

MASTERING *the* ART *of* SUCCESS



LES BROWN



MARK VICTOR HANSEN



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JACK CANFIELD



Mastering

the
a rt of

success



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MESSAGE FROM THE PUBLISHER



In today's competitive business world, success has become an art and those who master it are considered "lucky." I believe, however, that luck might not have as much to do with becoming successful as good old fashioned hard work and being willing to learn and grow.

I have interviewed many people and it seems that each one defines success differently. Success for one woman might mean a good marriage, happy children, and a good job she enjoys. Success for the man next door might mean a challenging job that keeps him on the run and provides enough money to enjoy life's luxuries. Some people do not define success in terms of material gain. For these people, success means learning new things, growing spiritually and intellectually, and other altruistic ideals that are internal rather than external.

We've searched for successful people and asked them how they have mastered success as they define it. The people I talked with gave me intriguing insights into what success is for them and advice about how others can follow in their steps.

I believe you will find that this book, *Mastering the Art of Success*, is a valuable addition to your continuing education library. You will learn from it, and it just may change your life. So take a little time for yourself. Kick back, read this book, and start a new chapter in your life. I think you'll be glad you did!

DAVID E. WRIGHT, PRESIDENT

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Chapter One

Success Leads to Freedom

BY ANDREW LOCK

DAVID WRIGHT (WRIGHT)

Today we're talking with Andrew Lock, the presenter and creator of the hit show, *Help! My Business Sucks!* at www.HelpMyBusiness.com. He is also the author of five small business marketing books, and is an in-demand international speaker on the topics of how to stand out from the crowd to grow any business, as well as small business marketing, and WebTV.

Andrew's background in the entertainment industry on both sides of the "pond" equipped him with a unique perspective on the topic of success.

Born and raised in the South of England, Andrew now lives in Salt Lake City with his wife Lucy and their cat, Tigger.

Andrew, welcome to *Mastering the Art of Success*.

What's your earliest recollection of a situation where you felt you had success?

ANDREW LOCK (LOCK)

One day as a kid at school in England, I was called to the headmaster's office. I stood outside, as nervous as a deer on a firing range. I honestly thought that I was about to be reprimanded. For what

exactly, I wasn't sure, I just knew that I must have done *something* wrong. Turns out, I was presented with the "Top of the Year" award for business studies. You could have knocked me over with a feather. Of course, I left the office beaming from ear to ear, with a new found confidence, and lots of ideas of businesses I could start.

WRIGHT

What does success mean to you? How do you define it and measure it?

LOCK

I think it's important to recognize that success really does mean something different to each person. For some it's achieving a certain amount of money. For others it's about fame, and being recognized. For others it's a personal goal that's been reached. I do think it's important to recognize that success rarely equates to happiness. It's possible to be successful and happy, and it's just as possible to be successful and unhappy. Achieving the former is obviously the best goal to have.

To me, success is simply a broad term that describes a positive outcome as a result of effort you put in. It means being able to be the person you want to be, freely and openly, without fear. Money has never been the main motivation for me. I prefer to focus on freedom of choice. I recognize that money is important, actually it's vital because the world revolves around it; but there are still plenty of people who have money and they're miserable. Money can buy a house, but not a home.

Ultimately, I believe that success often means having enough money to make choices without annoying limitations that would otherwise be imposed. It sometimes results in your being treated better, even like a celebrity. That's a sad reality, but it's basic psychology that most people look up to and admire others they perceive as being successful.

WRIGHT

What surprises you about success?

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LOCK

There was a fascinating research study conducted by Harvard University in 1998. The investigators asked students to choose one of the following scenarios, both imaginary and purely theoretical. With Option A you'd be paid \$50,000 a year while others earn an average of \$25,000. With Option B, by comparison, you'd be paid \$100,000 a year compared with an average salary of \$250,000. What do you think the results were? I was shocked to learn that most people went for option A. From a purely logical view, it doesn't make sense to choose \$25,000 when you could choose \$100,000 instead. The latter salary was four times larger. Researchers concluded that comparing ourselves to others standard of "success" is something we do naturally and regularly. This kind of social comparison is apparently very influential on us.

WRIGHT

Why are some people successful while others struggle?

LOCK

The foundation of success comes from your mental state. Whether you believe you can, or can't, guess what? you're right. Everyone has at least a few nagging doubts about themselves, but successful people learn to squash them so that when doubt rears its ugly head, it's immediately trampled on and put in its place! Having a positive "I can do this" belief system is essential. Many people wrongly believe that what counts are qualifications, skills, and abilities. Let me tell you, with sufficient motivation, you can learn to do anything you want. For some it'll take longer than others, but it's always possible.

