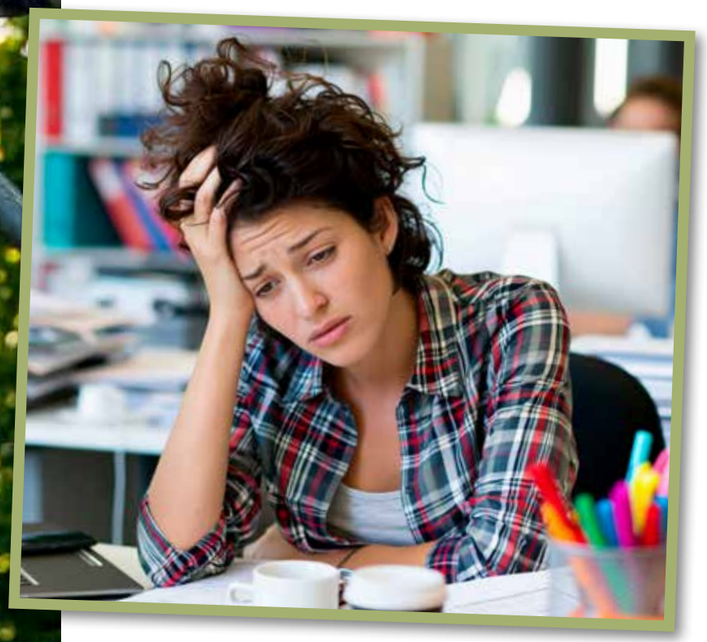
THE WAGE CAGE





Financial planner Amir Rodnia on why earning more money doesn't necessarily make you financially free



Think about a typical day. Your alarm goes off. It's not a soft chime, but more like an air-raid siren at 6am.

You wake up, smack the phone and stare at the ceiling. You know how the day will go. Get up. Go to work. Do what's expected to pay the bills, your rent, mortgage and annoying Afterpay instalments.

Now let me ask you this: do you remember the last time you woke up and felt truly free? Not on a holiday or a weekend. I mean free.

Free to spend your day exactly as you want. Not because you have to, but because you choose to.

For most people, the answer is… no, never.

Whether you wear steel-caps or suits, work shifts or in a boardroom, you're in the same loop.

We grind it out Monday to Friday, living for the weekend. By Sunday night, we dread the morning's blaring alarm.

We sell our time in exchange for money. With every swipe of the credit card, we exchange hours of our lives for things.

WE SELL OUR TIME

Most people sacrifice 80 per cent of their waking hours just to enjoy the remaining 20 per cent. It's like booking a seven-day holiday cruise and spending five of those days below deck scrubbing dishes!

I call this the 'wage cage'. It means being trapped in an invisible cage built from mortgages, rent, bills and subscriptions that quietly shape our lives and influence our every decision.

The wage cage can look deceptively comfortable. It can have a newly renovated kitchen with the latest gadgets and an impressive postcode. But make no mistake, if you can't choose to stop selling your time for money, you are still living in that invisible cage.

As a financial planner, I have seen people who make a million dollars a year feel just as stressed about finances as someone who earns $50,000.

Financial freedom is not about how much you earn. A larger wage does not necessarily mean more freedom – it just creates a shinier cage.

Now don't get me wrong, I'm not one of those who advocate for giving up your morning coffee or living on baked beans to retire at 40. Far from it. This isn't about making millions or retiring early. It's about choice.

Modern life has given us comforts that our ancestors couldn't have even dreamed about. Most of us now live better than kings and queens once did.

But comfort is not the same as freedom.

Our lives are cushioned by conveniences but squeezed by daily financial pressures.

It's as if we've made a deal without signing anything. *Here, have all the comforts you want.* The price? Your peace of mind and your freedom of choice.

The real currency of modern life is time. For some, that $20 burger might cost 10 minutes of work. For others, it might be one whole hour.

You're not just eating lunch, you're chewing on a chunk of your Tuesday!

Even if you own a good business, one that can't run without you, you're still in the wage cage. You have just built yourself a job with your name on the door.

Okay, after making everything sound gloomy, let me give you the good news: just as you clock off at the end of a shift, you can also clock off the wage cage.

Clocking off does not require becoming an overnight millionaire, retiring early, or taking advice from a finfluencer posing next to a rented Ferrari. The way out is surprisingly less dramatic and more achievable than you may think.

It starts with having a gameplan, a systematic approach that reduces your dependence on active (employment) income.

It works by creating a bit of breathing room with your cashflow, putting the surplus to work in income-producing assets that reduce your reliance on selling your time.

THIS IS A LONG GAME

You don't need to find stellar investments. You just need a collection of good decisions that work in concert.

This includes reducing bad debts, creating some additional income streams (e.g., a side hustle), setting aside a cash buffer so that surprise bills don't derail your progress, and gradually building enough passive income to totally replace your wage.

It's essential to understand that this is a long game.

At first, the passive income may only cover the electricity bill.

Then it pays for weekly groceries, your mortgage, and eventually all of your living costs.

Each bill covered with passive income buys back a piece of your life.

You might drop work to four days a week, change your career, start a new business, or spend more time with your kids.

Freedom is not the absence of work, it's the presence of choice.

I know financially free people who work the hardest because they choose to, not because they have to.

The path out of the wage cage doesn't involve predicting the next market boom or finding the next Amazon. It relies on having a solid gameplan that you follow diligently.

If you do that well enough, one morning when the alarm goes off, you'll feel excited to get out of bed and spend your time exactly as you want.

That is freedom.



This is an edited extract from *Freedom Gameplan* by Amir Rodnia. For more information, visit rodnia.com.au

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