



CREATIVITY

# How Wine Can Help You at Work (Seriously!)

An Interview with *Cork Dork's* Bianca Bosker.



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CREDIT: Getty Images

When [Bianca Bosker](#) quit her job as Executive Tech Editor at Huffington Post, she decided to dive into the world of wine and become a sommelier. She chronicles the whirlwind journey in her best-selling new book, *Cork Dork*.

For years, Bosker had been staring at screens, writing about screens, and only looking at the world in two dimensions. She was interested in getting back to basics, and adding two senses that we have decided aren't as important as the others -- taste and smell.

Long ago, Plato and Aristotle deemed taste and smell as senses that weren't worth exploring or truly valuing. Bosker argues that this theory might be wrong, especially with how we approach our professional lives and practices. Throughout *Cork Dork*, Bosker's journey has parallels to our work life - from how to be more present to how to trust your gut.

I chatted with Bosker about the book what she learned, and how the world of wine can help you at work. (The result? More Pinot, please.)



Via Wine Enthusiast

## A Different Kind of Mindfulness

One of the first things Bosker realized was that if she was going to get anywhere in the wine world, she had to be truly present. She had to quiet her mind and all the noise that came with it. In order to "blind taste", or identify a wine's origin, grape, and flavor notes without anything except a liquid in a glass, Bosker had to learn how to drown out any background noise, from her own head or other, in order to be successful. She takes this beyond just the tasting table, and into where that might help you professionally.

Blind tasting and wine "requires not only physical acuity but deep sense of mental control because it is a terrifying exercise. One where you have to basically silence all of your nagging doubts. That terrible voice in your brain that tells you, you know, you missed Chardonnay last time so like are you going to do it again. And shut out all the things that are designed to play our cognitive biases. And I found that the process, you know, this discipline of blind tasting really gave me just a world view that I have since taken far beyond glass. And that's in a sense that it really forces you to stay true to your own felt experience," said Bosker.

In the wine world, if you don't quiet your mind, you will fail. There are applications beyond just wine for this too, said Bosker. "Getting in tune with my sense of taste gave me a greater confidence in my taste in all things. And I aspire, as I said, to that same mindset

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when I look at a painting or hear a piece of music or read a piece of writing," she said. Next time you're working on a big project or getting feedback from a client, stay present to the task at hand, and silence the rest of the noise to get your work done.

#### Trust Your Own Judgment, Not External Cues and "Hacks"

Like in fundraising or pitching yourself, wine tasting and the wine world requires a use of confidence and trusting your gut that Bosker hadn't encountered before. In the wine world you need to silence the noise in your head, but you also need to trust your inner voice. This means not trusting outside influences. Bosker encountered this in the way she approached wine - because "being good at wine, or good at your job, also means not being swayed by a fancy label or some hype", she said. It means ignoring a trendy name or cache from others to figure out how your work can be better without a sexy startup crowd.

Wine also means trusting your own perception of the world - which Bosker says we have "divorced ourselves from trusting...we look for shortcuts. We look for hacks instead of just tuning in and paying more attention. We are kind of relying on indirect signals instead of really getting back to and trusting our own".

Next time you're tempted to rely on a "hack" or something to make your job easier, make sure you question why. "We let all these external cues substitute for our own self experience and as result, we're making judgment calls [that aren't based] foundation in our own kind of objective, unbiased perception of the world around us," said Bosker.

"We buy expensive \$12 cup of hipster artisanal coffee that's been pooped out by monkeys and we think that it tastes delicious because it's expensive. Because it's rare and because it's from this place that has really cool branding with Edison bulbs. And we let all of these external cues tell us what we taste," she said.



via [Biancabosker.com](http://Biancabosker.com)

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Having that critical eye, but one divorced from outside forces, is extremely difficult to cultivate. However, bringing that to the office will make you a better thinker and a better professional. Bosker said, "I bring that same mindset -- I'm going to put aside where I'm looking at it, or who made this, or when they made it, or how much they may have paid for it, and just try and experience the thing directly and reach my conclusion about it based on the information that I am picking up." Consider who and what is influencing you and try your best to acknowledge that it might be hampering your work product.

#### Use All of Your Senses at Work

This idea of taste and smell being crucial can help you in the office. From trusting your gut, to silencing your mind there is a lot to learn from the wine world. However, more literally, integrating a sense of smell can greatly influence your mood and work product. According to Bosker, we are way behind on our understanding of smell and how it can make us better professionals. On the floor of a restaurant, a contact of Bosker's would give her tired staff a quick sniff of sweet wine to wake them up. While you probably shouldn't be sniffing wine if you're dragging for your 4pm conference call, mint happens to have the same awakening effect.

We are living in an era of "sensory cultivation. I was living a life off sensory deprivation. And I wanted to know if I too could hone this sort of sensory skills," said Bosker.

These skills, says Bosker, are available to everyone, it's a "deep mental exercise".

If you put a bit of time and thought towards it, bringing your full self to work will not only benefit you but also those around you.

Just stop to smell the roses.

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