For most people, the main thing that holds them back is their lack of belief that they can do it. Another way of putting it is, "fear of failure," which equates to saying to yourself, "I don't think this will work for me, therefore I'm not going to even attempt it, because when it fails I'm going to feel bad." That kind of negative thinking is destructive because you've fallen at the first hurdle by not even attempting to fulfill a dream.

WRIGHT

What's your favorite success quote?

LOCK

“Develop success from failures. Discouragement and failure are two of the surest steppingstones to success”—Dale Carnegie.

I also like Albert Einstein's words, “Try not to become a man of success but rather to become a man of value.” Very wise, and he had the focus right, in my opinion.

WRIGHT

What do you think is your proudest accomplishment?

LOCK

Being able to feed my family consistently, even in the tough times, without having a “regular” job or being employed by anyone. Beyond that, I know I continue to help hundreds of thousands of small business owners and entrepreneurs via my free WebTV show, *Help! My Business Sucks!* (www.HelpMyBusiness.com). I've released more than one hundred and sixty episodes, which equates to more than forty hours of practical tips and advice. That's a successful accomplishment, and I'm committed to continuing to release new episodes for as long as I can.

WRIGHT

How important is it to be persistent when working toward a goal?

LOCK

Persistence is essential. It's one of the top ingredients that needs to go into the mix, alongside a positive personal belief. I've observed that many people give up too soon. My biggest breakthroughs have consistently happened shortly after I felt like throwing in the towel and giving up. With the benefit of hindsight, I'm so grateful that I stubbornly persisted, because the victories make the tough times worthwhile.

Mastering the Art of Success

WRIGHT

What advice do you have for readers who feel that success has eluded them?

LOCK

Everyone has had success in their lives. If someone feels that he or she can't naturally recall such times, chat about it with trusted family members and friends. They'll remind you of plenty of achievements that qualify as "successes."

WRIGHT

How can success be maintained for as long as possible?

LOCK

You become who you surround yourself with. We're all easily influenced, and that influence can be positive or negative. By hanging around other successful people, you greatly increase the likelihood that your success will continue, and even expand. The reverse is also true. If you constantly have to listen to negative, destructive comments, it will drag you down very quickly. Environment is critical, and you should and can control it to maintain a positive backdrop to your life.

WRIGHT

What personal qualities should people develop that will help them be successful?

LOCK

1. **Passion.** Having genuine enthusiasm for what you're doing is contagious, and it's self-motivating.
2. **Self-discipline.** There are plenty of opportunities and distractions. If you're not careful, you can be driven off course away from your goals by trivial or meaningless activities.
3. **Teachable.** Have a willingness to learn. We can never know it all. Be like a sponge, consuming useful information as often as possible.

4. **Persistence.** Most people give up too soon. If you're convinced what you're doing is right, then see it through without even thinking about giving up.
5. **Humility.** Don't let your ego get in your way. No one likes a person who's arrogant and full of their own self-importance.
6. **Gratitude.** Be grateful for everything you've been given. It's easy to take things for granted, until they are taken away from us. Express appreciation regularly to those who help you to be successful. No one can do it on their own, so recognize and support all those who have supported you.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Andrew Lock, is a maverick marketer who's been influenced by generations of unconventional marketers including Claude Hopkins, Dale Carnegie, Dan Kennedy, Seth Godin, Jay Abraham, and of course, fellow Brit, Richard Branson of the Virgin empire.

Help! My Business Sucks! (www.HelpMyBusiness.com) is a free, weekly Web television show that helps entrepreneurs

“get more done and have more fun.” Hosted by Andrew Lock, the show provides plenty of practical marketing tips, big lessons from well-known brands, and lots of little-known resources that small business owners can use to increase their profits fast.

With an irreverent, entertaining, and humorous style, the show has also become more popular than a supermodel at a Catholic boarding school.

As a result of the lessons he's learned, Andrew is on a mission to expose traditional marketing techniques as outdated and ineffective. You'll discover much better ways of promoting your business and to make it stand out from the crowd. You'll also discover that “*marketing is everything and everything is marketing*”—a phrase you'll hear a lot from Andrew.

Andrew's Story

It all started with potatoes . . .

As a kid, Andrew challenged every “normal” way of making money that was accepted by all the other kids. While most school-age youths were doing a paper route to earn some pocket money, Andrew hated getting up early in the morning, so that didn't seem like a good idea.

Besides, he was never one to blindly “follow the crowd” and he knew he could do better, regardless of his young age and inexperience.

One day while traveling on a bus, he overheard some old people complain to each other about not being able to carry bags of potatoes home from the store, and that sparked an idea to create a potato route.

