



Achieving Success – A Different Perspective

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I've always been fascinated with the underpinnings of success. From my early teenage years I can remember talking with successful people to understand what they did to become successful. I carried that curiosity with me throughout my career in sales, sales management, and executive leadership as I repeatedly sought opportunities to gain the wisdom of successful people and put it into practice. Now as an executive coach, consultant, and author, I continue to refine my knowledge of success and apply it in helping others find their own success.

One of my lessons learned is that you don't focus on success if you want to be successful. You focus on that which enables success. Neither is success about merely trying harder. It isn't about wanting something more intensely. It's not just a matter of getting more done in less time.

Success at its core is about embracing change. It is about getting off the hamster wheel of "busyness as usual", moving out of your comfort zone, and building the capability to continuously develop. It is about knowing and repeatedly employing a few basic principles that move you forward.

Another important part of success is knowing what you want to do. As Steven R. Covey popularized in his *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*, it starts with having the end in mind. It starts with knowing what it is that you want to accomplish. It seems simple enough, yet this challenges people. When asked, most people can't write down their specific goals, much less their plan for achieving them. Their goals are more general interests and broad objectives than clear outcomes. Yet for you to have clarity in what to do, you need to have clarity in where you're going.

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Equipped with a desired outcome, some people jump right into implementation mode. Others put off doing anything for awhile. Neither are optimal choices. If you are the type who is quick to implement, know that just a little preparation pays huge dividends. Or if you are the type who is slow to take action, know that days quickly become weeks which quickly become months which quickly make your goals seem out of reach. You must take action. The key is taking the right action with the right mindset.

People don't repeatedly fail at their physical fitness goals because they picked the wrong diets. They don't continually struggle in their marriage because they went to the wrong marriage enrichment programs. They don't consistently miss achieving their sales quota because they read the wrong sales books. The action you take is actually not as important as are other considerations.

Whether a go-getter, or a procrastinator, there are four fundamental enablers to success which deserve your utmost attention. Collectively they ensure the action you take moves you quickly toward your goal and in a way that is sustainable. They enable excellence in execution. The first enabler is having an accurate awareness of the development you need, personally or professionally, in order to reach your goal. The second is preparing your mindset for development. The third is building your knowledge. The fourth is creating ability.

Here is a brief summary of each:



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1. Awareness - About eight in ten people who approach me for coaching, have an incomplete view of what it is they need to do in order to reach their goal. People often see only symptoms, not the root causes or enablers to their success. They are unaware of what it is that truly holds them back. They miss the fine print that says for them to reach their goal, they must look at themselves first. They must grow, develop, learn, or stop doing something first.

For example, you might have a goal to become a better delegator. You've reached the point that you can't scale your current mode of operation any longer to get to the level of performance which you desire. You are involved in too much of the day-to-day detailed work and so you aspire to delegate more. You want to get out of the minutia and spend more time on activities that are strategic to your business.

The subtlety that you are likely to miss however is that your lack of delegation is a symptom, not a root cause. The root cause to your lack of delegation could be that you don't want to lose control, you don't trust your people to do the work, or you feel you will lose your source of value-add to the organization. For you to reach your goal therefore, you first need to deal with either your controlling nature, your inability to trust, or your sense of value-add before diving into the finer points of delegation.

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2. Mindset - The second enabler of success is having the right mindset. It is genuinely believing in the outcome which you are pursuing. It is fully understanding the answer to the question “Why am I doing this – is it really worth it?” Building the right mindset is exploring the “why” before jumping into the “what” and the “how”. It is dealing with any self-limiting beliefs and developing the confidence that you can deal with the obstacles that might come your way.

If for example you are working to overcome procrastination, yet you don't first adequately secure your enthusiasm and can-do mindset for the coming effort, you will have little sustaining power when the temptation to put something off comes up. You can't expect to stay with something if you don't fully believe in it and in your own ability.

3. Knowledge - The third enabler is building your knowledge. There is always more than one way to get to where you want to go and often a better way than you may have tried in the past. We live in a world rich in options and resources. We have at our disposal a plethora of ideas – both good ones and not so good ones. Don't assume you have all the answers. Do your research of available options. Be open to new ideas. Consider how you might test a few before settling on the one you plan to implement. Capture the knowledge that you need in order to know best how to get to your goal.

Seek advice and wise counsel from others. No one is successful on their own. Spend time with those who have achieved the goal you aspire to achieve. Learn from their mistakes. Seek knowledge until you are confident that you know “what” to do and “how” to do it. You might even find a mentor or partner to join you on your endeavor who can also provide other valuable resources.

4. Ability - Fourth, put your mindset and knowledge into practice. Create and refine your ability through repeated application. Whether you are improving your fitness, bettering a relationship, overcoming a bad habit, or building a new skill, the secret to sustained success is staying with it long enough that your new behavior becomes a habit. It has to become normal. Your development is not complete until your desired behavior becomes as unconscious as brushing your teeth with your dominate hand.



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Putting it all together, the formula for excellence in execution is 1) knowing the key behaviors and attitudes you need in order to reach success, 2) developing confidence and an underlying intrinsic motivation, 3) acquiring detailed knowledge of the “what” and “how-to” of your endeavor, and 4) driving your desired behaviors and attitudes into your subconscious through practice and replication. Repeat these four enablers of success for each successive goal you set and not only will you realize your ambitions, but you will continuously improve yourself reaching even higher levels of achievement in all areas of your life.

Pick one goal and give it a try. Dig in and uncover the root causes or enablers to your success. Build your motivation to achieve your goal. Secure a “can-do” attitude by removing any doubt that you can overcome obstacles. Ply your new skill, behavior, or attitude until it becomes a normal part of you. And experience for yourself the power of putting this method behind your ambitions.

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