

## Success – What It Takes

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There is no doubt that success starts virtually; in your mind. The first success is in your head. Once the right mental attitude is established *and maintained*, the “second” success (the real success) will follow.

Becoming a very successful rep requires a no compromise attitude. Just like any physical or athletic activity, the activity of building a thriving business is half physical work and half mental work. You might be relieved to know that most successful business people are not born that way, they are made. So what does it take to be famously successful? Well, there are definite prominent traits among past and present high achievers - traits that you can develop. Traits that might seem overwhelming initially, but are easier to develop than you might think. The secret is to start developing them now, in a very conscious, one step at a time fashion.

Lets study the primary traits and attitudes present in successful business people. These are traits that you can develop to put you in the top ten percent of the financial services industry:

### **Sense of Purpose**

A sense of purpose is like fuel in a car, the charge in a battery, the wind in a sail. A sense of purpose is the only thing that can keep a person motivated to maintain a high level of energy over the long haul as one works towards the accomplishment of their objectives. It is the driving force behind success. If a person does not have a sense of purpose relating to their career, something that gives meaning to what they are doing, all of the factors that will motivate them at the start or their career will be very short lived, and each day will eventually become a chore to get through.

High achievers in the financial services industry are always working towards something that has meaning for them. This meaning is typically related to the ability they have to provide helpful guidance that effects their clients financial well being. This meaning gives them their long term motivation to succeed. They turn the opportunity they have to create and manage wealth for people into a sense of purpose that inspires achievement.

High achievers determine what they want to become. They get a clear picture of the person they want to be at the height of their success, and work proudly towards that vision. They see in this vision, a person who earns a living by providing real value to those that they work with, and this is the vision that drives them to achieve.

## **Pride Based on Commitment to Excellence**

There is a very fulfilling pride that comes with knowing that you are very good at what you do. The only way to experience this pride is to commit to be excellent at what you do.

High achievers in financial services have pride in themselves. They do their job in a superior fashion. They commit to quality in every detail of their work. They are good, and they are proud of it. They know that there is nothing that can compare with the feeling of knowing that they are one of the best at what they do. They do not stand for mediocrity. They know that there is no such thing as superior rewards for average performance.

High achievers become absorbed in their work. They pay their dues early on so that they can enjoy the rewards that come with a well established business foundation. Their work becomes a part of them. Their career is an extension of their commitment to excellence in life. If they ever find themselves doing something that they have a hard time committing themselves to, and becoming excellent at, they move on. They know that they are not doing themselves, or anyone else any favors by sticking with something that is not right for them since they will never do well in it anyway.

## **Provide Real Value**

The free market rewards value with value. The people who are in this business primarily to make money are not the ones who are the top producers. In the financial services business, the more you focus on making money, the less you will make. The majority of successful reps did not begin to realize their success, until they began to focus totally on what they could give in return for their success.

High achievers know that in order to make a significant income they have to earn it. They must focus on providing real value to their clients. They know that *they are not here to sell, to prospect, to make trades... They are here to solve the customer's problems, to help them achieve their financial goals; to help them create and manage wealth, to increase their clients financial well being.* That is a very important distinction.

Successful reps are always looking for opportunities to service people better than they are currently being served. They concentrate continually on increasing the value of what they are doing for others. The customer comes first, second, third and fourth, and there ain't no fifth.

## **Accept Total Responsibility For Success or Failure**

The act of accepting total responsibility for your success or failure will directly influence the degree of success that a person will achieve in the financial services industry. High achievers realize that others can not make them successful. They are the only ones who can do that. Using a lack of support from others, the gyrations of the market, product availability, etc. as excuses is counter productive. It undermines the motivation to overcome obstacles.

High achievers take their career success into their own hands. They realize that they have everything it takes to achieve success. They do not make excuses by saying it was

the other persons fault that something did not work out. They do not blame their lack of sales on their employer for not doing enough advertising and promotion. They do not say things like, "If I were working at such and such a bank, I would be doing much better because they have a much better so and so." They realize that their success is up to them. It doesn't matter where they are working. They know that if they are good and doing what they are supposed to be doing, they will be successful.

The top producers realize that the days of waiting for the organization to guide them and tell them what they should be doing are over (or were never here to begin with). They are self starters. They know that the days of "just do it" are here. They are self reliant, they are "doers", they have a sense of urgency, and are self motivated. They are the type of people who, if they don't have the authority to do something, they go and find it...they just get things done. They create their own future, They don't wait for someone else to do it because the other person s version of their future is never be as good as theirs.

