

# The Laws and Secrets of Success

Delving Deeper than You've Been Told Before into the Mysteries of Why Some People Accomplish More Than Others, Are Happier, Better Liked, and Yes, Wealthier

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## Introduction

What is success, and what causes some individuals to have more of it than others? Many books, articles and examinations have studied these issues. Some have focused on the realm of personal factors, citing for example, motivation or drive, thrift or emotional intelligence. Others examine how we are shaped, by family and upbringing, education, background and socioeconomic factors etc. Some discuss the attributes of choice and decision making, while others make the case for the role of luck or fate.

Certainly all of the above, and more, can and do play a role in success. The question is, collectively, how much of a role, and are there other types of generally under and unexamined factors which are also critical in determining one's level of success?

I think that there are.

**The Laws and Secrets of Success** will examine new narratives in regard to how we think of success, in ourselves and others.

Narratives are powerful things. We have stories, scripts, concepts and/or memes that help us understand our marriage and our spouse, our job, our kids and our families of origin. We have narratives about our diet, about our exercise (or lack thereof), about our entertainment choices, about our sense of style.

You get the idea. In short, we have narratives about pretty close to every aspect of our lives. Including our notions of success.

This book will lay out nine areas that are typically underappreciated (or in some cases unrecognized) in our understanding of success, each in its own chapter. These are: A Deeper and More Nuanced Understanding of Emotional Intelligence; The Three C's (Competition, Challenge and Character); The Strength of Your Network Inbox; The Move From Domination to Discovery; The Strength of the Ant; Show, Don't Tell; The Confidence of No; The Wisdom to Know The Difference and Rising to the Top is Only the Beginning.

**A Deeper and More Nuanced Understanding of Emotional Intelligence** examines how success goes well beyond a predictive understanding of others and what they are likely to do.

**The Three C's (Competition, Challenge and Character)** examines how the successful take responsibility for their lives rather than making excuses or casting blame.

**The Strength of Your Network Inbox** examines that “birds of a feather do flock together” but that it is much more important who includes you than who you seek to include.

**The Move From Domination to Discovery** examines how the successful move beyond mastery and leaving their footprint on others and the world to leveraging the strengths of others in a service and partnership model.

**The Strength of the Ant** details how the successful frame their herculean efforts and results within the context of respect and appreciation for the abilities of others.

**Show, Don't Tell** details the importance, as they say, of “backbone over wishbone”.

**The Confidence of No** details the balance of the successful between influencing others and allowing themselves to be influenced.

**The Wisdom to Know The Difference** examines the role of discernment, judgment and attitude in success.

and **Rising to the Top is Only the Beginning** looks at why some stay on top and continue to rise and excel while other successful individuals

fall back down.

While the chapters cover some familiar topics of success, **The Laws and Secrets of Success** questions conventional contributing factors of success throughout. In doing so, the book accepts some traditional thinking, adds to some, and supplants others entirely. If success were so easy, we would all be there already!

The time for some fresh thinking on this critical topic is clearly well overdue.

### **Success Area 1 - A Deeper and More Nuanced Understanding of Emotional Intelligence and Success**

Emotional intelligence as commonly discussed and understood in regard to success often focuses largely on one's ability to successfully manage interpersonal relations. For example, how sensitive are we to social cues and what others are trying to tell us? How much empathy do we have? How well do we truly listen to others? And, importantly, how well do we recognize the needs and emotions of others and are able to meet or affect them?

These are important aspects of emotional intelligence and success. Emotional intelligence IS critical to success. Some argue that it is as or more important than general measures of intelligence or cognitive ability. We've all heard the examples of Ph.D.'s driving cabs and the difference between "street smarts" (including common sense, which has been said to be not

that common at times) and “book smarts”.

Although they are by no means mutually exclusive, neither are they inherently highly correlated.

If they were, we wouldn't have the universality of the “school of hard knocks”. We'd just learn everything we need to be successful in school. We all know that that isn't close to being the case.

But is emotional intelligence, in regard to one's success, a lot deeper and multi-faceted than is often considered? I will argue here for a resounding yes.

If life, meaning life experience, is the greatest teacher, and many feel that it is, then by traditional conceptualizations of emotional intelligence we will become more and more successful the better we understand other people and how they react. And that is true to a point. But herein lies the first major consideration, rather obvious but not often discussed in detail. You're you and they are them. You can understand another person up to a point, and certainly increase in that skill, and doing so is critical, even vital to one's success. However there are physiological barriers that impose obvious limits to how far this can be taken.

One could ask a fundamental question, which can be considered philosophical in nature but has practical applications in this realm. Are you fundamentally even understanding another

person or are you in fact increasingly developing your conceptualization of another instead? That is, can you ever really get outside of your own mind to see what the “objective” reality is, in this case another person?

What about intuition and empathy you ask? I do give these a lot of credence, but we must also examine our own filters and biases to better understand how we view and understand other people. This will allow us to better understand the role of emotional intelligence, in regard to learning about both others and ourselves, in success.

### **Knowing Others and Knowing Ourselves**

What if emotional intelligence, as it relates to success, is a lot broader than commonly considered? And different?

I believe that it can be convincingly demonstrated that understanding other people is the smaller part of the battle in terms of our success, and that understanding ourselves and our own thoughts, wants and behaviors is the larger part of emotional intelligence related to our success.

And that the blind spots that we have in this inner observation and maintenance are much larger than in understanding others. And in fact that our blind spots in understanding ourselves are a, and likely the, major contributing factor in our misunderstanding and misperceiving others.

And that these types of factors are critical to the role of emotional intelligence in success.

This is far from a distinction without a difference in regard to emotional intelligence and success. Rather, it is a critical difference.

Let's examine first the notion of self-fulfilling prophecies. Have you ever noticed how angry people tend to elicit angry responses from others, and loving people more kind responses from others? There is, possibly, enough evidence for any type of mindset that you bring into the world to be verified, such that you can find (or importantly, elicit) confirming evidence for those beliefs. While it feels as if we are being effected by the world and others, and sometimes perhaps even at their mercy at the worst of times, might it also be possible that we are in fact more active participants in our experience than this and shaping events, including responses from others, more than we realize or know?

It is famously said that twenty years of experience is different than one year of experience twenty times. Are we learning or are we reacting?

Let's think about patterns? What is a behavioral pattern? Do people engage in them in relationships, serious and otherwise? Is there something in us that elicits certain types of behavioral responses from others in certain situations? Is there an element called personality, while not universally perceived in

uniform by others, which does demonstrate elements of this principle such that many of us can agree that “Charlie is an angry guy” (overall or in spots) or that “Tom gets taken advantage of easily by bosses and women and family”.

Are we living and reacting to the world or are we repeating our behavioral expectations with others over time in patterns?

Certainly, it does not need to be either/or. One can believe, at the same time, in both the ability for growth and learning and also in our being “creatures of habit”, as incompatible, perhaps, as these two traits may appear to be.

But it is worth looking into in regard to emotional intelligence and success.

### **A Mirror Doesn't Lie**

I would argue that we are projecting as much as we are perceiving in regard to our experiences of others in this world, and that this is a significant factor in our varying outcomes that we would associate with success. How many times have you heard that success is a mindset, a way of thinking, a set of beliefs? That the rich think a certain way and the poor another. Or the famous saying that whether you think you can or you think you can't, you're right.

If this is true, or partially true, then emotional intelligence as it pertains to success is substantially, if not fundamentally, a measure of the views that we have towards others and how these influence - I would say often



actually dictate – our behaviors in the world and towards others which determines the results we obtain which we quantify and describe as our level of success.

Traditional notions of emotional intelligence, to be fair, have not always focused on increasing our understanding of the other. They have also, to a lesser degree, focused on ourselves, for example our ability to self-regulate and self-control our reactions based upon the social information that we have developed and receive from others. However, notions of emotional intelligence and success have primarily focused on understanding and managing our relations with others rather than an understanding of our own thinking, projections and behavioral styles.

Are you with me so far?

What I am saying is that if you want to understand another person that you have to understand yourself. Just as it is famously said that “charity begins at home” and you can’t love another if you don’t first love yourself, how can you accept anger in another while you struggle with your own anger issues? Can you allow another to feel vulnerable if you hate the vulnerability feelings in yourself?

I believe that life, including other people, is a big mirror of how we see ourselves. And that a mirror doesn’t lie.

Further, experiences are like receipts. When

you go into a store and purchase something, the receipt tells you what you have purchased and how much you have paid. Experiences are the same. What happens to you in life, that is the life experiences that you have, are, I would argue, to some measure and I believe a significant one, a receipt that demonstrates to you what your thinking patterns are.

Experiences are the mirror that show you (to the degree that you are open to seeing) who you are.

### **So, Are We Responsible For Our Lives?**

Another way of asking that question, at least some element of it, is, are we responsible for our success?

Yes and no I would argue, but more often I would say yes. You may have heard the famous expression, "life is 10% what happens to you and 90% what you do with it" (i.e. how you react to it). That does feel about right, scary (or empowering, or both) as this may sound.

Certainly it would be wrong to be totally absolutist. The infant who died of cancer who never had the ability to really live much less develop an adult mindset.

Certainly some of us have more "luck" than others (good luck or bad, you may have heard the saying, "if it wasn't for bad luck I'd no luck at all"), and some of us are born with more advantages than others (both material and life-given in other ways). I wouldn't dispute that at all. But the funny thing is that if we live long

enough, most if not all of us tend to encounter the same types of things, even if the details differ. Losses and challenges of various kinds.

We did not come from identical circumstances but we are all part of the human condition, and while we face different situations we also face many that are similar in kind.

And we each also have the same 24 hours per day.

### **Emotional Intelligence and Success**

Perhaps more successful individuals are, all things being equal, more optimistic and positive. Not naively positive, but positive backed up by effort and action. More of the “I can’t solve every situation but I can work hard and find the best or silver lining in every situation and generally have things work out ok”. Perhaps the optimistic, on the whole, get better reactions and more help from others because they elicit it. There is a tendency to be nicer to people we like. Perhaps optimistic people are more likeable. Perhaps they are friendlier. Perhaps they give more before expecting in return (you’ve probably heard the famous saying from Zig Ziglar “you can have everything in life you want if you will just help enough other people get what they want”).

Perhaps successful people are more resilient. Jesse Jackson famously said, “I may have been born in the ghetto, but the ghetto was not born in me.” As has been demonstrated in study, resiliency is a, perhaps even the, critical factor

in success. How many times have you heard successful people say in interviews that they simply got up one more time than life knocked them down?

I believe that we need to stop looking at emotional intelligence as primarily the ability to read and influence other people. I believe that not only does this have a potentially manipulative element to it - "managing others" - but it also is less effective than working and learning to increasingly manage ourselves.

When we are growth oriented we are learning to deal with our own blind spots, and this is a, and perhaps the, critical factor that allows us as we grow to see the world with fresh eyes and thus have that twenty years of experience rather than one year of experience twenty times.

As has been famously said, if you want to walk around in comfort, you can carpet the world or instead place a piece of carpet under your own feet.

Or, just as famously, "wherever you go, there you are".

### **Managing One's Fears**

It says in Scripture that "He who controls his temper is better than a war hero, he who rules his spirit better than he who captures a city."

The ability to manage one's fears productively is perhaps the hallmark quality of the successful

individual, and is, I believe, the fundamental expression of emotional intelligence. All successful people (that I have heard about) detail their coming up with some effective way of managing their own doubts and fears. Including those imposed on them from other people on the outside.

I believe that being able to act responsibly, effectively and courageously in the presence of one's fears is the most important factor in emotional intelligence.

And the greatest contributor of emotional intelligence to success.

One critical difference between those who are more and less successful is focus on fear. It has been well demonstrated that what we focus on grows stronger. Those who are more fearful are risk-averse. They play it safe. They try to protect the downside. Their fears control them because they feel weak and vulnerable, and scared about how it will affect them if something very bad or painful happens to them.

But what if an abundance of fear brings failure into our lives? We know that in the animal kingdom predators smell fear, and pounce upon it. The "blood in the water phenomenon". As much as we don't like to recognize it at times, there is a strong "survival of the fittest" element at times.

Those who are more fearful serve those who

are less fearful. Employees, who take less personal risk and are given more structure, work for business owners who engage in a greater degree of professional risk and work in a lesser degree of structure.

Fear constricts. When we live in our fears and give in to our fears it limits our choices and opportunities in life. Not only career opportunities, but opportunities with our mates and in mate selection, with our kids, and in all areas of life.

Those who are more fearful are cautious. They are “protecting the downside”. They don’t want to be hurt. As a result, they may not suffer catastrophic loss as much as they will “death by a thousand cuts” in lost opportunities. When you have that slow, drip, drip, drip sense of loss and missed opportunities, it can fuel negative beliefs such as disappointment and despair. And there may come a tipping point at which incremental losses start to accelerate.

The more successful, in recognizing, accepting but managing their fears, do not fear failure as much and instead recognize that failure is integral to success (e.g. trial and error). So they are focused on learning, “failing early and often”. They don’t conceptualize failing as being a failure. There is less catastrophic thinking, which is a fear based notion. The successful have a larger notion of self than a present circumstance, and as such an unexpected or poor result doesn’t define them or necessarily limit their options.

They realize that success is a process containing failure, and that they can remain focused to live and fight another day.

While the less successful play not to lose, the successful play to win.

This may be the critical difference.

In this way, managing fears is a critical element of emotional intelligence and success.

Accommodation and Assimilation are the two ways that one acts in the world. Certainly both are necessary for survival, mental health and success. The fearful rely heavily on accommodation. They are trying to figure out what is going on in the world and react to it, and this is the traditional notion of emotional intelligence and success. Assimilation, by contrast, is the incorporation of the world into oneself. While favored to a greater degree by the successful, this process is done far from blindly. Instead, emotional intelligence is used to better understand oneself and one's actions, fears, biases and styles such that one can interact with the world more intelligently.