Andrew found a farm that was willing to supply sacks of potatoes and had his parents drive him over to collect them. He then divided the potatoes into small “retail” bags and went from door to door, quickly establishing a little business that earned him eighteen to twenty times more than his school friends were making with their paper routes, *and* he was able to do it after school, not at 5 AM in the freezing cold of the British winters.

Andrew comments, “I had no interest in potatoes, but the money was hard to pass by. Actually, I got a lot of satisfaction from helping so many people who couldn’t get out of the house. They really appreciated the service and would frequently pay me more than the asking price. I realized at that point that within reason, price sometimes isn’t an issue. If demand is high and there’s no competition, price is often taken out of the equation. That was one of my earliest marketing lessons at a time when I didn’t even know what marketing was!”

School and Beyond

Understandably, at school, Andrew was known by everyone as “the entrepreneur,” and quickly won all the top awards for business studies.

Andrew’s first info-product was created at age fourteen. It was a guidebook about planning a vacation to Florida theme parks. “This was before desk-top publishing. so I used a typewriter to create the guide, and photocopied it to make copies to sell. By today’s standards they looked horrible, but again it taught me that if the information was good, people would overlook presentation.”

Deciding to forgo college and instead focus on real-world business, Andrew’s hobby in entertainment magic led him to hook up with famous entertainer Paul Daniels. Daniels is known as the Johnny Carson of the UK. He is someone who’s performed more magic on television than anyone in history. Andrew and Paul created the definitive course about how to profit from performing magic tricks for

others. Titled, “*How to Make Money by Magic*,” the course was sold via mail order. Eventually, the largest info-publisher in the UK picked up the rights to distribute it.

Andrew went on to become Paul Daniels’ personal manager, which led to an unexpected and fascinating marketing education. Andrew explains, “Little did I know that Paul was such a genius. He has one of the highest IQ’s of anyone I’ve ever met. I learned more about real-world marketing from him than from any books or courses I’d read up to that point. Together, we devised some amazingly powerful, sometimes wild and crazy marketing campaigns for Paul’s business that I’m very proud of.”

Andrew Lock


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Chapter Two

Find a Mentor and Believe in your Dreams

BY JACK CANFIELD

DAVID WRIGHT (WRIGHT)

Today we are talking with Jack Canfield. You probably know him as the founder and co-creator of the *New York Times* number one bestselling *Chicken Soup for the Soul* book series. As of 2006 there are sixty-five titles and eighty million copies in print in over thirty-seven languages.

Jack's background includes a BA from Harvard, a master's from the University of Massachusetts, and an Honorary Doctorate from the University of Santa Monica. He has been a high school and university teacher, a workshop facilitator, a psychotherapist, and a leading authority in the area of self-esteem and personal development.

Jack Canfield, welcome to *Mastering the Art of Success*.

JACK CANFIELD (CANFIELD)

Thank you, David. It's great to be with you.

WRIGHT

When I talked with Mark Victor Hansen, he gave you full credit for coming up with the idea of the *Chicken Soup* series. Obviously it's made

you an internationally known personality. Other than recognition, has the series changed you personally and if so, how?

CANFIELD

I would say that it has and I think in a couple of ways. Number one, I read stories all day long of people who've overcome what would feel like insurmountable obstacles. For example, we just did a book *Chicken Soup for the Unsinkable Soul*. There's a story in there about a single mother with three daughters. She contracted a disease and she had to have both of her hands and both of her feet amputated. She got prosthetic devices and was able to learn how to use them. She could cook, drive the car, brush her daughters' hair, get a job, etc. I read that and I thought, "God, what would I ever have to complain and whine and moan about?"

At one level it's just given me a great sense of gratitude and appreciation for everything I have and it has made me less irritable about the little things.

I think the other thing that's happened for me personally is my sphere of influence has changed. By that I mean I was asked, for example, some years ago to be the keynote speaker to the Women's Congressional Caucus. The Caucus is a group that includes all women in America who are members of Congress and who are state senators, governors, and lieutenant governors. I asked what they wanted me to talk about—what topic.

"Whatever you think we need to know to be better legislators," was the reply.

I thought, "Wow, they want me to tell them about what laws they should be making and what would make a better culture." Well, that wouldn't have happened if our books hadn't come out and I hadn't become famous. I think I get to play with people at a higher level and have more influence in the world. That's important to me because my life purpose is inspiring and empowering people to live their highest vision so the world works for everybody. I get to do that on a much bigger level than when I was just a high school teacher back in Chicago.

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WRIGHT

I think one of the powerful components of that book series is that you can read a positive story in just a few minutes and come back and revisit it. I know my daughter has three of the books and she just reads them interchangeably. Sometimes I go in her bedroom and she'll be crying and reading one of them. Other times she'll be laughing, so they really are "chicken soup for the soul," aren't they?

