

The psychology of success

Successful people have the habit of doing things failures don't like to do. They don't like doing them either, but their disliking is put into second place to the strength of their purpose, argues Robert Craven.

Successful people seem to do things in a different way from the unsuccessful. Success breeds success, and certainly attitude is a key part of the secret of success.

All successful entrepreneurs have a number of attributes in common, none of which is at all magical. The Harvard Business Review published an excellent study of entrepreneurial qualities by Geoffrey A Timmons. He came up with nine such assets:

1. A high level of drive and energy.
2. Enough self-confidence to take carefully calculated, moderate risks.
3. A clear idea of money as a way of keeping score and as a means of generating more money.
4. The ability to get other people to work with you and for you productively.
5. High but realistic, achievable goals.
6. Belief that you can control your own destiny.
7. Readiness to learn from your own mistakes and failures.
8. A long-term vision of the future of your business.
9. Intense competitive urge, with self-imposed standards.

Success is goals

Goals imply ambition and drive. Goals are the motivator that makes you work that much harder. Goals give you the reason that you go to work. So be clear about what you want – the lifestyle or the car or the house or the social life. Be clear about what you want to achieve and the focus will help you to succeed.

You will achieve little without goals. List your goals for your business, for your career and for your family. What do you want to achieve? And what will you have to do more of and what will you have to do less of to achieve these goals?

Self-limiting beliefs

What hold us back are our self-limiting beliefs. Our ability to dream is limited by our willingness to allow our imagination its freedom. Fear of failure is drummed into many of us from an early age (others are all too willing to mock our early failures) so that we become nervous to mention our deepest ambitions. Fear of success is another limiter on what you are willing to do.

What's holding you back? What are you frightened of doing that is stopping you from achieving your ambitions? Most fear is mental rather than actual. Fear of flying or of public speaking can be overcome with determination and willpower. How badly do you want your goals? If you aren't prepared to make the necessary sacrifices to achieve your goals, then you don't want them badly enough!

Accept responsibility

The successful accept responsibility for the consequences of their actions. They

accept their failures as being a result of their own behaviour and they also accept their successes as being attributable to their own behaviour. They don't blame others.

What business problems are you blaming others for? Accepting responsibility puts you in a position of power – take control of the situation rather than let the situation control you.

Develop a positive attitude

If you surround yourself with negative people you will take on their negativity. In fact you will absorb the attitudes of those around you. Surround yourself with beer-drinkers, and talk about beer and alcohol will soon become the norm. Surround yourself with musicians and talk of music will soon become the norm.

Surround yourself with people and books that stimulate and encourage you to stretch yourself. Do not listen to the doom merchants who transfer their own sense of inadequacy on to you by pointing out all the reasons why you are going to fail.

Believe in yourself

Self-belief and self-confidence are probably the most important gifts we can give to our children. With self-confidence, we are willing to experiment and try out new ideas. We don't measure ourselves by other people's standards.

If you don't believe in what you are doing then who will? Take yourself seriously. Build up your confidence; challenge yourself and push yourself to do more than just enough. Don't settle for mediocrity; strive to do your best.

Decide to be successful

Success won't just happen to you. You have to work at it. Whatever you want, you can have it but you need to concentrate your efforts to achieve it. You must recognise the trade-offs involved and be prepared to pay those prices.

Decide what your definition of success is. Plan out how you are going to achieve it.

Manage your time

To be successful, you must manage your time as effectively as possible. Many successful entrepreneurs are habitual list-makers. You need to manage your time effectively and to do that you must have clarity about what you are trying to achieve.

Use your time effectively. Do you always use it as well as you could? Cut out the time-wasting activities, decide what is important and concentrate on the activities that give you most benefit.

Set goals and achieve them

Clarity and vision about what you are going to achieve reinforce your determination to succeed. The more you visualise your success, the more you rehearse your victory, so the more you prepare yourself for the task ahead.

What are your goals? What do you want to have achieved in the next three weeks? What do you want to achieve in the next three months? What is it that you want to achieve in the next three years?

Checklist for success

- Remember, success is goals
- What's holding you back – your self-limiting beliefs
- Fundamental rule: accept responsibility
- Develop a positive attitude
- Believe in yourself
- Decide to be successful
- Manage your time
- Set goals and achieve them

About the author

Robert Craven is the keynote speaker and author of the best-selling business books 'Kick-Start Your Business' and 'Customer Is King'. His new book is 'Bright Marketing - why should people bother to buy from you?' (July 2007). As MD of The Directors' Centre www.directorscentre.com, the consultancy for growing businesses, he works with ambitious directors to break through constraints on business growth. Robert can be contacted at rc@directorscentre.com or +44 (0)1225 851044.

By Robert Craven for our sister site, [BusinessZone](#)

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