Winners make progress. Losers make excuses. Winners are in control of their life and their success. No one else is. The top wage earners in every field, without fail, think of themselves as self employed and act as though they own the place. They know that one of the greatest mistakes anyone could make is to think you work for anybody else but yourself. It doesn't matter who writes their paycheck. The fastest way to move ahead in almost any organization of value is to treat the company like it belongs to you.

Don't believe that the grass is always greener on the other side. Fertilize your own grass. Make no excuses. Success is up to you.

## **Balance**

Balance is critical for success. It is impossible to achieve real success in any field without a sense of balance in life. Although there have been successful people who have not had real balance in their life, their success, self admittedly, has been very hollow, and in many cases, short lived. By balance we mean an appropriate amount of the things that make for a healthy mental and physical condition. Most normal people have to have a healthy dose of a variety of things in their life for true fulfillment. Remember that if you are not healthy mentally and physically, you will not be performing nearly as well as you otherwise could be.

Typically the things that need to be balanced in life tend to be areas like: work, family, physical activity, personal education, "nourishment of the soul", contribution to society, etc. There will be different things for different people at different stages in life.

Achieving professional goals at the expense of the rest of your life is a hollow victory. Sales results are not the total measure of life. Yes, high achievers put in a lot of hours, but their passion for work tends to spill over into the rest of their lives. They are typically as passionate about their family, their vacations, their hobbies, etc. as they are about work. Contrary to popular belief, there is a very blurry line between their business life and their personal life. They live with work, and work with life. Because of the overlap between work and play, they are able to give both equal energy and time.

There are plenty of people who achieve early success only to self-destruct. These are the people who were out of balance. They fell over. Burnt out. High achievers learn to sense when they are out of balance and becoming inefficient, and they do something about it. They do whatever it takes to bring balance into their life.

Successful reps also realize that the required balance is different at different stages of life. A lot of the difference depends on what is going on in the rest of their lives. For example, it might be all right for them to work fifteen hour days at certain times in their lives to maintain momentum, or achieve a specific objective, especially before being married or starting a family. But these times of heavy work focus tend to get balanced out after the “foundation is laid”. They start finding that by making sure they are fulfilled in other areas of their lives and maintain good health, rest and relaxation, they are much more productive when they are working. Their tendency is to quickly gain the ability to become very efficient, leverage their time, get more done in less time, and work smarter, not harder.

They have a knack for acquiring the ability to “be good at everything they do”. To not neglect the important things in life. To be good workers, spouses, parents, neighbors, etc. This, in fact, doesn't come naturally, it is an acquired skill that is by design and practice.

So remember, if you are balanced, you are falling down.

### **Passion and Focus**

Passion is probably the one thing more than any other, that the high achievers exude. When they talk about their work, they are passionate in discourse. When they are faced with a work related problem, they see it as a challenge and are passionate about finding a solution. When they put in long hours they do it out of a passion for and absorption in what they are doing.

This tends to spill over into their personal lives as well. They are passionate about everything they do and tend to see less of a separation between business and pleasure since they truly enjoy both.

The passion that successful reps display is based on the belief that what they do is valuable and worthwhile. They see being in financial services as a vehicle that allows them to help others create and manage wealth, and get rewarded significantly for it. That is something that they get passionate about. They commit themselves to that mission and work at it with zeal.

And high achievers focus, focus, focus. They have the ability to focus on their work so intently that they become unstoppable. This becomes easy for them since they have such a passion for it. Most high achievers get so caught up in what they are doing that by the time they look up, the day (and part of the night) is gone, and they have no idea how it went by so quickly.

They also focus on their market. Frequently they have developed a specific market niche(or niches) and target them intently to really penetrate the niche. They become known as THE broker to work with in that specific market. They get major market share of a targeted niche by providing the best value in that market.

## **Discipline**

Top producers don't do anything half way. If something is important enough for them to contribute their time to, they do it in a way that they are proud of. They don't need someone else to tell them what they should be doing. Every professional person knows what they should be doing as they work their way through a day. They instinctively know what is important and what is not. They also know when they are goofing off or making excuses. The key is that top producers have the discipline to stay on the productive course.

They know that we all have the same 24 hours in a day,. It s what we do with those 24 hours that determines our destiny. The person who really succeeds is the one who is disciplined enough to always be doing what they should be doing. The person who really gets ahead is the one who really does not need a boss. They are the ones that stick to doing the things that really move them forward. They have the discipline to continually do what they know they should be doing. They don't compromise. They become role models. They are always asking themselves: "Is what I am doing now moving me towards my goals?" If the answer is no, they stop doing it, and start doing something that will.