## **Conclusion**

Emotional intelligence IS critical to success. But we first need to understand ourselves before we can understand others. What we think we know about others can be, instead, a projection of our own biases and what we elicit from others (including related to our fears), which, based upon our level of self-understanding and

emotional intelligence, we may realize more or less well.

As we broaden the notion of emotional intelligence to include how to relate to and understand ourselves, we can be more effectively served by emotional intelligence in its important role in success.

## **Success Area 2 - The Three C's (Competition, Challenge and Character)**

### **The Three C's and Success**

Most of us avoid or dislike obstacles, but not the most successful.

Successful people realize that it is important, to quote from Joyce Meyer, to use the hardships in life to "make themselves better rather than bitter". This mindset is a critical difference between highly successful individuals and those less so. Successful individuals recognize and in fact appreciate that life can be, and often is, difficult, but that this is not something to be feared or criticized but embraced. Less successful people instead make excuses and cast blame. If only they'd gotten better breaks or not been mistreated. A victim mentality. By contrast, successful individuals take responsibility for their lives and the results in it, and do not blame other people.

### **Competition**

Successful people are often portrayed or considered as ruthless. As competing with others and taking whatever they can grab in a



win-lose proposition.

You've heard the expressions:

"Who did you step over (or sleep with) to get to the top?"

"It's a dog-eat dog world"

"No good deed goes unpunished"

Despite this conventional wisdom, this is not, in fact, how most successful think and act.

Far from it.

You may not be used to thinking this way about successful people, so it may sound a little surprising at first, but consider this:

Successful people realize that the real competition is actually with oneself. Others just serve as a mirror, and a measuring stick, for us to allow us to see where we are at and improve. This is part of taking responsibility for one's life.

And for one's success.

Life created each of us differently. An oak tree will never be a better maple tree than a maple tree. It will never be a better bird than a bird. But if it takes advantage of its surroundings to the maximum, plays well the cards it is dealt (or can acquire), then it can be the best oak tree that it is capable of being.

As corny as this may sound, successful people realize that success involves being the best “you” that you are capable of being. That is why successful people are not jealous or envious of other people. Envy and jealousy are negative emotions emanating from a feeling of lack. We wouldn’t be jealous of others unless we felt that they have something that we do not. It is this inner feeling of lack that gives rise to a corresponding poverty or other form of lack in the world – for as within, so without. By contrast, gratitude is an expression of fullness and wealth. How can you be grateful unless you are already full and have a lot to give. The same applies to all feelings of fullness or completeness versus feelings of lack. For example love versus hate (or apathy). Love is a sense of I have enough for myself, and even extra that I can give to you. Hate by contrast, is a feeling of lack, you took something from me I need, or you have something that I need, etc. Apathy is much different than contentment. Contentment is feeling that what I have is enough, it is all that I need. Apathy is there is nothing of value that can be gained nor to share, and hence I have no interest in other people.

Why feel bad that another type of tree has some “desired” characteristic that you do not. Or that something comes easier to another than it comes to you. “Variety is the spice of life” and successful people realize that is important to focus on what you have, and make the most of it, rather than what you do not. This does not mean that one cannot nor

should not work on one's "weaknesses" as well as one's strengths. Certainly we should seek to improve in all areas that are important to us. But to waste time and worry in comparison to others when we each are unique and on our own individual path in life is not something which successful people are prone to do.

### **Competition in the World**

And yet life does have a highly competitive element. Seen from a spiritual perspective, this involves the notion that the lower is always subservient to the higher. From a carnal perspective it can be expressed, for example, through the notion of "the survival of the fittest", a "will to power" or a need to dominate.

This is real, but far different than aggression. While the successful are often viewed as the most aggressive, they may instead, perhaps, be seen as the most focused or determined. They are certainly not easily swayed away from their goals. In addition, not only are they NOT more aggressive, but they are in fact most able to withstand the intrusions of others. In short, they have a balanced mood and temperament that is not easily displaced, even within the highly competitive challenges of the world.

Unsuccessful people become moody, angry and upset. They strike out at others when they do not get their way or seek to overtly dominate them. Successful individuals, by contrast, stay calm and professional and withstand the strongest blows. They possess the centeredness

and inner confidence and calm not to be easily ruffled. This is a major component of success.

Not responding when others are asserting their will to power against you can seem like weakness, but many times it reflects a superior strength in that such a successful individual is not allowing oneself to be distracted to become engaged by the other who is generally less successful. Successful individuals are calm because they are confident. They are not overwhelmed by the will to power intrusions of others because they recognize the reasons why they occur as being from a source of weakness from the other.

The most successful individuals may well be the most competitive but they are able to do this largely, rather than through overt competitive actions but through, interestingly, the self-control of avoiding the competitive acts of others. By not becoming engaged, and thus not wasting valuable energy and resources, including time.

Success by ignoring others!!

(So, now you know why the very successful never return your calls).

In all seriousness, We all prioritize our activities, and the most successful are primarily engaged with others who are also most successful, who share the same or similar characteristics as themselves.

By making oneself inaccessible and unassailable, the successful individual is free to focus on one's own goals without distraction. They also, in avoiding stress and resource draining altercations, retain the focus and resources to directly confront competitive challenges that occur that they must respond to that are more serious.

We call this picking one's battles.

### **Competition Tools in Society**

Those who are high on the success chain have five extraordinarily powerful tools at their disposal. Business resources (including, importantly, financial resources). Legal resources (and by extension the courts), political and government resources (executive and legislative (so we'll count this as two). And the media. Focusing on these is a book onto itself, but suffice to say that, given these collectively, the highly successful individual is not overly concerned, for the most part, in regard to competition that may arise from the average man or woman on the street.

I will make one quick note about the media. The fallacy (but oft repeated mantra) that the media is the watchdog of the other four (and especially the other three, being the three branches of government) is perhaps the biggest fox guarding the henhouse delusion that keeps the whole system working well together in an integrated and reinforcing fashion.

The general idea of checks and balances is itself

a tool of the rich and successful to present an illusion of opportunity (if not fairness) that many may suspect in their heart of hearts, especially if they are the cynical kind, is instead a reinforcement of entrenched interests of the status quo.

Want to see it even more dramatically. Add in these two additional forces: police and the military.

It's easy to see, how it can appear at times, that it a completely stacked deck. However, before we consider these an abuse of power, we must also recognize that being a nation of laws serves us all (although perhaps to varying degrees), as does having a judicial system, media, police, etc.

It's simply a matter of balance and fairness in regard to how these institutions are used. And when they are misused, they start to erode and lose their power, because the masses of people will not follow them when the trust level dips below a certain point.

Some might see such a structure as an argument for Social Darwinism or "might makes right". There is a fine balance here. Power MUST be used for one to be successful but when it is misused this violates the essential principles of life and backfires. Understanding the intricacies and nuances between effective use versus misuse, is a, if not the, critical determining factor between success and failure. How is this distinction effectively made?

By character, which we will be examining a bit further below.

In short, the successful use power effectively but are not power-hungry. We'll examine this more below (in short, the adaptive use of power aids all and reflects a sense of fullness, while the abuse of power represents a sense of deficiency and lack and thus becomes non-constructive or destructive, depending upon degree).

### **Competition and the Marketplace of Ideas**

The world is a competition of ideas. More powerful ideas (such as a car for transportation) tend to replace less powerful ideas (such as horse and buggy).

Or, to date, capitalism over communism.

Almost by definition, the successful possess better (i.e. more successful) ideas.

It has been said (and I'm paraphrasing) "that whenever two people engage in dialogue in good faith, the one who is more certain will wind up influencing the one who is less certain".

Think of the power and implications of that principle.

The world advances so good ideas must advance. The world is complex so ideas must be considered not only in isolation but also as they relate to the bigger picture. The power of

learning is that it exposes us to better ideas.  
And through understanding and experience we  
can incorporate those ideas into guiding  
principles and wisdom.

The most successful people clearly do.

Successful ideas can be incremental or  
disruptive in their advancement. Fortunes are  
made from successfully implemented disruptive  
ideas.

### **Challenge**

They've done studies involving taking bees into  
space, and the bees die. They die because there  
is not enough resistance to their flying. The  
bees need the resistance to survive.

Resistance is critical to human beings as well.  
We need to grow - everything in life grows or  
dies, that is a fundamental principle in life (my  
Dad termed it, "if you're not moving forward in  
life, you're moving backwards").

Or, as many have heard said, "that which  
doesn't kill us makes us stronger".

When we exercise it hurts, but it hurts in a way  
that is making us stronger. Muscles need to be  
used to grow. The "use it or lose it"  
phenomenon.

Perhaps the challenges of life, the  
disappointments and hurts, are mental  
exercise.



Successful people better accept life on its terms, and adapt to it. They take responsibility for the actions they engage in, the thinking that gives rise to it, and the results that emerge. Unsuccessful people live in “woulda, coulda, shoulda”.

It's been famously said that “if” is the longest word in the English language.

This is not to say that every pain is to be embraced.

There is helpful pain and non-helpful pain. The helpful pain is a stretching or a discomfort that is expanding our capabilities, our minds, our hearts, our conscience, our will, our spirits and our souls. The non-helpful type of pain is when we torture ourselves with the things we tell ourselves --“I'm not good enough”, “I'm not strong enough”, “No one will ever love me”, “I can't accept...” etc.

Successful people understand this critical distinction, and make it.

Successful people are compassionate with themselves in addition to being compassionate with others. Self-compassion, a form of self-love, is the basis for being compassionate with other people.

Another Joyce Meyer concept is that human interactions can be like sandpaper, helping to take away our rough edges. If you are not that compassionate in life, or if it is a trait that you

are working on, consciously or unconsciously, you may draw people into your life who will encourage you or literally force you (although we do have free will) to be more compassionate. Perhaps you will have a special needs child, who needs more of your heart, devotion and care than you thought that you were capable of giving. Perhaps a trusted friend or relative will betray you, forcing you to either forgive or remain bitter over time.

When you start to realize that others are serving as a mirror for you so that you can better understand yourself and where you are at, then, to the degree that you accept this, you can begin to become more compassionate with yourself and with others.

This is the basis of emotional intelligence leading to success that we examined in the last chapter.

Remember those bees above. That must seem like nirvana in those first moments, to go through life with little or no resistance, and while it might be helpful for a short period of time - we all surely need to relax and recharge our batteries at times - life has its fullness and growth from challenge.

It is, apparently, the nature of the world in which we live.

It is human nature, even by those who are disciplined, to sometimes (or often) seek the path of least resistance, and embracing the

challenges of life takes real maturity. Life can seem incredibly challenging. Will we survive? Will we prosper? Will we continue to prosper?

It has been famously said that time is the gift of the universe providing perspective. We're mortal, and we're reminded of that with time. There is no success, in the long run (from all we know so far) of cheating death in this world. This is incredibly sobering.

The losses that we suffer in life bring us closer to that ultimate loss, that inevitable loss. Our death. And are a reminder that can bring richness and meaning to what we experience in our lives if we are open to having it be as such.

Ultimately, challenge is scary because it brings us closer to our ultimate challenge, our mortality, the challenge that we cannot conquer.

We distract ourselves with the challenges of the day and as we solve these successfully we delude ourselves that we are ultimately secure. But cracks appear - inevitably.

Successful individuals are better at accepting the truth of situations more fully. We all intellectually accept that we are mortal but we, it seems, largely put it out of our minds. Some people say that successful people are driven by their fears. If we are driven by fears then our level of success must be questioned, as what is our quality of life no matter what we have gained if we are captive to fear?

The successful individual is at peace with oneself and the circumstances in one's life. He or she has learned to come to terms with losses large and small, understanding that challenge is intrinsic to life, inescapable. In some way, the successful have learned to accept the rules of life from small loss to ultimate loss. In this way, challenge takes on a new meaning. It is a stretching of oneself to be better able to accept what is, or some other framework that generates acceptance and peace.

### **Challenge and the Law of Attraction**

We examined in Chapter One the idea of self-fulfilling prophecies. Angry people are sensitized to look for angry and unjust circumstances and find them (i.e. they help to create them). By contrast, for example, gratitude promotes richness and success.

How does this work in a little more detail? Well, as I think of it, we're all like tuning forks in terms of what we attract and repel. Just as a radio or TV station plays the message that corresponds to that individual frequency or wavelength, so experiences manifest corresponding to the energy in our hearts, minds and souls. Have you ever felt that someone was drawn to you, or you to them, or repulsed?

The outer is a manifestation of the inner, like a mirror. Our experiences reflect to us how we feel about ourselves (and correspondingly about others). "Fruits of the spirit", including

love, acceptance, joy, compassion, gratitude,  
etc. **REFLECT A STRONG SENSE OF INNER  
COMPLETENESS, SATISFACTION AND  
RICHNESS, TRUE WEALTH**, etc. that become  
manifested in the world in the forms of money,  
harmonious relationships, health, etc.

**THIS IS THE SECRET OF THE BOOK BY THE  
SAME NAME, AND MAY BE, AS FAR AS I  
KNOW, ONE OF THE POTENTIALLY  
FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES OF THE UNIVERSE.**

Life, and life experiences, are showing you what  
you already hold or believe yourself to be.

Or, as has been said, “wherever you go, there  
you are”.

Feelings have a stronger vibrational energy  
than do thoughts, so how you feel about  
something is a stronger predictor of the law of  
attraction than what you think about it. If you  
feel happy, content, grateful, joyful, etc. then  
the law of attraction is working to your benefit.  
If you wish for good things but your emotions  
are out of whack then at best you are sending  
mixed messages and again feelings are more  
powerful. Powerful and successful feeling leads  
to powerful and successful thinking, and you  
can work on your thinking in addition to your  
feelings for beneficial effect.

Successful people know, and utilize, that to see  
success in the world, it starts first inside.

**Character**

Biology should never have been characterized as destiny. But character may well be.

I like to say that “talent can take one to the top, but only character keeps one there”. This is because those who rise without character may reach the top but are much more likely to fall, quickly or after a period of time, than those who do.