CANFIELD

They really are. In fact we have four books in the *Teenage Soul* series now and a new one coming out at the end of this year. I have a son who's eleven and he has a twelve-year-old friend who's a girl. We have a new book called *Chicken Soup for the Teenage Soul and the Tough Stuff*. It's all about dealing with parents' divorces, teachers who don't understand you, boyfriends who drink and drive, and other issues pertinent to that age group.

I asked my son's friend, "Why do you like this book?" (It's our most popular book among teens right now.) She said, "You know, whenever I'm feeling down I read it and it makes me cry and I feel better. Some of the stories make me laugh and some of the stories make me feel more responsible for my life. But basically I just feel like I'm not alone."

One of the people I work with recently said that the books are like a support group between the covers of a book—you can read about other peoples' experiences and realize you're not the only one going through something.

WRIGHT

Jack, we're trying to encourage people in our audience to be better, to live better, and be more fulfilled by reading about the experiences of our writers. Is there anyone or anything in your life that has made a difference for you and helped you to become a better person?

CANFIELD

Yes, and we could do ten books just on that. I'm influenced by people all the time. If I were to go way back I'd have to say one of the key influences in my life was Jesse Jackson when he was still a minister in Chicago. I was teaching in an all black high school there and I went to

Jesse Jackson's church with a friend one time. What happened for me was that I saw somebody with a vision. (This was before Martin Luther King was killed and Jesse was of the lieutenants in his organization.) I just saw people trying to make the world work better for a certain segment of the population. I was inspired by that kind of visionary belief that it's possible to make change.

Later on, John F. Kennedy was a hero of mine. I was very much inspired by him.

Another is a therapist by the name of Robert Resnick. He was my therapist for two years. He taught me a little formula: $E + R = O$. It stands for Events + Response = Outcome. He said, "If you don't like your outcomes quit blaming the events and start changing your responses." One of his favorite phrases was, "If the grass on the other side of the fence looks greener, start watering your own lawn more."

I think he helped me get off any kind of self-pity I might have had because I had parents who were alcoholics. It would have been very easy to blame them for problems I might have had. They weren't very successful or rich; I was surrounded by people who were and I felt like, "God, what if I'd had parents like they had? I could have been a lot better." He just got me off that whole notion and made me realize that the hand you were dealt is the hand you've got to play. Take responsibility for who you are and quit complaining and blaming others and get on with your life. That was a turning point for me.

I'd say the last person who really affected me big-time was a guy named W. Clement Stone who was a self-made multi-millionaire in Chicago. He taught me that success is not a four-letter word—it's nothing to be ashamed of—and you ought to go for it. He said, "The best thing you can do for the poor is not be one of them." Be a model for what it is to live a successful life. So I learned from him the principles of success and that's what I've been teaching now for more than thirty years.

WRIGHT

He was an entrepreneur in the insurance industry, wasn't he?

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CANFIELD

He was. He had combined insurance. When I worked for him he was worth 600 million dollars and that was before the dot.com millionaires came along in Silicon Valley. He just knew more about success. He was a good friend of Napoleon Hill (author of *Think and Grow Rich*) and he was a fabulous mentor. I really learned a lot from him.

WRIGHT

I miss some of the men I listened to when I was a young salesman coming up and he was one of them. Napoleon Hill was another one as was Dr. Peale. All of their writings made me who I am today. I'm glad I had that opportunity.

CANFIELD

One speaker whose name you probably will remember, Charlie "Tremendous" Jones, says, "Who we are is a result of the books we read and the people we hang out with." I think that's so true and that's why I tell people, "If you want to have high self-esteem, hang out with people who have high self-esteem. If you want to be more spiritual, hang out with spiritual people." We're always telling our children, "Don't hang out with those kids." The reason we don't want them to is because we know how influential people are with each other. I think we need to give ourselves the same advice. Who are we hanging out with? We can hang out with them in books, cassette tapes, CDs, radio shows, and in person.

WRIGHT

One of my favorites was a fellow named Bill Gove from Florida. I talked with him about three or four years ago. He's retired now. His mind is still as quick as it ever was. I thought he was one of the greatest speakers I had ever heard.

What do you think makes up a great mentor? In other words, are there characteristics that mentors seem to have in common?

CANFIELD

I think there are two obvious ones. I think mentors have to have the time to do it and the willingness to do it. I also think they need to be people who are doing something you want to do. W. Clement Stone

used to tell me, “If you want to be rich, hang out with rich people. Watch what they do, eat what they eat, dress the way they dress—try it on.” He wasn’t suggesting that you give up your authentic self, but he was pointing out that rich people probably have habits that you don’t have and you should study them.

