their hands with its red seal and their name fancily inscribed on it – as their passport to pleasure and success. With most of the work now done, they surmise, its time to sit back and reap the rewards.

The hustler has ambition and takes risks. She or he is brave, takes chances and has energy. Whilst the graduate has ambition too, they aren't quite as willing to pay the same price for it. The hustler will work 2 jobs, 3 if they have to, the graduate more likely to stay at home because all the jobs available are not of the right status and salary level befitting their degree.

The other thing about the hustler is the respect and appreciation for money. When they make it, they look after it. They don't just get the CEDA loan and rush out to splash out on the new Land Rover. Oh no – knowing how hard they have had to hustle for it – they keep it around, use it wisely, investing for the future all the while maintaining their humbleness and taking nothing for granted. The graduate all too often has got their Edgars, Truworths and Foschini accounts all opened and BlackBerry ordered before the ink is even dry on their graduation certificate. The world's their oyster and it had damn well better have a flawless pearl inside when they open it or they'll know the reason why.

Another point my client made about a lot of graduates is the lack of relevance of their coursework and the quantum leap between text book models and theoretical examples and the real world. The classic case model is Bill Gates. He dropped out of Harvard after two years, claiming that it had nothing more to teach him and in the light of his subsequent career you can hardly argue with him. It took that hallowed hall of learning some thirty two years to come round to his way of thinking but finally, in 2007, they awarded him an honorary degree, tacitly admitting that he was right and they were, well, wrong.

Wow – the world's richest man, most powerful CEO and most famous captain of industry turns out to be the Hustler King. And staying on a year longer to collect his pretty piece of paper couldn't have taken him any higher and would only have held him back. And okay, the 'hustler good, graduate bad' might not be a totally accurate reflection but it's food for thought and a set perception in the mind of my client. Some of the hustlers and graduates in my office had their own opinion. They believe that whilst these two groups exist in Botswana there is more of a morphing and blurring of delineation taking place. There is no room for the graduate with the 'I've arrived, know best and where is my silver spoon?' attitude. 'Enlightened' graduates are realising that without a little hustler mentality they aren't going to make it in business today. I spoke to a CEO of one of the major banks the other evening who said that they had recently started placing graduates in teller positions and how the biggest challenge was managing their perception that they are better than the position they are in and the customers they serve.

The world is not black and white. And whilst the argument represents two extremes, there has to be a meeting in the middle. It also highlights what we need to be looking at when it comes to people. A combination of the two is first prize really – a graduate Hustler or a hustler who eventually graduates, even with honorary letters after their name. It's the best of worlds, the practical and the theoretical, the energy and the will all perfectly in sync, on song and in flow. It's about balance., about not being too big for your academic boots and about adapting to the situation. Above all, it's about recognising that that piece of paper says you're someone capable of learning, not someone who already knows it all and the opposite is equally true. No paper qualification doesn't mean you're not up to the task in hand – ask Bill Gates, then cover your ears.

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