It's a similar principle to lottery winners who do not have a wealth mentality despite winning great wealth. If the lottery winner can develop a wealth mindset then they should be able to keep, maintain and even build upon their winnings. However, if they can't, then they're simply a poor person who temporarily happens to have a lot of money. That is, they have retained the mentality of a poor person, they think like a poor person, and as detailed earlier as per the law of attraction, this inner feeling and belief of poverty must manifest in the lottery winner again becoming poor.

People with a poor person's mentality at some level don't feel entirely comfortable being rich. Perhaps they feel guilty. Perhaps they do not appreciate the money as one might if acquired in a different way (e.g. by years of labor and sacrifice).

Back to character. I define love as wanting to help those who can do nothing for you, and character as has been famously said, as “doing the right thing even when no one is watching”.

It's human nature that we want to lie in bed and do nothing (and still become rich). We want (at least at times) to be petty with others and be selfish. Character teaches us we can't be lazy. Character teaches us we can't be mean.

Not if we wish to have a successful life.

We have to have the discipline to work hard Even when we don't feel like it. We have to move beyond our personal feelings and look at the bigger picture in terms of our words and moods.

Character is destiny.

In a later chapter we'll be discussing success as determined by the strength of your network.

Do you think that successful individuals want to hang out with you or be part of your network if you have bad character?

Let's put it this way. You know how hard you've worked to get to where you are. Do you want someone irresponsible, careless or carefree dragging you down?

I defined character as doing the right thing even when no one is looking. Many people appear to do the right thing when others are watching, for personal gain. Character runs a lot deeper than that. It is an internalization of beliefs, and attitude and drive that keep one on true north.

Character is destiny. Ask the successful people you know.

## **Conclusion**

Competition is real but largely a competition with ourselves to be the best we can be.

Successful people realize that as we compete in the world we are learning about ourselves and the notions that we hold. Successful individuals make effective use and take benefit from utilizing powerful institutions but do so in a balanced way to avoid negative consequences.

Life is a battle of ideas, both incremental and disruptive.

Successful individuals realize that challenge exists to make us “better rather than bitter”, and thus is to be embraced rather than feared. Sometimes life uses others to help smooth away our rough edges or improve us in some other way. The law of attraction is a powerful force and translates our inner feelings and beliefs into experiences in the world. This is the great and powerful secret.

Character, perhaps more than anything else, is destiny. The successful may rise through talent, but require character as a necessity to maintain and expand upon their success.

## **Success Area 3 - The Strength of Your Network Inbox**

“Birds of a feather (do) flock together”.

However, it is much more important who includes you than who you seek to include.



The successful know this and practice it well.

Commonly, when it comes to networking, we may think of the successful as “network animals”, working the phones, conferences, network events etc. And certainly some of this goes on. But in the later stages. First you have to create and demonstrate your value. You can go to every conference in existence, and if you have nothing or little to offer, you have nothing or little to offer.

And thus no takers.

### **The Addition of Value**

Money is an expression of value. If you think something is worth \$500 to you then you’ll pay \$500 for it, if you think it is worth \$10 to you then you will pay \$10 for it, and if you don’t think it is worth 50 cents then you will keep your 50 cents in your pocket.

Networks are similar. Any human relationship is based upon value. Parents for children provide survival value. And nurturance value (contributing to personality/moral/character development, self-esteem, etc.). And hopefully love and companionship which is reciprocated, among other factors.

Children for parents also provide satisfaction value, lineage value, insurance value during old age, etc.

Spouses provide value. Friends provide value. Employers provide value. Employees provide value. Businesses provide value.

You get the idea.

**The quality of your network is a reflection of the value that you are perceived to provide.**

Think about that one for a moment.

More successful people have more influential networks because they offer more value.

I'll repeat that: More successful people have more influential networks because they offer more value.

So it flows from this that if you want a more powerful network, increase your value. It's the same principle as a business that wants more and bigger customers. Businesses express value by solving problems. Every business solves problems, and the scope of the problems solved and the amount of people suffering from that problem seeking relief, and the degree of motivation that these sufferers have to be relieved, determines the value and thus the monetary success of the business.

It's pretty straightforward.

Think the same way with networks. Human beings are social animals. For one thing, it's a diversification of labor. How successful would you be as a person if you had to be totally self-sufficient in today's world. Grow your own food. Build your own house (and furnishings and appliances), educate yourself, provide your

transportation, etc. You get the idea.

A famous person once said (I believe it was a CEO), I don't need to know how to do everything, I just need to know the people who know how to do the things we need done.

Your ability to attract and get the best out of others who will work with you towards your goals (and you with them towards theirs - it is a little thing called reciprocity which tends to be essential) will be a bellwether of your degree of success.

Business is a team sport and success is a team sport. Anything that you can do to bolster your people skills and your networking skills will be critical to your success.

### **Network Preparation**

In sports they say that winning takes care of everything. In business, Ford famously proclaimed, "quality is job one". If you continually focus on providing more and more value, your travels will take you to more people at higher levels.

But a certain amount of preparation is in order. You have to build up your value, understand it well, and be able to communicate it coherently before you start shouting it out to the world.

Yes, marketing and promotion are important, in networking and in general. You may be doing a bang-up job, but if nobody knows about you...

However, consider this:

If you are doing a bang-up job at any scale, people will know about you. If you're good but you're small, grow bigger. That is what good small businesses do.

Let's talk a little bit about promotion or marketing for networkers. There are two types of marketing for networkers, internal and external. Internal marketing comes first, and has to do with quality and quality control.

Before you can market effectively to the outside, you have to have (or be) something great. And you get something great via an emphasis on quality and quality control. This involves working on your skills, working with your team, managing your processes, etc.

Once you have something of quality, then you are ready to market it outside of yourself and your company. Too many people try to market their company in a big way before it is ready, and too many people try to market themselves in a big way before they are ready.

### **Find the Right Level**

We discussed in the last chapter that one strategy of the successful is that they ignore others who are not at their level. So what is going to happen to you if you constantly try to network your services to those several levels above you?

Nothing.

Except a lot of wasted time and effort.

So what are you to do? You know that you are to market yourself to those at a high(er) level so that you can increase the strength of your network, but if they going to just ignore you then what is the point?

Successful people know that they need to be realistic. Which involves being honest with oneself in regard to one's strengths and weaknesses, and the level that one is at.

Being realistic in our self-assessment is a sign of maturity. The world is full of feedback if we are open to it. The most successful are open to it, and in fact invite it proactively.

Sometimes we don't know exactly what level we're at (especially if we are in a new field) at the start, so we can also approach people at different levels to start to zero in on where we are at. Once we have done so, if we wish to be more effective it is important to concentrate the lion's share of our efforts on those on our level or slightly above.

Even though we may not receive a significant response, there's nothing wrong with investing, say, a small but reasonable portion of your networking efforts on those really out of our reach. If nothing else, we're planting seeds for when we are more ready, and that can be a very good thing. However, as is famously said, "you never get a second change to make a good first impression". So, if you think you're at a much higher stage than you really are because you love what you're doing and have a difficult

time getting out of yourself to look at it more objectively as it will be viewed by those at a higher level, then you can quickly become a distraction to be tuned out. If you are too persistent at that time, it may well hamper you later on when you have indeed grown to a higher level, because of the impression that you have already created.

Don't try to oversell yourself. Successful people have confidence that they will be accepted for who they are. They recognize that overselling oneself smacks of desperation. Most people are pretty sophisticated, so it's pretty difficult to fool people for long.

Successful people don't even try.

### **Networking is all about giving before you receive - or providing value**

If you want people to want you around, give them something of value. You can provide value to people at any level, but it is much easier to provide value to those around your level because you understand them best because they are most similar to you. Although it is true, as stated, that those much higher than you will probably ignore much if not all of your outreach, you may well still wish to engage in some "stretch networking" as this will force you to learn how those at a higher level think and operate. It has been often said that who you surround yourself with says not only a lot about you but also a great deal about your level and prospects of success. In fact, if you want to be able to predict your future success, one of the very most accurate

predictors is to look at the strength of your network.

If you surround yourself (as much as you can) with more successful people, you will learn from them, not only consciously but unconsciously as well through osmosis, what being successful means and what it takes. This is the power of modeling, and mentoring. If you are open to and can find them, mentoring (or coaching or the like) can accelerate your progress and success greatly because you will be learning from someone who has already been through what you are going through and has the experience and a roadmap to assist you.

Don't be stubborn and think that you can do it all on your own. Remember, success is a team sport. Going it alone would be like taking a class in College in a new and difficult subject for you without a teacher.

Not recommended for success.

### **How do you provide value?**

It is important to understand and evaluate your own skill set, but then you also have to get outside of yourself somewhat to learn what the individuals you are seeking to provide value for are all about. You've all seen the case of the individual who buys everyone presents that the giver enjoys rather than the recipient. If in your networking, you constantly seek to provide value through not your own preferences but the preferences of those with whom you are networking or seek to network with, then you

will be well on your way. It has been said that we each receive love in a different way. Don't think that your way is the only way, and that how you define value will be how others define it.

It often doesn't work that way.

Do your research. Ask questions also if the opportunity presents itself. As long as you do not become obsessive about it (e.g. "I found out who you dated in the 8<sup>th</sup> grade") people are generally flattered and impressed when someone takes the time to learn about them, especially if it is evident that a significant effort was undertaken. We're each the primary experts in ourselves, and our own life story is the one that is most interesting to us, so when someone, in a helpful way, wants to share in our story it can be alluring.

When you repeatedly provide value, and/or provide value at a substantial level to an individual, then the individual can come to appreciate and even depend upon the value you are providing. You are enhancing the other in some way, and making their life easier, better or more interesting.

Chances are, if you keep doing this, they may want to keep you around.

### **The 80-20 rule in Networking**

The 80-20 rule in general as applied to networking states that 80 per cent of your success will come from 20% of your contacts.



As a result, you want to remain focused, for optimal success. If you're targeting too many individuals to network to in a scattershot approach, you're diminishing your value. It would be like if you had 100 children. What kind of individual relationship would each one have with Mom or Dad? Before you start targeting who you want to network with, it is important that you know yourself and your goals well, and what you hope to accomplish with your networking. This doesn't mean you have to have everything planned to the nth degree. For one thing, you won't often know where a networking relationship will or won't lead at first, and for another, there is a certain amount of serendipity and being open to fluidity and to the bob and weave in life that is contained in success. However, if you just go willy nilly into your networking efforts, you'll find after a period of time that you have selected too many of the wrong individuals, and as a result wasted their time (if they let you) as well as your own.

Once you have found the right people, utilize the 80-20 rule to your advantage. Be someone who your primary contacts can count on consistently. Some of your contacts may want more or less from you, but don't make the mistake of being too busy to help when the opportunity helps. If you're constantly unavailable when they call, or more likely simply fail to call of them because you are too busy, it is quite likely that they will soon find somebody else to replace you.

## **Networking Style and Networking Relationships**

Rule number one in regards to networking style, as it is in all human interactions, is that to be effective you have to be authentic. Yes, you do have to also be sensitive to your networking target (that is rule number two), but if you try to be something you're not in order to impress someone else then, sooner or later, and often sooner, this is going to fall flat and fail. This doesn't mean that you shouldn't be on your best behavior. You should. You should give your contacts the best you that you have to offer. They deserve it, and it will maximize your results. But if you are comfortable also with yourself you can actually provide the most value and this will be recognized as such.

"Rome wasn't built in a day".

And "a journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step". Networking relationships, as with all relationships, need to be nurtured and respected to blossom. You can't do a year's worth of networking in a week by trying harder. As with the growth of flowers, trees and humans, etc. there is an incubation, gestation or waiting period. Relationships have similar periods as well. People are testing each other or waiting on each other, or busy with other things. Trust that the networking relationship will flourish over time if it is meant to be. Do your homework so that you are fully prepared (this involves not only research but also insightful thinking so that you can present in the most impressive manner) but don't feel rushed to make the networking relationship

bloom. Too much pressure may kill the relationship before it is fully formed. If you opened up the caterpillar's cocoon to find the butterfly, obviously, as you know, all you would find is a dead caterpillar. Don't do this with caterpillars, and don't lose your networking relationships through impatience. Give a nudge if you must, even two, but then quickly back off if it isn't taking.

Confidence (but not arrogance or false confidence) is a sign of fullness already, and thus will manifest in your networking in terms of optimized relationships if felt at a high level. Confidence is appealing to all individuals, and especially those at a higher level than you are least likely to be threatened, as you are not viewed as a potential challenger. Picture yourself as a successful networker. You can do this literally through visualization, or employ affirmations, self-talk or other methods which work for you. Perhaps you use meditation to calm your mind and put yourself in a confident state. Your state of mind has a substantial role in the success of your human interactions, so as you network make sure that you take the time to put yourself in the proper mental, physical and even spiritual framework. Remember, you can't provide your optimal value when you're in less than your optimal state. Not every day will you feel like a home run, but if you concentrate on being your best and giving your best for your network, then the best outcome possible should be your result.

Successful people know that the most

successful results occur through positive habits. Networking involves habits and if you incorporate some of these principles in a way that is authentic for you then you can make the habit a highly rewarding and successful one.

### **Inbox Not Outbox**

We often assume that the successful are great networkers because they go out and get the attention of all these great people who are they interested in networking with.

Not exactly.

I've already discussed that can be a waste of time, seeking only to network with those many levels above you. Successful networking is about providing value, and you don't have a keen enough understanding of what individuals many levels about you are all about in order to provide enough value to them on a consistent, ongoing basis. Frankly, if you did understand them that well, and what they need and are looking for, you'd be close to or at their level already. The higher is always somewhat incomprehensible to the lower. A college student can understand the mindset of a third grader (as long as the college student has some memory and empathy) but a third grader understanding in depth the mindset of a college student? Not so much.

So, you can spend your time sending hundreds of emails in your outbox to those much higher than you, and have little to show for it. Outreach is important, we all need to give

before we receive, but who shows up in your inbox as being interested in networking with you is a more accurate reflection of your networking and overall success. Those who contact you and put in effort to you are demonstrating real tangible benefits for you and your life. Do an assessment of who is in your inbox, both literally and figuratively, and how you can maximize those contacts.