I always ask salespeople in an organization, “Who are the top two or three in your organization?” I tell them to start taking them out to lunch and dinner and for a drink and finding out what they do. Ask them, “What’s your secret?” Nine times out of ten they’ll be willing to tell you.

This goes back to what we said earlier about asking. I’ll go into corporations and I’ll say, “Who are the top ten people?” They’ll all tell me and I’ll say, “Did you ever ask them what they do different than you?”

“No,” they’ll

reply. “Why not?”

“Well, they might not want to tell me.”

“How do you know? Did you ever ask them? All they can do is say no. You’ll be no worse off than you are now.”

So I think with mentors you just look at people who seem to be living the life you want to live and achieving the results you want to achieve.

What we say in our book is when that you approach a mentor they’re probably busy and successful and so they haven’t got a lot of time. Just ask, “Can I talk to you for ten minutes every month?” If I know it’s only going to be ten minutes I’ll probably say yes. The neat thing is if I like you I’ll always give you more than ten minutes, but that ten minutes gets you in the door.

WRIGHT

In the future are there any more Jack Canfield books authored singularly?

CANFIELD

One of my books includes the formula I mentioned earlier: $E + R = O$. I just felt I wanted to get that out there because every time I give a

speech and I talk about that the whole room gets so quiet you could hear a pin drop—I can tell people are really getting value.

Then I'm going to do a series of books on the principles of success. I've got about 150 of them that I've identified over the years. I have a book down the road I want to do that's called *No More Put-Downs*, which is a book probably aimed mostly at parents, teachers, and managers. There's a culture we have now of put-down humor. Whether it's *Married . . . with Children* or *All in the Family*, there's that characteristic of macho put-down humor. There's research now showing how bad it is for kids' self-esteem when the coaches do it, so I want to get that message out there as well.

WRIGHT

It's really not that funny, is it?

CANFIELD

No, we'll laugh it off because we don't want to look like we're a wimp but underneath we're hurt. The research now shows that you're better off breaking a child's bones than you are breaking his or her spirit. A bone will heal much more quickly than their emotional spirit will.

WRIGHT

I remember recently reading a survey where people listed the top five people who had influenced them. I've tried it on a couple of groups at church and in other places. In my case, and in the survey, approximately three out of the top five are always teachers. I wonder if that's going to be the same in the next decade.

CANFIELD

I think that's probably because as children we're at our most formative years. We actually spend more time with our teachers than we do with our parents. Research shows that the average parent only interacts verbally with each of their children only about eight and a half minutes a day. Yet at school they're interacting with their teachers for anywhere from six to eight hours depending on how long the school day is, including coaches, chorus directors, etc.

I think that in almost everybody's life there's been that one teacher who loved him or her as a human being—an individual—not just one of the many students the teacher was supposed to fill full of History and English. That teacher believed in you and inspired you.

Les Brown is one of the great motivational speakers in the world. If it hadn't been for one teacher who said, "I think you can do more than be in a special education class. I think you're the one," he'd probably still be cutting grass in the median strip of the highways in Florida instead of being a \$35,000-a-talk speaker.

WRIGHT

I had a conversation one time with Les. He told me about this wonderful teacher who discovered Les was dyslexic. Everybody else called him dumb and this one lady just took him under her wing and had him tested. His entire life changed because of her interest in him.

CANFIELD

I'm on the board of advisors of the Dyslexic Awareness Resource Center here in Santa Barbara. The reason is because I taught high school and had a lot of kids who were called "at-risk"—kids who would end up in gangs and so forth.

What we found over and over was that about 78 percent of all the kids in the juvenile detention centers in Chicago were kids who had learning disabilities—primarily dyslexia—but there were others as well. They were never diagnosed and they weren't doing well in school so they'd drop out. As soon as a student drops out of school he or she becomes subject to the influence of gangs and other kinds of criminal and drug linked activities. If these kids had been diagnosed earlier we'd have been able to get rid of a large amount of the juvenile crime in America because there are a lot of really good programs that can teach dyslexics to read and excel in school.

WRIGHT

My wife is a teacher and she brings home stories that are heartbreaking about parents not being as concerned with their children as they used to be, or at least not as helpful as they used to be. Did you find that to be a problem when you were teaching?

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CANFIELD

It depends on what kind of district you're in. If it's a poor district the parents could be on drugs, alcoholics, and basically just not available. If you're in a really high rent district the parents are not available because they're both working, coming home tired, they're jet-setters, or they're working late at the office because they're workaholics. Sometimes it just legitimately takes two paychecks to pay the rent anymore.

I find that the majority of parents care but often they don't know what to do. They don't know how to discipline their children. They don't know how to help them with their homework. They can't pass on skills that they never acquired themselves.