Time Management is critically important. They are always using their time in the most productive manner possible (keep in mind that this sometimes means taking a break, balance is important). Their time management is a discipline based on their goals, and their goals are designed to always move them forward. They grasp the concept that their career (and life) is like a bicycle, if it is not moving forward, it is falling down (see the tie in with balance?...).

## **Persistence**

Nothing is more powerful than drive, determination, and persistence. There is no doubt that the person who keeps trying after all others have quit is the one who will succeed. It has been said that success doesn't come to you, you go to it. Failure is frequently the path of least persistence. There is no such thing as failure. There is only such a thing as not trying hard enough.

Successful reps get stuff done. They persist. Their drive is a product of their focus, which is a product of their sense of purpose.

Anybody can be persistent, but successful reps are persistent at the right things. When they persist with something, they know it is something that is worth the effort. That is because they have a strong sense of priorities. Their priorities are based on their goals, which are based on their vision.

A high achievers impressive level of persistence becomes basically instinctive to them. It is almost something that they take for granted. As you can see, their persistence is a product of the other characteristics we have been discussing, which is a product of their nature that they worked to cultivate. Their persistence is something that they do not really realize until it is brought to their attention.

Perhaps Calvin Coolidge best summed up the importance of persistence when he said: "Nothing in the world can take the place of persistence. Talent will not. Nothing is more common that unsuccessful men with talent. Genius will not. Unrewarded genius is almost a proverb. Education will not. The world is full of educated derelicts. Persistence and determination alone are omnipotent."

Determine what you want, go after it, and don't stop until you get it.

### **Not Afraid to Fail**

The secret to success is failure. Sounds funny, but it is true. Look at any successful person and you will see that there is a graveyard of failed ideas and attempts behind them. As Thomas J. Watson, the founder of IBM said "Do you want to be successful? Then double your failure rate." Success is impossible without failure.

Did you learn to ride your bicycle on the first attempt? Of course not. And not on the second, third, fourth, or fifth attempt either. Look at silicon valley, one of the greatest business success stories of our time. It is a graveyard of failures. Many more companies have failed then succeeded. But it is all those failures that made the success possible. It is simply a matter of trying enough things until you find the few that actually work.

The average millionaire went bankrupt between three to four times before finding success. Failure is not bad, it is good. It helps you learn another way not to do something. Thomas Edison took two years and literally thousands of attempts to invent the light bulb. When someone asked him how he could stand failing thousands of times he said something close to, " I haven't failed at all. I have just discovered thousands of ways not to (invent the light bulb)."

### **Perpetual Learning**

All successful people are committed to being perpetual learners. To them, every day is filled with learning opportunities. School never ends, so to speak. They are constantly in competition with themselves. Always looking to get smarter, solve a more difficult problem, come up with a more unique marketing strategy, etc. They never pass up a learning opportunity.

Successful reps make sure they are always moving forward. They never waste their time. They tend to not watch much television since they feel that it is a waste of time, something that generally prevents growth instead of promoting it. High achievers do not tend to read many novels. They figure that if they are going to commit that much time to reading, they make sure they are reading something that will move them forward, something that they can learn from. They realize that there are an incredible amount of good books out there that will make them better at what they do. Fifty eight percent of adults never read a nonfiction book from cover to cover after they leave high school. Successful people realize that if they are the exception to this, it will give them tremendous leverage. These are the same people who will possibly one day be interviewing you and ask you what the last business book is that you read, and if you

don't have an answer, they will not hire you since they will feel that you are not serious about your professional development.

Top producers constantly read, learn, study, do everything possible to take in more information on a day to day basis. It gives them an enormous edge. They take advantage of the many services that exist to consolidate important information for busy executives. For example, there are services that summarize the best business books into a few succinct pages every month. There are services that do the same on audio tape. Subscription services that contain monthly discussions with leading business and motivational speakers. On-line services with programs called "smart agents" that will filter out and send them just the information they are interested in. They use the available organized information to give them the advantage.

You will rarely find a successful business person listening to their radio as they commute to their office. They are typically listening to things like business books on tape for information leverage. They consider their car a university on wheels. They become so well educated in their "spare time" that they develop the edge they need to move them into the top ten percent of the field.

### **Get Started...**

The qualities of success are easier to develop then would be apparent on first read. They actually build off of each other. The secret is to take it one step at a time. Develop one of the qualities, then work on the next. Each successive quality will be easier to develop since it will build off of the one before it. The key is to get started. Once you have some momentum built up, the development of these qualities take on a life of their own, and your exponential improvement becomes almost unstoppable.

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