In addition, become the type of person who radiates value and you will attract a crowd. Crowds go to the supermarket and restaurants because they want to eat. Food and hunger is a powerful drive. Identify the drive(s) that you meet and satisfy in others, and then expand it and make it greater. As you do so, you'll find that people seek you out proactively more and more. As you elevate your skills and what you have to offer at higher and higher levels, you'll find your inbox getting fuller.

And containing contacts from those at higher levels as well.

## **Conclusion**

"Birds of a feather (do) flock together, but it is more important who seeks to include you than who you seek to include. **The quality of your network is a reflection of the value that you are perceived to provide.** More successful people have more influential networks because they offer more value.

To be effective in networking, plant seeds with those at a higher level than you but spend the majority of your time providing value at those

closer to your level so as not to be ignored and thus wasting time.

You must provide internal value, internal marketing via quality and quality control, before you are ready to effectively provide outside marketing of your networking skills.

Know yourself and be authentic but also tune into the prospect you are networking with to meet their style and needs. Utilize the 80-20 rule to maximize results for yourself and others.

Recognize that you are successful already, and measure your success by who wishes to associate with you and finds you to provide value. The strength of your network is an extremely strong predictor of your future success.

#### **Success Area 4 - The Move From Domination to Discovery**

##### **The Progression of a Life to Success**

When we're young it is me, me, me. We think about events, and others, in terms of how they impact us. We think about how we feel, and what is important to us.

We think about making our mark, our imprint on the world.

And we think about dominating others.

Some of us are more passive, and some of us are more aggressive, but all of us, when we are

less mature, want to (directly or indirectly) dominate others. That is, having them serve our needs primarily or exclusively. We think that this is intrinsic to our survival. Babies come into the world programmed how to cry to draw the attention of adults (especially Mom and Dad) to meet its needs. Two year olds have learned how to throw temper tantrums, something those a little older have sometimes not forgotten and can still use.

We call this egocentric. Is there a strong awareness on the part of the infant that his or her crying in the middle of the night is keeping up his parents and depriving them of sleep? Does the two year old causing a scene in a store suddenly spontaneously stop the behavior overcome with guilt that he or she is embarrassing one's parent? Obviously, awareness and then concern for others is something that we grow into. You can label it part of socialization. Or identification, etc. Over time we come to learn, increasingly, if we are to have success in this world, that it is not all about us.

The successful have learned to move beyond their needs to meet the needs of others. This may be the critical factor in success because the more you can meet others needs the more they can reciprocate, and if you don't do anything for anyone else then, surprise, surprise, there may be very few people that want to do anything for you (your Mom may still love and accept you unconditionally, but even that generally has its limits). If you're just

a selfish person and not doing anything for anybody else, than who wants to do anything for you?

Or have anything to do with you?

We can't move beyond domination until we have something to replace it with. Over time we learn that a little less firm grip on the world can actually assist us. This may be considered the difference between feeling and being secure. We may feel more secure when we control or seek to dominate, but if this is pushing others away then we are actually less secure. So feeling secure is not the same, obviously, as being secure.

Let's repeat that again: So feeling secure is not the same, obviously, as being secure. This is because our feelings are in line with our maturity, so the less mature we are the more that our feelings may betray us in regard to our ultimate success and good. Hence, when we are less mature, we have feelings and justifications that we wish to be selfish, or angry or mean.

These ego justifications, feelings and rationalizations may give rise to certain mindsets. Such as:

"I can do whatever I want" (causing us problems, for example, in relationships)  
Personal note: I knew someone once who lived and preached this mantra. When acting selfishly the person would repeatedly say, "I



can do whatever I want". To which I finally came up with this refrain: "Yes, we have the freedom to bang our head against the wall, but if we do then we shouldn't complain when we get a headache".

"Nobody can tell me what to do" (causing us problems, for example, with bosses at work)

"I am entitled". This is a big one that really causes problems for those so afflicted. Related mindsets may include: "the rules don't apply to me" (and the accompanying, "I can get away with things that others can't") "I'm special" (and not only special, but better than) and narcissistic injuries such as "I can't forgive you because you hurt me" to minor slights (and attempts to hurt back, etc.).

You can imagine how well these may go over with other people.

### **From Domination to Discovery**

Moving beyond the immediacy or exclusivity of our own needs involves a level of self-awareness in which we can differentiate between our own feelings and experiences and those of others. When we are immature we cannot significantly gain this distance and act, and act out, from this ego-based and ego-biased stance.

The transition from domination to discovery is a journey from obsession with self to awareness and concern for others. Domination involves seeking to exploit others as objects to

further our own needs and goals. Discovery involves standing back and observing and interact with others not from the vantage of what we want from them but from the vantage of who they are apart from us. That is, we “discover” them as distinct from ourselves.

The world is a very different place when you are in discovery mode. When you approach the world through a mindset of discovery, it involves respect and even reverence for what you find. Like an explorer, you are looking at things new and fresh, without expectations. As we saw in the chapter on emotional intelligence, often we’re really not seeing others at all, but instead projecting onto them our own wishes, desires and needs. This is the famous one year of experience twenty times as opposed to the twenty years of experience.

Sadly, if you agree, when we are doing this, when we are locked into domination over discovery, than we are perhaps merely existing as opposed to living. We’re repeating the same history over and over again, our story, like a broken record. Have you ever known someone that almost no matter what the circumstance you just knew what the “story” was going to be?

As we go through life self-absorbed, our experiences are defined, and limited by, our own needs and conditionings. As has been famously said, “If all you have is a hammer, then everything looks like a nail”.

## **Learning**

And were it not for the results of our actions,  
we might never change!

Failure is a great teacher because it points out our limitations. Often these limitations result from responses from other people. We had an impulse to dominate, or we thought we could dominate - could impose ourselves in terms of our wants and desires, but other people had other ideas.

How dare they!

Life is a process of negotiation, and that is why other people are so valuable. It would be impossible to get everything we need in this world negotiating only with ourselves. But for negotiation to be most effective it must be honestly reciprocal. We must give in addition to receive. We saw in the previous chapter that "birds of a feather do flock together". As a result, we are in significant measure negotiating with those at a similar level as ourselves. Similar mindsets toward the world, similar needs, limitations and strengths. No wonder we have so many conflicts in the world, the things that we find limiting in ourselves we are finding every day in our interactions with others as well!!

Isn't that interesting?

When we negotiate with others at a similar level as ourselves, the issues that we each face come to the fore. Until we develop effective ways of coping with these issues, we may fail

and fail and fail again. This contributes to the limiting patterns or problems that we find in our lives or with others.

As was discussed earlier, although we typically we may think of the successful as self-serving or even selfish, the thing is that if you go through life upsetting people then someone, or a series of people, is going to come back at you and block your rise. This doesn't mean that people-pleasers rise over those who are more frank and honest, but it does mean that those who do not genuinely care about others are held back.

In fact, in this world we serve as checks and balances for each other. When you feel slighted by a person and wish to have this made up for then you may be motivated to seek to put some limit on the other such that you receive "your due". We each seem to have a scorecard in our mind - - and the crazy part is of course that our scorecards do not necessarily even come close to agreeing - in regard to who is up and who is down, in what way and in what amount.

How much of our life in terms of our relationships with others is based on exactly this!

### **Relationship Dues**

People are sophisticated enough to know if you really care about them versus it just being an act, especially over time, and you can't just claw your way over all others to the top. As we have seen, our success is predicated upon the

cooperation and goodwill of others towards us.

Hence, it is not true that nice guys finish last, although weak ones generally do, and often the two are confused. Being nice, or concerned about other people, has the component of strength built inside it. I can care about you and your well-being because my sense of self and survival is not so fragile that I have to guard and protect it every second. I can put it aside for a little while to see who and what else is in the world.

Many of us have an intuitive understanding that things do happen for a reason. We may even say that regularly, “things happen for a reason”, even if we do not know what that reason is! A funny (actually an interesting) thing happens when you start valuing people for themselves as opposed to as a means or extension of yourself - it increases the value, appreciation, even the sanctity of your interactions and the beneficial responses that you may potentially receive.

As has been famously said, “If you love something let it go. If it comes back to you it is yours. If it doesn't, it never was.”

Of course the ego-based domination craving mind perverts that sentiment into its own degraded terms, the also well known, “If you love something let it go. If it doesn't come back hunt it down”. The entitlement mentality of this mindset even thinks that this is funny.

Personally, I believe that every interaction can be sacred. Einstein famously said, "God doesn't play dice with the universe". I believe that this is true for interactions as well as physical laws, that every interaction is special, and - when recognized as such - even sacred. Whether or not this is true, if you act as if it is true, watch the benefits of your interactions and relationships soar.

Sometimes we really need to slow down to get the most out of our interactions with others. That does not mean that there cannot be a time and place also for urgency. As they say, "there is a time to let things happen and a time to make things happen". Without going to the opposite extreme of being overly passive, if you proactively eliminate a potential resistance by not coming on so strong, you may just find that you get to your interaction or relationship goal a little sooner.

Successful individuals utilize a bit of finesse, smart and tact. They don't approach relationships as a bulldozer.

### **Energy Transfer and Beyond**

Energy follows attention. Whatever you are attentive to becomes energized.

Think about that.

When we seek to dominate others, arising out of feelings of inner deficiency and self-concern, it limits and locks our energy inside ourselves (which isn't very healthy on a lot of levels).

We're focused on ourselves and our own needs, so that is where the energy stays even if we are seemingly active in the world. When we are in the realm of discovery, we are learning about the world and that is where our energy flows.

Energy follows attention.

When our energy flows out into the world it is dissipated and doesn't become stagnant and stale. Energy trapped inside ourselves without the ability to dissipate becomes corrosive or destructive. Energy needs an outlet, and where there is none, when energy is blocked or partially blocked, it can do bad things.

Let's look at energy transfer as it allows us to be successful in the world.

People who have moved beyond self-obsession and primary narcissism can direct their attention and energy into the world.

This is the foundation of productivity. Productivity is the ability to focus attention and energy on outside tasks, objects or people.

Let's consider the case of a student. How are you going to succeed as a student if you can't focus intensely on your studies?

Or work. How are you going to succeed in your career if you can't focus in depth on your career activities. When we're self-absorbed we don't have the energy, interest or attention to concentrate significantly on other things, to

learn new things. We're self-contained.

If you look at someone very self-absorbed the energy is limited and backed-up. High degrees of narcissism, or its cousin entitlement, frustration or anger, or when blocked, depression.

Not a pretty picture.

By contrast, those who are in discovery mode have their energy available to be interested in and attentive to the world. Someone who has a strong set of interests that are not merely an extension of oneself is someone who has learned how to "lose oneself" in the discovery process and have the energy flow. This is life-affirming and joyful. You may have heard of the states of peak experience or 'flow'. When we are so engaged in the activity and the love of it takes us over we become impervious or almost impervious to time or distraction and have the ability to perform at our peak level. You've heard when there have been superior performances the individual may say, "I just lost myself in the activity" or "it just flowed", or "hours went by and I didn't even realize it", or, my favorite, "I wasn't thinking about anything, I was just doing" (ironically, when we are not preoccupied with our own thoughts about an activity, we can be most aware of everything that is going on, and I believe that this is a fundamental factor in the enhanced performance).

Discovery, we can see, is a very powerful thing. It is fundamental to our sense of purpose and



happiness, and also to our success.

### **Discovery in our Lives**

We are meant, as we evolve, to see beauty in the world. This is what discovery is. Anything can be beautiful when you give your attention to it and truly discover it. Live things such as a tree or a flower, but also inanimate objects such as a glass or a chair. This is what Eckhart Tolle details in his famous book “The Power of Now”, and what I believe the famous poem talks about in finding eternity in a grain of sand. Every moment is alive if we enjoy it and live in it. Have there been times in your life where your senses were heightened because everything in the moment was so good. So much of our lives is in the past and future, but in fact, in reality, only the present exists. Hence the expression, “Yesterday is history. Tomorrow is a mystery. Today is a gift. That’s why it is called the present”.

And another thing the successful realize - sometimes the greatest gifts are the ones that we give or allow to ourselves. The parts of life that we open up to which we had previously closed.

To go a bit further, it is my personal belief, not to push this on you if it isn’t your thing but just to put it out there, that every object can serve as a window to the Divine if we honor it.

Perhaps that is why love is experienced as so transcendent, as taking us out of ourselves to someplace else. A better place.

Love (it has been said) “covers”. It doesn’t see errors. That is why they say love is blind.

Perhaps mature love does see errors but it doesn’t focus on them. It doesn’t highlight them and magnify them.

If it was so easy and great, wouldn’t we do that all the time? Love can warm but perhaps it can also burn. And love lost really hurts.

Discovery implies discovering things about ourselves, and that process, especially when we’re newer to it and have been avoiding the things inside ourselves that we do not like - that can be scary and uninviting indeed.

As they say, “don’t go there”.

Sometimes before we see the sun all we see is a little spark or a small ray, surrounded by clouds, perhaps ominous and dark clouds. The spark or the ray has to be alluring enough to us that it beckons us to wade through the dark clouds to find it and nourish it, and bring it home.

An increasing awareness of the clouds does not mean that they were not there previously unrecognized, impacting how we feel and what we do. We have to have, or learn to build, enough confidence that the sun that we find in our experience can break through - and break up - the clouds. The explorer in search of discovery needs to have some sense of courage, because it is not entirely clear what

will be around the next bend, and what dangers may lurk there. And yet something can encourage us on. That “still small voice” that says it will be ok.

And one day, if we are lucky perhaps, that sun shines through. It is famously said, after all, that “a moment of light erases 1,000 years of darkness”.

### **The Future is Now**

Successful people understand that “the only constant is change”. They embrace it.

Remember, we mentioned that successful people do not identify failure with being a failure. This is critical. Our destinies are shaped by our decisions, or our actions over time (collectively, we call that character, hence we said “character is destiny”). Our actions are influenced, if not dictated, by our feelings. And our feelings are impacted by our thinking. So “stinkin thinkin”, when you follow the chain all the way through, can be the cause or effect, depending upon how you conceptualize the chain, of a pretty poor and limited life.