Unfortunately, the trend tends to be like a chain letter. The people with the least amount of skills tend to have the most number of children. The other thing is that you get crack babies (infants born addicted to crack cocaine because of the mother's addiction). As of this writing, in Los Angeles one out of every ten babies born is a crack baby.

WRIGHT

That's unbelievable.

CANFIELD

Yes, and another statistic is that by the time 50 percent of the kids are twelve years old they have started experimenting with alcohol. I see a lot of that in the Bible belt. The problem is not the big city, urban designer drugs, but alcoholism.

Another thing you get, unfortunately, is a lot of let's call it "familial violence"—kids getting beat up, parents who drink and then explode, child abuse, and sexual abuse. You see a lot of that.

WRIGHT

Most people are fascinated by these television shows about being a survivor. What has been the greatest comeback that you have made from adversity in your career or in your life?

CANFIELD

You know, it's funny, I don't think I've had a lot of major failures and setbacks where I had to start over. My life's been on an intentional curve. But I do have a lot of challenges. Mark and I are always setting goals that challenge us. We always say, "The purpose of setting a really big goal is not so that you can achieve it so much, but it's who you become in the process of achieving it." A friend of mine, Jim Rohn, says, "You want to set goals big enough so that in the process of achieving them you become someone worth being."

I think that to be a millionaire is nice but so what? People make the money and then they lose it. People get the big houses and then they burn down or Silicon Valley goes belly up and all of a sudden they don't have a big house anymore. But who you became in the process of learning how to be successful can never be taken away from you. So what we do is constantly put big challenges in front of us.

We have a book called *Chicken Soup for the Teacher's Soul*. (You'll have to make sure to get a copy for your wife.) I was a teacher and a teacher trainer for years. But because of the success of the *Chicken Soup* books I haven't been in the education world that much. I've got to go out and relearn how I market to that world. I met with a Superintendent of Schools. I met with a guy named Jason Dorsey who's one of the number one consultants in the world in that area. I found out who has the bestselling book in that area. I sat down with his wife for a day and talked about her marketing approaches.

I believe that if you face any kind of adversity, whether it's losing your job, your spouse dies, you get divorced, you're in an accident like Christopher Reeve and become paralyzed, or whatever, you simply do what you have to do. You find out who's already handled the problem and how did they've handled it. Then you get the support you need to get through it by their example. Whether it's a counselor in your church or you go on a retreat or you read the Bible, you do something that gives you the support you need to get to the other end.

You also have to know what the end is that you want to have. Do you want to be remarried? Do you just want to have a job and be a single mom? What is it? If you reach out and ask for support I think you'll get help. People really like to help other people. They're not

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always available because sometimes they're going through problems also; but there's always someone with a helping hand.

Often I think we let our pride get in the way. We let our stubbornness get in the way. We let our belief in how the world should be interfere and get in our way instead of dealing with how the world is. When we get that out of that way then we can start doing that which we need to do to get where we need to go.

WRIGHT

If you could have a platform and tell our audience something you feel that would help or encourage them, what would you say?

CANFIELD

I'd say number one is to believe in yourself, believe in your dreams, and trust your feelings. I think too many people are trained wrong when they're little kids. For example, when kids are mad at their daddy they're told, "You're not mad at your Daddy."

They say, "Gee, I thought I was."

Or the kid says, "That's going to hurt," and the doctor says, "No it's not." Then they give you the shot and it hurts. They say, "See that didn't hurt, did it?" When that happened to you as a kid, you started to not trust yourself.

You may have asked your mom, "Are you upset?" and she says, "No," but she really was. So you stop learning to trust your perception.

I tell this story over and over. There are hundreds of people I've met who've come from upper class families where they make big incomes and the dad's a doctor. The kid wants to be a mechanic and work in an auto shop because that's what he loves. The family says, "That's beneath us. You can't do that." So the kid ends up being an anesthesiologist killing three people because he's not paying attention. What he really wants to do is tinker with cars.

I tell people you've got to trust your own feelings, your own motivations, what turns you on, what you want to do, what makes you feel good, and quit worrying about what other people say, think, and want for you. Decide what you want for yourself and then do what you need to do to go about getting it. It takes work.

I read a book a week minimum and at the end of the year I've read fifty-two books. We're talking about professional books—books on self-help, finances, psychology, parenting, and so forth. At the end of ten years I've read 520 books. That puts me in the top 1 percent of people knowing important information in this country. But most people are spending their time watching television.

When I went to work for W. Clement Stone, he told me, "I want you to cut out one hour a day of television."

"Okay," I said, "what do I do with it?"

"Read," he said.

He told me what kind of books to read. He said, "At the end of a year you'll have spent 365 hours reading. Divide that by a forty-hour work week and that's nine and a half weeks of education every year."