Are you with me so far?

Our future, to the extent that it exists, is the collection of the decisions, large and small, that we make in the present – just as what we experience today is a reflection of decisions made before.

It is easy, sometimes too easy, to live with regret, recrimination or bitterness. Towards

yourself and/or others. But remember that everything that has happened to you was instrumental, perhaps even necessary, towards making you the person who you are today. When viewed from that perspective, we start to realize that life is indeed a journey. How could you be the person who you are, and are and were meant to be, if you didn't go through certain experiences and learning.

From that perspective, we're each on our own path and, by definition as extension, each of us is a success.

### **Charity Begins at Home**

Learning about other people, as we've seen (think about the chapter on emotional intelligence) starts with learning about ourselves. Thus, discovery of the world and discovery about ourselves are intertwined. As we increase our self-awareness and become more open and accepting of various aspects of ourselves, so do our eyes open to the wonders of the world.

We seek to dominate others because we seek to dominate ourselves. We're hard on ourselves, we're controlling. We manage rather than love or accept ourselves.

Successful people realize that success is at the beginning, not at the end. This moment is a success, and the next, and the next, and all the way through. When we start to think of our lives as a series of "perfect moments" then we begin to move away from a sense of deficiency

or lack to a sense of fullness, completion and success. We do not arrive at success. We do become successful. It is not something which happens to us someday.

It is there for the taking right here and now.

At any time.

It is famously said that power is not given, it is taken. It is the same with success. No one can make you successful. Only you can make yourself successful. And you can do that in any moment that you choose. We put preconditions on what it means or feels like to be a success. I will be a success when this happens, or I will be a success when that happens, but those things may or may not ever happen, and even if they do, by that time we may have well moved the goalposts to somewhere else!

Some say that happiness is available at any accepted moment and involves being satisfied with what you have. Your desire to be more before you can be happy tucks away your joy. It is the same with success. Successful individuals know that they are successful because they have accepted that they are successful. They have acknowledged it. They have owned it. Not in a “fake it till you make it kind of way”, although there can be an element of this, but in manner that the inner belief and feeling of success flows from the inside out.

It is famously said that “I’ll believe it when I see it”, but I would reorient you if you ascribe to that view that you’ll probably never see it until you believe it first. Belief, and its close friend vision, are what propel you to take action in the world, handle disappointments, and not let go of your dreams.

Although we can also surprise ourselves, it may be that everything that is accomplished, and even every feeling or experience which serves as a breakthrough, was seen and imagined first.

If you can believe it, you can do it.

Some have said that the desires of our hearts are not put there by mistake. If the passion is strong enough in terms of what we hold to be our purpose, that the means to accomplish it is also given.

But it is never promised that this will be easy.

### **Giving, Receiving and Success**

What you seek may be something that you already possess. Can you give away something that you do not already have? Can you give away love if you feel no love? Can you give respect if it is not something you already feel?

The world is a stimulus, or a mirror, or whatever metaphor you wish to use, to illustrate to us what we have inside and to use our experiences in order to grow and develop further. The successful understand, in taking responsibility for their lives, that domination

constricts our focus and awareness while discovery expands it.

It has been famously said that “when the student is ready, the teacher will arrive” and also, that “the one who learns the most in a classroom is the teacher”. Giving and receiving, teaching and learning, are not separate things, but intertwined. We give as we receive. And we receive as we give.

### **Mastery Versus Contribution**

We each have a contribution to make to the world. A function or role(s) with a set of skills and aptitudes. A sphere of influence if you will. As participants in the world we leave a footprint in all that we do. We do get to decide, however, whether we will tread lightly and with some nuance or grace, or instead stomp through life.

In the next chapter we will explore how the footprints that we leave in the world, in regard to our abilities, interests and skills, is matched by others. There is not another like us but in regard to our abilities and our skills we are not totally unique. In short, it is incredible the things that we can do as an individual but it is incredible the things that others can do as individuals as well. We have no corner on this market, and thus the idea of domination becomes practical and silly. Developing your muscles, physical or mental, in business or in love, will not diminish the capabilities of another to do the same as we are independent actors. We’re all in the process of getting both

stronger (through experience) and weaker, as birth is a step towards death. It's a relative matter overall.

Mastery implies an endpoint, which is subjective in nature. We can be proficient, which itself is subjective, and should feel a sense of pride regarding the development of our skills. However, as mentioned, the successful realize that we are simply becoming a better or more developed version of "me". We are not becoming better as compared to others per se.

We're each running our own separate race in life, even though we are certainly interacting, even if it seems as if we are competing with each other. Anyone who doubts this, just think about a lost love to realize that in the end each person (unless they become overly dependent) follows their own path. Or ask the parent whose child has broken away onto a path of their own.

Individual choices lead to individual destinies. Although we may be intertwined for a time, we are, as the saying states, born alone and die alone. If that is not a powerful statement of individual existence than I do not know what is. In that context, the idea of domination makes less sense. Influence yes. We allow ourselves to be influence. Dominated, for periods of time perhaps if that is what we allow.

But, whether we accept it or not, we are, most fundamentally, on our own.



It has been said that we come together in the broken places. We are alone but as we recognize our brokenness and aloneness perhaps for the first time we more fully recognize and appreciate these in others as part of the human condition.

The discovery of ourselves and the world has come full circle and is one and the same.

### **Conclusion**

We start off in life egocentric, focused on our own needs. Over time, we start to learn that if we want the cooperation of others, to survive, much less thrive, we're going to have to give in order to get (perhaps our Moms will love us unconditionally, but most relationships have limits and reciprocity is key).

There are many ways that we can learn to get outside of ourselves to discover what other people and the world is all about. This is also a process of self-discovery as we learn more about ourselves and our hopes, dreams and fears.

When we focus our energy and attention on other people and the world around us, we have the opportunity to build our success through increased productivity and enhanced relationships. Peak performance and loving experiences can supplant ego-based deficiency attempts at domination, mastery and control.

### **Success Area 5 -The Strength of the Ant**

In the previous chapter we examined how the successful have traversed beyond domination to a discovery orientation. **The Strength of the Ant** builds upon that explanation and provides additional insight to it.

Ants are well known for being able to carry many times their body weight, by some estimates 10-50 times their body weight. This is amazing. You see an ant trekking along with a huge or heavy object compared to its body weight or size and you think to yourself, "Oh my gosh, how is this possible?"

And yet it's not just a capability of one ant, as herculean a feat as this is. Apparently all ants can do it.

This is an interesting phenomenon when considered from a human perspective. Although we cannot lift weights of that extreme (one article I read compared the ant's feat to a human lifting a VW beetle with 5 people inside over one's head) we are pretty amazing creatures ourselves.

And we darn well know it.

Anyone who follows one's own thinking, and my guess is that we all have a tendency to do so, realizes how complex it can be. Sure, some of us are smarter and/or more analytical than others, but the complexity of the human brain and the thinking that it gives rise to it is phenomenal.

Even for an individual functioning at mere subsistence level, the degree of thinking that is going on is intricate and intense. Importantly, we're aware of our own thinking but we can't get inside the brains of others to read their thoughts. We can infer what others may or may not be thinking, but we are in fact confronted by our own thoughts on a continual basis.

There is a strong ego bias to overvalue what we think relative to others. I don't know whether this is related to survival, identity or to something else, but we have a need to be right, a need to remain attentive to our own thoughts, our own feelings, behaviors, actions and lives. This ego bias is strongest when we are youngest, we're living more unconsciously or by instinct. As we develop we go through the process of socialization in which we build the conscious mind and internalize the norms and expectations of society, including our parents and teachers but also peers, friends, and others to whom we are exposed. When we're an infant we can just cry out to get our needs met, but as we become over time an adult we need to learn to plan and organize our responses and have them be sensitive to the needs of others and the world around us if we are to survive, and hopefully more than this, thrive and prosper.

So, the ant is herculean in its efforts. And we are herculean in ours. The intricacy and complexity of our thinking, the strength of our will. It is amazing. But due to this ego bias it is often difficult for us to realize that these

herculean efforts can be matched by others. Just as the amazing things that the ant can do can be matched by other ants. It doesn't make it less amazing. It just means that you're not going to be able to dominate if everyone else can do the same sorts of things that you can do (we each of course, have our own relative strengths and weaknesses). We're one human out of billions (and the one ant would be one out of I hate to even think of how many) so when we have this need for domination that we discussed in the last chapter - uh oh, we're running up against the fact that we dealing with a pretty stacked deck.

Perhaps this is where existential anxiety comes in and why our fear about whether we will survive can be so strong.

### **Performance as a Matter of Small Degrees**

It's amazing how a small percentage difference in performance can lead to drastically different results in terms of success. One example I've liked is college cross country runners because I used to be one. Yes, you'll have some stragglers and the few most elite runners that may be significantly ahead of the pack, but what you tend to find is that you have each athlete struggling with their top effort for miles to outdo the competitors and that at the end they come in one after another, sometimes a field of hundreds maybe 80-90% all finishing within half a minute or a minute of each other in a multi-mile race.

In other words, in relative terms most everyone

does fairly close to the same. But in perceived performance terms, although not much difference in absolute performance terms, one will be judged as 5<sup>th</sup> place out of 200, and another 171.

People who compete against each other in almost any endeavor are selected, including self-selected, to be at relatively similar performance levels. It's like in professional baseball, you have the rookie leagues, A ball, AAA, and then the major leagues. And below professional baseball you have College, and a whole host of progressively easier leagues all the way down until T-ball for organized baseball.

You're just not going to have high school teams and athletes competing against the major league squads.

In life, if you're way better than your peers then you'll tend to be promoted to a higher level, and if you're not as good you'll get demoted. So, in grade and high school, most will go one year at a time with their peers, some will get left behind a grade, some will wind up taking gifted or advanced classes, and then upon graduation students who decide to go on to college will wind up at varying tiered difficulty and reputation educational institutions.

The problem is that our ego bias forces us to elevate our own station in life to a higher status so that we feel more secure in regard to our

ability to survive. If we thrive in an educational setting, this may lead us to believe that we're on the path to great success in life and have an advantage over others. If we don't like school or do poorly in it, guess what, while we may criticize ourselves we also are prone to minimize the value of the activity. For example, we may well tell ourselves, those who do well in school have "book smarts" but that this has nothing or little to do with success in the world and that we have "street smarts". We know what is going on the world much better than those eggheads and are much more equipped to deal with it and be successful.

In that situation we talk about all the Ph.D.'s (standing for "Piled higher and deeper") living in a dream world (or an "ivory tower if they stay in academia, "those who can't do, teach") and driving cabs, and how wimpy the highly educated are because they're not doing "real work", getting dirt underneath their nails, etc.

Who is right?

### **Ego Bias and Security**

Feeling good about ourselves and our prospects helps us to feel secure. The weaker is our confidence in regard to our own survival the more we may well feel the need to compensate by disparaging, belittling or verbally attacking others.

We explored previously how the highly successful have learned to develop an equanimity of spirit that allows them to ignore

the power-based intrusions of others in this competitive world. Although there are certainly some bad actors, part of the reasons why the rich and successful are so often disparaged in popular culture is, I think, for the rest of the population who is less successful to feel better about themselves.

Wow, that is an interesting thought right there.

I know that that is a really hard message for many to hear perhaps, but remember what we discussed before. The successful do not make excuses or look to blame others. They take responsibility for their lives and the actions with which they are comprised. This takes a great deal of maturity and inner strength and is, by no means, an easy thing to do. Of course we all have better and worse sides, and better and worse moments, but you get the main point that I am getting at, which is that there a fundamental difference between how the highly successful and others view themselves and their conditions in life, and the resulting way in which they conceptualize and act towards others.

Sometimes life squeezes us and puts us in a box. We have free will, but sometimes it simply becomes too painful to keep doing the things that we are doing, because the results are not what we want. This is the path of growth, and the successful individual recognizes it and embraces it. Fighting against the ways of the world are not going to change them. Wailing because we are not getting our way and

because successful individuals do not want anything to do with us because we are not mature enough to invite us to play in their playground will not move us ahead. Sometimes in life we have to give up the lower things in order to gain the higher. What feels like loss, or a narrowing, is sometimes a strengthening on our growth path to increase the benefits that we can ultimately receive in our lives.

### **The Strength of the Ant**

The real strength of the ant is not in its individual feats of strength, as impressive and herculean as those may be. For an ant is puny, and the world is big. The real strength is in the collaborative and cooperation functioning of ants (ants can also be competitive), which has contributed to ants thriving throughout the globe (it has been estimated that up to a quarter of the entire biomass of the planets may be ants, an almost unthinkable figure when you consider how small they are compared to most species). Ants also are flexible and impressive problem-solvers, a key factor in their thriving throughout the world.

Similarly, with humans, teams win. We live in an interdependent planet and the ability to get along, influence and find favor with others is critical. Competition is also important at times, although as we have seen domination as a primary strategy is ineffective and the most successful have the maturity to move from domination to discovery - to learning and being interested in others and providing value to them which can then be reciprocated.



## **Ego Bias in Life**

The ego bias is very strong as we grow up. When we're young we have, relatively speaking, fewer abilities, and perhaps if we faced that head on the anxiety in regard to our survival would overwhelm us.

As they say, denial is not only a river in Egypt.

We can identify with others, such as parents, to help guide and support us, but parents are not perfect people either, and the shortcomings which they have may become internalized in our own lives in regard to the insecurities that we hold. If we look to our parents for survival, and they can only accept us in certain ways, then it can become easy to reject the parts of ourselves that they (or others in society) do not accept.

As our personalities develop - even infants have miniature personalities or behavioral tendencies - and provide a structure to our experience, this is comforting in its consistency but can also reinforce our ego biases in terms of the ways that we view the world.

The need to be right is a reflection of our insecurity and attempt to compensate through control. When we feel threatened by the views or differences of others then our "fight or flight" response kicks in and we may become argumentative, hostile, controlling etc., or alternatively we may avoid others or only engage with them superficially.

As with the ant we can do herculean things. Human beings are amazing creatures. When we become overly enamored with our own capabilities in an unbalanced way we can easily become too independent or standoffish to be optimally successful. Successful people can be introverts or extroverts, but generally successful people become somewhat more extroverted over time, because it is more difficult to show a sincere interest in other people if you are not in communication with them!

Sometimes shyness is in fact an over-concern with self, insecurity and fear of rejection. Successful people understand that rejection is part of life, and that they are strong enough to survive it and grow from it. They do not set themselves up to fail, but they realize that failure is a part of life, and if they're smart about how they approach people and don't get in over their heads but do push themselves, then they will grow as they go along.

As one matures one naturally becomes more interested in other people. There is a whole big world out there full of interesting things and people, and those who have progressed largely into discovery mode are eager to engage with it. That does not mean that one becomes a pleasure seeker or a social butterfly, there is a balance to all things, but one does need to put oneself out there if one is to learn about other people.

## **Respect and Appreciation**

Successful individuals have increasingly learned how to respect and appreciate others apart from how they can satisfy one's immediate needs (i.e. beyond serving as objects to be manipulated) and despite the differences that they may have with us. It is true that "birds of a feather flock together" but this tends to be primarily for underlying essential values, maturity levels, and core interest, etc. A highly mature person is not likely to want to be with someone is largely a clone of themselves, they generally have more confidence than that and would find such an experience rather boring. If everything is the same, where is the opportunity to learn something new?

And as has been said, if two people think exactly the same, then one of them is unnecessary.

Relationship means "relating" to the individual as they are. That doesn't mean that we don't have preferences, and it doesn't mean we have to be overly permissive in regard to all behaviors, but it does mean we are generally comfortable with others emanating from the fact that we are comfortable with ourselves. Brian Tracy, in his well-known success and sales training, mentions that the most successful salespeople are those who can get along with the most different types of people. You've probably seen this type of person, who can get along with almost anyone. Tracy indicates that such individuals do not look to make mountains out of molehills, instead they overlook things

which are not important in favor of the relationship. They like people and this comes through.

I believe that it is probably not that difficult for such individuals. Yes, part of being successful is learning how to be nice to people you don't like that much, that can actually be a significant part of success, but most people are pretty sophisticated and can tell if you are just pretending to like them or really like them. Those who really like different types of people have the clear and decided edge.

Just as the ant has herculean abilities but so do all ants, the successful individual appreciates and respects others for the individual gifts, talents and qualities that each brings to the table. This is our real strength, and what leads to success.

### **Conclusion**

We each have incredible skills and abilities, but, of course, and herein lies the rub for those who would be seeking to dominate, so do others. Sometimes as we grow up we become locked into our own ego biases such that we place a premium on what we think and are able to do, at the expense of recognizing the abilities of other people. We're well acquainted with ourselves, and it can be sometimes just so difficult to get out of ourselves and realize and accept that plenty of other people can do a variety of things just as well as we can (and sometimes better) and have their own unique sets of skills and qualities, which may be

different than ours. We develop personalities and identify and internalize experiences as we go through our earlier years that can heavily influence us. We can have the need to be right or isolate ourselves from others different than us. The successful are those who come to learn how to meet others on their own terms in addition to ours, and do so openly and sincerely.

### **Success Area 6 - Show, Don't Tell**

I learned this one from elite VC Brad Feld. Anyone can say they are going to do great things, or that they are doing great things. But, of course, as they say, talk is cheap. And actions do speak louder than words.

### **The Discipline to Do**

Not all action is productive but productive action is productive. So I should probably rename that title "The Discipline to Do Well". I think of the successful people I know and they are always doing things. Quality things.

I know for myself too often in life I've wasted time critiquing others, blaming others etc. All of that gets one nowhere.

As they say, it is difficult to be in the arena. And by contrast, it is easy to be on the sidelines "throwing stones".

The maturity of doing well is that it takes us outside of ourselves into the world, and into creating value in the world. In Chapter 4 we

discussed the move from domination to discovery. Discovery is the act of doing, of interacting with our world to create value.

It can be a creative work of value, such as a book or a concert. It can be an interpersonal work of value, such as a group activity or a relationship building one.

Doing things takes effort. Creating things takes a lot of effort. Creating quality things takes, perhaps, the most effort.

The discipline to do is the discipline to fight the law of entropy and the dark matter of the universe that would, symbolically, slow us down and make us want to quit.

We've all been there.

"It's too hard."

"I'm not getting anywhere."

"I want to quit."

We live in a world where quitting is easy - at least in the short term. The path of least resistance feels good. Why should we swim upstream when water flows downhill? Working seems kind of silly when you think about it from that perspective.

But the problem is that things do not happen by themselves. There is such a thing as grace, but to manifest rewards and success in this

world we have to work them out in the world.

We have to birth them.

### **We are those bees in space**

I discussed earlier those bees in space, who died when they did not have the proper air resistance. Work is our air resistance. Work is our muscles in the world by which our experiences take hold and shape us. When we do things we are creating value in the world and for others. And at the same time we are making ourselves stronger.

The world would break down, and quickly so, if we just talked about things rather than doing them. How would you feel if you went to the grocery store and the manager responded to you when you asked him why there was no food on the shelves, “We’ll be getting in a great supply next week” or “I hear our other stores are stocked.”

That’s all well and good, you think to yourself, except that I am hungry now, and your other stores are half an hour or further away.

That’s when you lose to your competitors.

You’ve heard the expression, it doesn’t take wishbone to succeed, it takes backbone.

Successful people live in the world of action. It is said that action is the dominant mover in the Universe. It is also said that success favors the bold. Sometimes the bold are simply those who

consistently take the greater actions. Of course don't confuse bold with crazy. We have to act to succeed, but act intelligently.

### **Entitlement versus Work**

This isn't a political book, and will not attempt to take a political stance, but one relevant issue here is the notion of entitlement versus work. I tend towards being a soft-hearted person. I would like to see everyone get everything just, well, just because ("hey, you're a nice guy, here's \$100,000). But I've seen, and I'm sure that you have too, that the world doesn't work that way.

George Mitchell, a famous person in my state, said something to the effect of "None of us are entitled to success. But we each deserve the opportunity to succeed.". I love that.

You have to be like someone in order to recognize and appreciate their strengths, and while I feel that I still have a long way to go (as Nike famously says, "there is no finish line") I can look at more successful people now and recognize in them the personal sacrifices they are making to serve others and to keep their own egos in check in the process.

I have heard a lot of successful people say the same thing. Work hard and be nice. This can be difficult to do in tandem. When we start to work really hard, we can start to feel entitled, I've done my part now it's time to take. We can think that we are more talented than others, or stronger. When we're nice we may think that this substitutes for working hard. That people



will just love us for our personalities, and give us what we want or need.

No, to be successful we need to do both. We need to work hard and we need to do it with a servant mentality, a sense of true humility rather than arrogance or entitlement.

This is the wisdom of success.

Although work, by definition, is not always fun (I like to say that if work was always fun, you wouldn't have to pay people to do it) it is a blessing. Work allows us to get outside of ourselves, outside of our own limited wants and needs and be of service to others. When we start to provide service we can provide blessings to others. When we love others the blessing returns to us. And when they love us, then we are additionally blessed.

It is said that opportunity is often missed because it comes disguised as hard work.

When we do things "for" another person we are not always helping them. If a person has earned a reward, then they will probably appreciate it. But if they haven't, then they probably won't. Human nature in many respects is often weak. We want what we want, but we don't want to do what is required - put in the work - to receive it. We are, too often, instead, jealous and envious of other people.

People will not be able to trust us if we cannot consistently demonstrate the ability to work

hard. It is essential to success.

### **Mindset of Doing**

We should work smart, but if we want to be successful we should also make up our minds that we are going to work hard as well.

Consistently hard. Sometimes we get so into being “efficient” and “less is more” that we’ve defeated ourselves, truly, before we’ve even begun.

Lazy people are unsuccessful. They look for shortcuts. Or get rich schemes. Such people may believe that they are as likely to win the lottery as anyone, and that you thus “have to be in it to win it”. Technically this is true. Your odds are the same.

But your odds are very very small of winning the big prize. Somebody does win, of course, but many many people lose.

Get rich schemes, as I call them, have an allure to those who do not want to work hard for success. They’re smarter than that, they believe.

I used to believe I was smarter than other people, but life has often (and easily) disabused me of that notion. In the last chapter on “The Strength of the Ant” we saw, as with the ant, human beings have herculean abilities. But this is species wide, not limited to just you or me as one individual. The quicker we learn this lesson, the quicker we learn to not try to outsmart others, which invariably generally leads to

simply outsmarting ourselves.

## **Conclusion**

Talk is cheap. Lazy people think that they can “work smart” and avoid working hard. Working smart is critical to success. A lot of people in low wage jobs are working very hard but are not getting ahead. But, in addition to working smart, you also have to put in the hard, hard work. Not hard work by struggle, although effort is required. Hard work by discipline. And by love. And by maturity.

When you’re ready to pay your dues in the world, the universe opens up. You feel clean. You feel worthy.

And you draw your success.

## **Success Area 7 - The Confidence of No**

Successful people are not afraid to say No.

Even under intense pressure.

I say “the confidence of No” because it takes a great deal of confidence and self-esteem to be able to say No when others are saying Yes.

Let’s start at the beginning. Successful people say Yes quite a bit. They say Yes because they understand that one must pay one’s dues in order to be successful, and that it is only by helping enough other people, as we saw from the famous Zig Ziglar quote, that one will also be successful in getting what one wants.

So, Yes is a big part of success. Successful people say Yes even when they don't want to say Yes sometimes, when they know that it is good for them (kind of like eating your broccoli and other vegetables if you don't like them). Successful people understand that it isn't about doing what you like, it's about doing what needs to be done to create success.

So, the confidence to say No is not about taking the easy way out or being selfish. Quite the contrary. Again, the successful are saying Yes a lot of the time. The confidence to say No relates to the ability of successful people to stick to their guns to say No, even under pressure, when they understand that this is instrumental to their success.

As one example, we saw earlier how successful people do not engage when provoked by those less successful than themselves. Less successful people are easily provoked and respond with anger or counter-verbal attack when they feel that they have been slighted. Successful people have the self-control to ignore provocation to which they feel they do not need to be drawn into. They know that the momentary feeling of annoyance or even anger will pass and that if they play into this drama then it will distract them from their success activities and hence lessen their success.

Some people believe that it is important to put other's needs before their own, while others believe that if you don't care of yourself first

you won't be any good for anyone else.

Kind of like in the airplanes when you take a flight and the airline attendants say in the preflight instructions that in the case of an accident in which the oxygen mask is needed put the oxygen mask first on yourself before attempting to assist others.

Certainly, to be successful in life we need to learn to be able to say Yes and to say No. What feels like the proper balance in this dimension to one person may not feel at all comfortable for another.

And some are much more comfortable closer to one end of the scale.

### **Saying Yes Because You Can't Say No**

What does it mean to say Yes? Saying yes can have many positive and adaptive elements. It means that one is engaged in life. It means that one cares, or at least is interested, in helping others. It means that one understands that one must sow the seeds of success through one's helpful actions.

But at what point does Yes become a detriment, or might it?

Yes might become a detriment to your success when you're giving away more of yourself than you can afford, such as when you're generous to a fault. There can be many examples or aspects of this.

We think of this in terms of not being able to

say No to others, but we also need to consider that it may also involve not being able to say No to oneself. For example, perhaps a person is heavy, or obese, because they eat too much (and exercise too little). Or the person is eating the wrong kinds of foods. Or is sexually promiscuous or not highly discerning in who one selects as one's intimate partner. Saying Yes in such circumstances results in short term pleasure, which you can define as success if you want to or if that is what you believe in, but is leading to longer term difficulties.

Successful people understand that short-term pleasures sometimes, perhaps often, need to be sacrificed to reach long term goals.

Successful people have high levels of self-discipline and delay of gratification. As a result they say Yes by saying No to themselves.

Some people can't say No to their baser emotions in their interpersonal relationships. They can't say no to anger. Or they can't say no to jealousy. Or bitterness, etc. You get the idea. Saying Yes to negative emotions is also saying Yes to toxic relationships.

Successful people are generally pretty nice.

They understand that others have long memories, and that, as is famously said, that people may not always remember what you said or what you did (although they probably will if it was good or bad enough from their perspective) but they will always remember the way that you made them feel. Successful

people are liked because they play well with others. They are respected because they are kind. The law of reciprocity is a strong one. While it is fashionable sometimes to believe, as they say, that “no good deed goes unpunished”, and this may well be true if the individual is in fact weak rather than kind, it is more true that we like those who like us (and demonstrate this by treating us well). In fact, it is relatively difficult for most people to dislike those who like us, or to be intentionally cruel or unkind to those who, from a position of strength of character or true caring, have been kind with us.

Some people can't say No to themselves in their finances. They have, as is said, champagne taste on a beer budget. Some people, perhaps those with lower self-esteem, can't feel good about themselves unless they have luxury items. These are the types of people who will work weeks or months for a designer item, or take vacations which they can't afford, because they “deserve it”. We talked earlier about entitlement. Those who cannot say No to themselves in the area of finances may not ask themselves, as successful people do, “Can I afford it?”. No, instead they ask themselves, “Do I want it?”, or “Do I deserve it?”.

People with self-esteem issues may buy it because they don't like how they feel about themselves when they do not have it. Just as food can serve as a compensation or substitute for love or happiness, so items can be plugged into the same role. I'm depressed, so I'll go

shopping, that will make me feel better (I've heard that referred to as "shopping therapy") etc.

There may be an element of truth to "when you look good you feel good" (or "clothes make the man or woman") but you see plenty of successful people who are not dressed to the nines or driving around in fancy cars. Successful individuals generally feel comfortable with money and will buy the things they need, but many are thrifty. In fact research has demonstrate that thrift is one of the hallmarks of many wealthy individuals and contributors towards wealth.