I thought, "Wow, that's two months." It was like going back to summer school.

As a result of his advice I have close to 8,000 books in my library. The reason I'm involved in this book project instead of someone else is that people like me, Jim Rohn, Les Brown, and you read a lot. We listen to tapes and we go to seminars. That's why we're the people with the information.

I always say that your raise becomes effective when you do. You'll become more effective as you gain more skills, more insight, and more knowledge.

WRIGHT

Jack, I have watched your career for a long time and your accomplishments are just outstanding. But your humanitarian efforts are really what impress me. I think that you're doing great things not only in California, but all over the country.

CANFIELD

It's true. In addition to all of the work we do, we pick one to three charities and we've given away over six million dollars in the last eight years, along with our publisher who matches every penny we give away. We've planted over a million trees in Yosemite National Park. We've bought hundreds of thousands of cataract operations in third world countries. We've contributed to the Red Cross, the Humane Society,

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and on it goes. It feels like a real blessing to be able to make that kind of a contribution to the world.

WRIGHT

Today we have been talking with Jack Canfield, founder and co-creator of the *Chicken Soup for the Soul* book series. Chicken Soup for the Soul reaches people well beyond the bookstore, with CD and DVD collections, company-sponsored samplers, greeting cards, children's entertainment products, pet food, flowers, and many other products in line with Chicken Soup for the Soul's purpose. Chicken Soup for the Soul is currently implementing a plan to expand into all media by working with television networks on several shows and developing a major Internet presence dedicated to life improvement, emotional support, and inspiration.

CANFIELD

Another book I've written is *The Success Principles*. In it I share sixty-four principles that other people and I have utilized to achieve great levels of success.

WRIGHT

I will stand in line to get one of those. Thank you so much being with us.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Jack Canfield is one of America's leading experts on developing self-esteem and peak performance. A dynamic and entertaining speaker, as well as a highly sought-after trainer, he has a wonderful ability to inform and inspire audiences toward developing their own human potential and personal effectiveness.

Jack Canfield is most well-known for the *Chicken Soup for the Soul* series, which he co-authored with Mark Victor Hansen, and for his audio programs about building high self-esteem. Jack is the founder of Self-Esteem Seminars, located in Santa Barbara, California, which trains entrepreneurs, educators, corporate leaders, and employees how to accelerate the achievement of their personal and professional goals. Jack is also founder of The Foundation for Self Esteem, located in Culver City, California, which provides self-esteem resources and training to social workers, welfare recipients, and human resource professionals.

Jack graduated from Harvard in 1966, received his ME degree at the University of Massachusetts in 1973, and earned an Honorary Doctorate from the University of Santa Monica. He has been a high school and university teacher, a workshop facilitator, a psychotherapist, and a leading authority in the area of self-esteem and personal development.

As a result of his work with prisoners, welfare recipients, and inner-city youth, Jack was appointed by the State Legislature to the California Task Force to Promote Self-Esteem and Personal and Social Responsibility. He also served on the Board of Trustees of the National Council for Self-Esteem.

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Chapter Three

Planning For Your Success

BY LAURA POSEY

DAVID WRIGHT (WRIGHT)

Today I'm talking with Laura Posey. Known as America's Business Growth Expert, she is the author of *The One Page Strategic Plan: How to Focus Your Whole Business and Life with One Sheet of Paper*. Laura is Founder and Chief Instigator of Dancing Elephants Achievement Group. She speaks, consults, and creates do-it-yourself programs that drive dramatic income increases for entrepreneurs and sales teams around the world.

Laura, welcome to *Mastering the Art of Success*.

What is success?

LAURA POSEY (POSEY)

Before you can become successful you have to have a definition of what success means to you. In business, we talk about success all the time but rarely do we ever define it.

Every person I've met wants to be successful, but when I ask people what success means to them, few can tell me how they describe a successful life. Most just stammer out something about having fancy houses and cars, taking long vacations in faraway places or never having to go to work again. While these toys bring temporary fun, they

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don't bring lasting joy and emotional satisfaction. True success includes deeply satisfying experiences and relationships in addition to short-term happiness.

WRIGHT

How do you define success for yourself?

POSEY

For me, success is about being totally clear about what you want in your life, what activities and things deeply emotionally satisfy you, and then creating ways to bring those things into your life consistently.

It has been said that success is a journey, not a destination and I find that to be very true. Certainly having fun and engaging material things, being a part of a meaningful community, and being someone you feel good about are all important and could be considered attributes of success but is that all there is to life? Is it worth any struggle or strife to achieve them? Or is true success about enjoying the journey to these goals as well enjoying the path to achieving them and growing within them?