Probably many or most of us want nice things (some, by contrast, have convinced themselves that they don't deserve it, or it goes against their values of being not materialist, etc.) but successful people have learned to mediate their purchases by denying themselves when they feel they cannot truly afford the item and/or it does not translate into bringing them closer to their long term goals.

There is an important difference between success and the appearance of success. Those who are less successful may be more into the "appearance" or "trappings" of success. They are "keeping up with the Joneses" and want others to know that they have "made it". We've all seen those with the toys they cannot afford, whether it be the fancy house, the fancy car or smaller items meant to demonstrate status and success.



Living beyond one's means.

Being successful is difficult (if it was easy, everyone would be doing it and you'd likely have no need or interest in this book) and rather than doing the actions that lead to real success some would rather just give the impression that they are successful even when they are not.

### **Yes Arising From Insecurity or Fear**

As mentioned, the law of reciprocity is quite powerful. As a result, we know that if we want others to do things for us, that we have to do things for them. This is perfectly healthy, except when it is taken too far.

There is a time to give to others, and a time to receive from them. Giving is powerful, but only when it is freely given. Freely given implies that we have a choice to give or not to give. This makes the giving powerful, because we made the affirmative decision to give.

Some people are people pleasers. They have to give until it hurts because they are afraid to say No. People pleasers avoid being disliked, and they avoid confrontation. They may give but be resentful for the imposition. Or they may pretend to give, or give halfway, and pull the receiver's strings such that the gift is no gift at all. Instead it becomes a passive-aggressive drama.

A martyr complex.

“After all I did for you!!”

Obviously, this isn't healthy giving. In fact, you could make a convincing argument that it isn't really giving at all. It strikes me as taking disguised as giving. A fox guarding the henhouse type of giving.

Successful individuals are wary of people pleasers because they understand that the giving is done out of weakness rather than out of strength. That is why people pleasers get taken advantage of, and why the saying “no good deed goes unpunished” perhaps arises, for it certainly applies to these folks. People pleasers aren't really being taken advantage of. They are individuals who seemingly have a lot to give but in reality not so much.

There are many forms of this. Giving, for example, to inspire guilt, or with strings attached. Reciprocity is a powerful force but ebbs and flows. It can be accountable but it is not desperate. It does not keep strict score. People who are insecure know at every moment who is one up and one down, because they feel vulnerable to being down. Those more secure in themselves have a realization that good relationships have an ebb and flow which makes keeping strict score difficult and frankly not useful. Yes, they do have a developed sense of equal relationships and will exit unequal ones, but they're not panicked by every perceived slight, personalizing it and turning it into a catastrophe.

Hence, successful people are, as you might imagine, not into the drama. They don't need it. It doesn't do anything for them.

Those with poor self-esteem may also be punishing themselves by giving too much, such as being invested in the martyr complex or victim mentality. To receive requires self-esteem. I need to be worthy of receiving. To be identified with a victim mentality can seem a sense of solace in an insecure world. I'm so good that no one appreciates me.

I guess they call that winning by losing, but it still looks like losing to me (real winning by losing, I believe, is when you walk away or responsibly give in when facing unproductive battles).

Those with poor sense esteem may be afraid of confrontation. Confrontation to a fragile sense of self is frightening, for it feels as if it is a danger to one's very existence. Successful people address issues and address problems, it is one of the hallmark qualities of their success. As a result, by definition they must confront the challenges that stand in their way, and yes, you guessed it, these challenges involve people.

While successful people have learned how to pick their battles, it does not mean that they avoid facing issues in any way. Successful people care about their success, and are prone not to let this fear of difficult interactions deter them from problem-solving. Successful people don't expect success to come easily, and they

realize that solving problems is what success is all about. Successful people also have a wellspring of inner resources, such that a difficult interaction is easier to rebound from and withstand.

Now it is clear why persistence and self-esteem are critical skills of salespeople, and for all business and life success. There is a great deal of failure in life. In fact it has been said that a winner is just a loser who kept going (or also, famously, someone who got up one more time than they were knocked down). Resilience is something inside a person which says I'm good enough, I'm strong enough, I can do it.

Not that it is always easy by any means. It is said that successful people are courageous, and this does not mean acting without fear but instead acting in spite of one's fears. Successful people are also smart. They are not going to place themselves in situations in which the probability for catastrophic loss is great. But they will take intelligent risks. Intelligent risk is often defined as a, and perhaps the, key element of success, and that is because reward is the flip side of risk.

"Nothing ventured, nothing gained". The degree of one's success might well be quantified as the degree of one's ability to engage in, and profit from, intelligent risk.

The higher the risk, the higher the potential reward. Of course, this is a matter of experience and skills. What is highly risky to

one individual may well be old hat to another.  
And we each have our stronger and weaker  
areas.

Successful individuals can give a meaningful Yes  
to others because it flows out of a Yes to  
oneself.

This is what makes it both powerful and real.

### **The Confidence of No**

We've seen that Yes can arise out of weakness  
or strength. Of course the same is true for No.  
We've seen above how sometimes No can  
underlie Yes, and cover it. This is a No that  
appears at first glance to be a Yes.

That is a weak No.

The confidence of No is something differently  
entirely. The confidence of No is a clear and  
compelling No (no matter how it is received or  
understood) because it emanates from a place  
of clarity and resolve. The confidence of No is  
not essentially a No to the other as much as it is  
a Yes to self. That is, in this circumstance or  
situation, in order to be true to myself I have to  
say No to you. This isn't a reflection on you but  
rather a statement, from integrity, about me.

As we discussed before, you have to possess  
something before you can give it away. Can you  
give away a radio if you don't own it? Can you  
give away love, or strength, or compassion, if  
you don't already contain it within yourself?

The confidence of No indicates that I can only

be my best to you, others and the world if I am true to my goals and myself. Your request - or demand - will be factored into my thinking. If it is not factored in and considered then it is not a confidence of Yes or No but instead a robotic response in which I am so focused on me that I cannot consider you.

If I consider you and say No, it may be out of either strength or weakness. I may be so fearful and hurting inside that I considered what you said intellectually but emotionally I was forced to say No. I had no other choice. If I considered what you said truly, and, importantly, had the true option to say Yes but said No then this No, alternatively, comes out of strength.

Life is a series of continual tradeoffs. To say Yes to one thing often means or implies saying No to something else, or many things. Marrying one person means you are not marrying someone else (and if the marriage remains intact, anyone else). So, Yeses and Nos carry a great deal of repercussions (or implications if you prefer to think of it as such).

The confidence of No involves a level of self-awareness in regard to what these tradeoffs and repercussions are and how they relate to one's goals. One cannot be confident in one's No, or one's Yes for that matter, if one does not know oneself well and where one is going and the reasons for the decisions that one is making. The strengths of one's decisions will always reflect the strength of one's knowledge of oneself and one's commitment to one's

goals. The self-aware individual who is highly committed to one's goals is keenly focused and, as a result, highly resistant to the requests, pleas, commands or demands of others which would throw one off track from these goals.

We discussed life largely being a battle of ideas. This is the competitive element of life of which we are each well aware. We are each continually confronted with many decisions which involve competing ideas. Our life is harmonious, and successful, to the degree that we can line up our thinking and behavior behind the ideas that matter most to us. This involves the sacrifice of those ideas that mean less to us, and a recognition that we cannot be all things to all people. When those rejected ideas are closely attached to others in our lives, then our rejection of those ideas may lead to interpersonal conflicts and the potential for those relationships to wither, break apart or die.

The Power of No indicates a maturity level in which the individual is willing to positively confront the expectations of others that contrast with one's own, with the knowledge that doing so may impact relationships that one has. Life is a series of people coming into and out of our lives and becoming more and less close. We grapple with issues with people as we grapple with the ideas that we feel that we can and cannot embrace. The Power of No is a power, or empowering, to the degree that it reinforces an identity and life direction that we believe in. Often we are torn and conflicted

between competing interests and loyalties, and these situations, often painful, if we face them result in our learning more about ourselves and our priorities. For it is when we are in conflict or struggle that we often learn the most about ourselves. We have ideas about ourselves and what we believe and what we will do when under stress and challenge but these become tested by actual events and our responses may or may not be as we planned.

Highly successful individuals have pretty much of an unyielding spirit in regard to the power of No. Less successful individuals believe what they believe in regard to their life goals, but are quick(er) to crack and deviate under pressure. As a result, they may blame others (or themselves) for becoming distracted from one's goals. Highly successful individuals are extraordinarily resistant to such distractions, and that is why one can witness such individuals withstanding high degrees of pressure while still maintaining their stance and dedication to the Power of No.

**Conclusion:**

No, as with Yes, can be a sign of either strength or weakness, depending upon the factors involved. Successful people say Yes a lot because they understand the principle of helping others as being vital to success. However, successful individuals also have the Power of No. They understand they are responsible for their own success and how important it is not to be distracted by others away from one's goals. As a result, successful individuals can become highly impervious to



the direction and demands of others when these are viewed as being inconsistent with the directions that one has planned for one's life.

### **Success Area 8 - The Wisdom to Know The Difference**

What is signal and what is noise, or, in earlier parlance, what is the wheat and what is the chaff?

Or you've likely heard the Serenity Prayer, which begins (sometimes the wording is slightly different from version to version):

"God grant me the serenity  
to accept the things I cannot change;  
courage to change the things I can;  
and wisdom to know the difference."

But how do we know the difference?

In this chapter we break down some elements of wisdom that the successful employ in this regard.

#### **Discernment**

Discernment has many nuances of meaning. Most directly, it often means judging clearly or understanding well. Sometimes it can have a spiritual connotation.

To me, discernment involves seeing to the heart of the matter such that one can differentiate and distinguish the important from the important. Discernment has the notion of separating, as above, the wheat from

the chaff or the signal from the noise.

Discernment is thought of, rightfully so, as a skill of refinement. Those with a cruder understanding of a matter, topic, situation, person or the like will be less able to discern meaningfully or well. One who can discern well is a virtuoso, an expert, a clear and incisive thinker.

Discernment involves the notion of peeling away of the outer or superficial levels in order to see to the heart of a matter. Individuals with a high degree of discernment are able to separate the important from the unimportant because they can see and understand both and distinguish between the two.

So, what contributes to discernment, and how is it utilized by the successful?

Discernment is a hallmark quality of the successful. We live in a complex and confusing world. Insight and clarity are powerful success factors which are not easily attained in such conditions. It is said that the world is not only moving faster than ever but that the pace of change is increasing as well. The rate of change is accelerating! In such a world, one may well be the proverbial duck with the legs going faster and faster even to stay in one's relative place. Those who are not sprinting full speed are likely being left way behind! In such conditions, how can one keep a clear head. With the stress of living amid constant change, how can we ever know what we indeed need to know and what we don't. What is essential and

what is extraneous?

It is often said that information is power, but the problem we face in the modern age is not a dearth of information - it is everywhere - but instead information overload. Those who win are not those who have the most information but those who have the best information well understood. Organizing information in a manner in which it is actionable in regard to desired results is critical for success. When we talk about time management, prioritization, even stress management, these each imply the ability to manage information successfully towards desired goals.

You've probably heard of the expression, first things first. One meaning of the term is placing the greatest value on the things which are most important. Another meaning, perhaps related, is tackling the most important things first. Successful individuals are highly disciplined. They're not time-wasters, focused on the less important activities which may be easier or more fun. Successful individuals have that discipline to do the hard things, and the hard things first before spending time on the less important. I talked about the famous 80-20 rule and how 80% of one's success results from 20% of one's activities. Highly successful individuals focus on that 80% first.

Discernment is the ability to determine what those most important activities are. Most people are busy, and we each have the same 24 hours per day. Successful individuals are able to

better discern what is most productive activity and then have the discipline to focus on that.

Is discernment native intelligence or is it the result of experience? This is an interesting question. Certainly some individuals have good discernment abilities, relatively speaking, across the board or across a swath of domains, although clearly experience and expertise in the domain of question can also be critically important. Experienced jewelers are likely to have a discernment in regard to issues with precious stones that laypeople often do not. Grade school teachers are likely to have a discernment in regard to learning principles in their pupils that outsiders may not. Anything that is more familiar to us tends to have patterns and trends that we pick up over time and discern and understand.

But the ability to get to the heart of the matter and separate the important from the unimportant can also be a general skill. Some people seem to have a skill of getting the best out of situations, including people, while others seem to get lost and not “see the forest for the trees”.

Discernment is a function of maturity. You can't see what is important and unimportant in a situation except as it relates to the broader backdrop of who you are and what you understand. As we saw earlier, life can be as much (or more) projection and creation as it is perception, so what we see in situations and in people will be largely influenced, if not

dependent, upon our own self-awareness.

As noted, discernment to some entails a spiritual dimension, a spiritual seeing. Such individuals may believe that it is only from the spiritual perspective that one can see most deeply, and thus possess the greatest level of discernment.

### **Judgment**

“She’s a good judge of character”

“She demonstrates good judgment”

“It’s a judgment call”

What is judgment, and what does it involve? I think of it as the ability to make well-reasoned and astute assessments.

That is a substantial component of “the wisdom to know the difference”.

If discernment sees to the heart of the matter and peels the unimportant from the important, then judgment, which is clearly related, is perhaps the faculties, wherewithal and skills by which such discernment is possible. In judgment we weigh, we consider, we analyze.

Judges, for example, would be expected to use all of these skills, and more, in making their judgments.

And with us all.

But we can also get carried away and become “judgmental”. Having good judgment implies that we have a clarity of focus, values and decision-making upon which to accurately make such decisions for good. If our focus is poor we cannot have good judgment. If our values are poor we cannot have good judgment. And if our decision-making processes are poor then we cannot have good judgment.

Our judgment flows from our character, which is really another way of saying that it flows from the desires of our heart. If the desires of our heart are mature or elevated, then then our judgment will, flowing from these, be refined. Conversely, if the desires of our heart are base then our judgment, or judgments, reflective of this, will be coarse.

Are you with me so far?

We talked before about character being destiny. Judgment is a mechanism by which character is expressed. As our life is our collective history of the choices that we have made, judgments are critical in regard to where we wind up based upon the choices we make.

What kinds of judgments do successful people make? Successful people favor their higher selves over their lower selves in the choices that made. We all feel angry at times, mistreated, neglected, misunderstood. Successful people identify with the higher parts of oneself which transcend these slights and hurts, forgive others and see the best in them.

Another definition of judgment is reckoning, e.g. the notion of judgment day. This alludes to the fact that the judgments that we make mold our destiny. Perhaps karma is, in a sense, nothing more than a playing out in time of the judgments we have made.

As has been famously said, “thoughts are things”, and also, “as you believe, so you will receive”. The power of the mind, flowing from the heart and reflecting our character, dictates our present and shapes our future.

Whoa.

Successful individuals take responsibility for their thinking and the judgments that they make. They don't blame others, because they understand that taking a victim mentality is a mental practice which, from a karmic perspective, puts into the motion the potential for one to become victimized (or perhaps more accurately, define oneself as such).

Experiences are the mirror of our lives and judgments are the driver of these experiences.

As within, so without.

### **Attitudes and Beliefs**

We come to our judgments based upon the attitudes and beliefs that we hold. Attitudes and beliefs might be considered preferences, perspectives or even prejudices (in the more general use of the term). They are inclinations,

mental sets. I discussed previously how our perceptions are often projections. Attitudes and beliefs give rise to these projections. We believe, as a few examples, that people are kind, or evil, or untrustworthy, or good. These then are projected onto our walk in the world, dictating our experiences and coloring them.

A few possibilities covering part of a range of attitude and beliefs that we might witness in the world:

I have a protectionist attitude because I believe that the world is a scary place.

I have a calm and loving attitude because I believe that the world loves me.

I have a cooperative and collaborative attitude because I believe that the interests of another are not, ultimately, separate from my own.

I have a competitive attitude because I believe that life is a zero sum game.

Beliefs and attitudes are perhaps the beginning building blocks of the “the wisdom to know the difference” and thus critical in determining the quality and successful we attain in life.

What kind of life will I have if I have primarily a competitive attitude? If I have a cooperative one? Every attitude can be elevated or evolved to its greater good. Competition can be elevated to growth, cooperation can be an elevation of acquiescence. There is a seed in



every belief and attitude that points us and drives us to our next level of development. That is why there is a seed or element of truth in anything that is thought or believed.

But it can become very much distorted.

And although I am not sure who would be the judge in such a matter, certainly there is a hierarchy in regard to the more evolved versus baser nature of varying attitudes and beliefs.

Successful people have successful beliefs. They understand that the energy in the belief propels them towards the attainment of the desire contained within the belief. It is said that God does not put a desire within our hearts that we do not have the potential of actualizing. It is true also, however, on the other hand, that part of life involves learning how to let go, as life is in some sense largely a continual process of both acquisition and loss.

Growth requires effort, which at the higher levels can be thought of as focus or concentration. It has been said that the vast majority of the energy in the universe is dark energy and dark matter. The natural inclination is towards entropy and decay.

According to

<http://science.nasa.gov/astrophysics/focus-areas/what-is-dark-energy/>:

“It turns out that roughly 68% of the Universe is dark energy. Dark matter makes up about 27%. The rest - everything on Earth, everything ever observed with all of our instruments, all normal

matter - adds up to less than 5% of the Universe.”

Talk about a stacked deck!!

This principle plays out in our daily lives:

“I’ll just take it easy today and rest.”

“I feel like giving up.”

“I’ll never reach my goals.”

I don’t know why the universe is apparently stacked against us in this way but I do know that even though we may often have our doubts and face constant struggle, we do find a way to make it through. Perhaps such struggle is a mechanism for developing our empathy and other “spiritual muscles”, perhaps it is a little bit of a cosmic joke, I wish I knew.

In any event, achievement takes constant effort against this inertia principle to keep going forward and advance.

Just because other people seem to be swimming along, don’t assume that they have it easy, or any easier than you. Successful people realize and accept that life is difficult. They don’t expect it to be otherwise. They gird themselves up to face the challenges that arise.

Much of the New Age movement details wonderful principles such as the law of attraction, etc., but for these principles to work

still require effort. Too many people think that you just sit back and meditate and one's life is transformed. Inner peace is essential for success, because as long as we are struggling within ourselves significantly it can be seemingly impossible to get even meaningfully started. But action arising out of this calm state is also required. If we are attentive to our inner state we will feel a natural intuition of when it is time to work and when it is time to rest. Naturally the oak tree grows and instinctively the fox runs. They know how to do these things. But the tree must withstand the storms (a little flexibility doesn't hurt) and the fox must rely on experience (and cunning) and effort to survive.

It is the way of the world. Even the Bible explains that faith without works is dead.

It is paradoxical that we are perfect already, but in constant state of development as well.

Successful individuals use the power of their beliefs and attitudes to infuse their actions in the world. They develop habits, such as self-discipline, cooperation laced with self-reliance and meditation, gratitude and/or prayer which help propel their beliefs and attitudes into taking root in the world. The development of one's greatest potentialities lies, interestingly enough, in striving for a purpose greater than oneself. Successful people realize that while they may be a mere speck in the Universe that they also, in some sense, as spiritual beings, paradoxically, can tap into the cosmic infinity at

the same time. It is this accepting of paradox which helps to reconcile the contrasting elements experienced in life. We don't need to have all of the answers to live a life of conviction and purpose. The fact that we do not know everything does not mean that we know nothing, or nothing of importance. Life guides us moment to moment, teaching us what we need to know at that time.

Successful individuals use their beliefs and attitudes, along with judgment, discernment and other qualities, to position themselves to be receptive to the instructive beneficent forces of the universe. When the essential properties of a man or woman line up with the laws of the universe, one serves as a productive and often joyful vessel in one's experience and life's work.

This is success.

## **Conclusion**

Discernment, judgment and beliefs and attitudes are each critical in regard to the wisdom to know the difference, and to success.

Discernment is an inner wisdom or light, serving as a source of navigation in a complex, complicated and challenging world.

Judgments, beliefs and attitudes are the building blocks, arising from character, which structure our path in the world. The ability to separate out the signal from the noise, the important from the unimportant, is the critical

dimension upon which we navigate between success and failure. Each of these serve as tools to move us forward, if well utilized, towards the attainment of our goals and dreams.

### **Success Area 9 - Rising to the Top is Only the Beginning**

I said before that character may well be destiny.

Here's another one: Talent takes one to the top, but only character keeps one there.

This final chapter will examine why some people make it to the top (that is, a high station in life) but fall (or stagnate) while others keep on progressing and moving forward.

#### **A Drive to Achieve**

Will is a fundamental force in the universe, and extraordinarily powerful. If you have the will to do something, the motivation, as well as sufficient ability, then you are quite likely to succeed.

But success can be temporary or lasting.

Will without character is dangerous, because we may accomplish our goals but these goals may be misguided or harmful. There are some people highly motivated people to do bad things. Highly motivated criminals come to mind.

Why God gave us free will but not always the wisdom to best use it is something that is well

beyond anything I understand. What I do believe is that Life also instills limits in our lives. Some of these limits in our lives are self-imposed, as we are socialized to regulate our own behavior. This is necessary for society to insure that we do not transgress upon the rights of others, and that they do not transgress upon us. When these internal controls prove inadequate, then external controls (think everything from the admonishments of others up to prison and police etc.) can come into play. If we did not have external controls then the failure of people to self-regulate due to ineffective and underdeveloped internal controls would prove increasingly dangerous.

The balancing of internal and external controls is critical, and a judgment call. For example, it has said that it is better that 100 guilty people go free than that one innocent person be convicted. I honestly don't know if that is a proper balance or not, but I would say that it is important that as a society and a planet that we collectively come up with what we believe, based upon reflection and hopefully wisdom, is the appropriate balance.

### **Talent**

It has been famously said that talent is equally distributed across the globe, but that opportunity is not. Certainly, wherever you go, talented and highly talented individuals are to be found. Talent can and will take one to the top. If you are extraordinarily motivated and extraordinarily talented then you'll have a major leg up in this competitive world in regard

to achieving great success.

However, getting to the top is not the same as staying there. In Chapter 2 I mentioned a guess that maybe 15% (a total guess, really) get to the top by unethical means, such as lying, cheating, bullying etc. It is these 15% that are especially prone to fall. Elephants have long memories, but humans do as well. It is famously said “be careful how you treat people on the way up, because these are the same people you will meet on the way down”.

Isn't that the truth?

Think about how people have treated you in your life. While forgiveness is most certainly overall a virtue as well as being liberating to the forgiver, I also believe, on the other side of the scale, that life places these memories in our minds towards contributing to a world of accountability. In short, we're all accountable to each other in this world. You ride your car over the bridge and you trust that the engineers who built the bridge did an adequate job. You trust that the people who built your car designed it so that it is not going to blow up. You trust that the governments of the world are protecting your air from contamination so that this is not killing you as you go about your daily life (and if you don't believe that last point, or any of them, you're free to protest or take other corrective action against it).

We each have an internal notion of fairness. When we believe that someone has aggrieved

us we notice. We may seek to fix the perceived unfairness in some way or we may just make a mental note. But we're all watching over others whom we encounter in this life or by whom we are effected by in some way.

That can be either a reassuring or scary notion I suppose, based upon how it is perceived.

Life is an incredible tapestry. We share the same sources of air and water and we work, live and travel on common ground. We have roles and rules that help to organize what we do and are allowed to do. Hence our freedom, such as it is - and we are CONSTANTLY making decisions - is also contained and constrained within this framework as well.

Life also constrains (or enables) us based upon our sphere of influence. For example, in a work setting, we may have the maturity and talent such that life puts us in charge of 10 people, or 100, or 1,000 or 10,000, as the case may be.

There are certain people, obviously, that you would not want to be responsible for 10,000 people.

Or even 10 in some cases.

Most essentially, talent may be the ability to get to where we wish to go. This may or may not be a tangible place, it can also be an expression, a feeling, even an idea that we come to in our mind.



## **Character Part 2**

Following the earlier discussion of character in chapter 2, here I will discuss it as the differentiating factor between who stays on top versus who falls back down.

Have you ever heard the expression “Be careful what you wish for”?

Life knows what we can handle well and what we cannot. Imagine what kind of world it would be if we received everything that we want.

Shivers!

I’ve often wondered why life allows us to want and hope and even dream for things that may not be ultimately good for us. Perhaps part of the reason may be that we have to advance in terms of what we think we want and that is this a fundamental aspect of growth. Perhaps part of learning what we do want, or come to want as we continue to mature, is learning what we do not want, or no longer want.

Character, in one sense, is the totality of the things which we want and what we, in a corresponding fashion, hold to ourselves to be. This continually advances (and hopefully matures).

Character is what allows us to stay on top when we reach it.

It is the sustainability mechanism.

Think again of those lottery winners.

Technically, by definition, they are wealthy individuals due to the fact that they currently possess a large sum of money. However, if they do not also possess a wealth mentality, and instead possess a one of being poor, then of course they are in fact poor individuals who temporarily have a great deal of money.

Such individuals at times cannot lose the money fast enough.

It is said that “a fool and his or her money is soon parted”. I always wondered how the fool accumulated the money in the first place.

Certainly it is good to gain, but it is better to keep. They say that rich people do not necessarily earn more than others (although in sometimes they do) but in fact retain more. They spend, for example, their money on assets rather than liabilities. And they profit from tax advantages.

If we want to not only succeed but stay successful, we need to be wise. Everything is a stepping stone to everything else in life, so our successes, and also our failures, hopefully prepare us for greater successes down the line.

### **Success as We Define it**

Sometimes what seemed like a success at one point in life does not seem so later on. That marriage that fulfilled us may feel a little different after the divorce. Our financial success may carry a bit of an edge if our personal relationships suffered at the same

time.

SOMETIMES WE FALL FROM ONE SUCCESS  
BECAUSE WE ARE HEADED TO A GREATER  
SUCCESS DOWN THE LINE.

You've heard the expression that we learn more from failure than success. Sometimes failure teaches us to be more wise. Or more careful. Or more aggressive. Or more humane. Life is a learning experience, and other people often serve as our teachers. If we view our travels through life as a process, as a journey, then it reaches a point where we can assert that "it's all good". Not that we enjoyed every experience or wanted it at the time, but it brought us to where we are today as a person, something that many of us would not ever want to trade.

In this sense it is difficult to really talk about success versus failure, because there is no finish line, it's always a work in progress (throughout this lifetime and some would state beyond) and how much success we've had in one area is related to the priorities we have had, our skills, and the choices that we have made.

Although this book has been about success, I believe that an equally useful paradigm, perhaps, is authenticity. Perhaps the degree to which we've been authentic to ourselves, and the level of evolution and development this authenticity has gained, is the truest measure of our level of success. That is, perhaps success

is ultimately not externally defined -- we broke a world record or became CEO -- but relates to the degree that we were true to ourselves, became a better person, showed courage and determination, etc.

### **Redefinitions of Success**

That is a definition of success that I enjoy. It puts us all on a level field, and also removes comparison. The world becomes a bridge back to ourselves in regard to how we conceptualize success.

“Talent takes on to the top but character keeps one there”. Some attainments, or stations in life, are only temporary resting stops, while others develop into core and lasting components of our identity and roles. Sometimes we want a certain position in life for ego, and sometimes for soul. If we are knocked off a lofty perch because it doesn't serve our higher nature is that a failure or success?

We are each part of the human condition. We hurt. We love. We feel joy. We feel pain. Are we succeeding or failing or are we simply experiencing the range of human experiences, including inner experiences as we go through our lives?

I hope that this book has stimulated your thinking in regard to notions of success, traditional and not. I have used a great deal of quotes in this book, and one more, said famously by Shakespeare, seems to sum up pretty well: Of course he said:

“There is nothing either good or bad, but  
thinking makes it so”

**Conclusion:**

Yours.

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