I'm often asked if there is a wrong way to define success. Many times I'm asked if it is wrong to want material goods or to want praise and acknowledgment as part of being successful. In my opinion, there is no wrong way to describe a successful life. True, some people want lots of material things in their lives. Others desire freedom to spend their time in ways that they enjoy. Others want lots of money in the bank. To some, deep and wonderful relationships are part of success, while others want to give back to their community. Still other people want recognition and awards and notoriety. And many people want all of those things and more. None of these is better or worse to want than the others. What matters is to know what satisfies you on a deep, emotional level. What matters is to know what excites passion in you without worrying about what someone else thinks. When you can let go of caring about what others think about success and then discover what it means for yourself, you are on the path to success.

WRIGHT

How did you come to be successful yourself, Laura?

POSEY

It took me a long time to learn to be successful and to embrace the success I have had along the way. I didn't come from what many people would think of as a successful family. We didn't have much extra money, we didn't have fancy houses or cars, and neither did anyone in my family have a big, prestigious job. We were just your average American family in most ways. From the outside, we didn't look very successful and I don't think my family felt very successful. Growing up, I was always aware that so many others had so much more than we did and it made me feel less successful than they.

As a result, I spent a lot of my life chasing those other people and trying to outdo them whenever I could. I wanted better cars, bigger houses, and fancier clothes than they had. To me, at that time, that meant I was successful. I was also exhausted and very unhappy deep down.

About five years ago, I took two weeks and went on a sabbatical to the desert. I walked and climbed and meditated and focused on the things that were important to me—the things that really moved me emotionally, that touched me, and that made me want to get out of bed in the morning and get excited about life. I stopped seeing my success through other's eyes and started seeing it through my own.

During that time, I made a long list of the things I wanted to have, to be, and to do and I set about acquiring them. As I came to each new item on the list, I checked inside myself to see if it was really something that would make me deeply satisfied or if it was just a toy to temporarily amuse me. What I discovered was that the things that made me happiest were the relationships I had with other people and helping others find their happiness.

This became the foundation for a strategic plan to get all the things I most wanted. I crafted those things I most wanted into a vision of how to live my life in the most meaningful way. That vision was tested by the question, "If I achieve this and die the day after, will I have any

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regrets on my deathbed?” Only when I could answer “no” definitively, did I know I had my vision perfected.

From there I added a few ideas for reaching my vision, and then started executing those ideas. Amazingly, from that point on, everything in my life seemed to come easier. I met people who could significantly affect my goals and my life, I found shorter and easier paths to achievement, and I found deep, lasting love as well. It was almost as if my plan had allowed me to bypass many of the obstacles that had been holding me back.

Since creating my plan for success, I have become all the things I wanted. I speak to large audiences around the world on how to find passion, productivity, and profit in their lives. I train, consult, and speak about how to use the brain to achieve more in less time. I work with entrepreneurs from all over to help them grow amazing businesses, find freedom from the day-to-day grind, and use their wealth to transform the world they live in. I have the freedom to travel the world, seeing incredible sights and meeting interesting people. Soon, I'll be realizing part of my vision of living in ten world cities for at least one year each.

All of this success has come as a result of a lifetime of learning and applying that knowledge.

WRIGHT

In your experience, what do you see as the biggest obstacles to people being successful?

POSEY

Throughout the years that I have been consulting, I have worked with hundreds and hundreds of people on their path to being successful in their lives. In that work, I've noticed two things that consistently come up as obstacles to success.

The first obstacle I see is people's idea that they have to be realistic about what they want. When I ask them what they most want in life—how much money, how much free time, what kind of relationships—they almost always push back and tell me they can't have those things and it is unrealistic to expect so much from life.

So what does being realistic mean? Realistic expectations are based on past experience. In order to think realistically, you have to look back into your past and examine what you have accomplished up until now, then project that into the future. For example, if your company has historically grown 10 percent per year, you're likely to think that 10 percent growth next year is realistic. You might even stretch a bit and be comfortable with 15 percent. But if you think about 100 percent growth in one year, part of your brain will think it is unrealistic.

Likewise, if everyone in your family is overweight, it is easy to think that being overweight is a genetic problem and that, realistically, you'll never be fit and trim.

This obsession with realism comes from the left side of the brain where logic and reason rule the day. This side of your brain looks out through your senses and bases all of its decisions on what it sees, hears, smells, touches, and tastes. It can only think as big as what it has experienced in the past.

Luckily, the other side of your brain—the right side—is more concerned with creativity, pictures, and stories. This side of your brain can visualize what you want, then tap into your creativity to achieve it. The right side is unconcerned with what happened in the past; it is more concerned with what can happen in the future.

If you allow the right side of your brain to dream, to look only forward, it can, and will, find ways to grow your company by 100 percent or help your body weigh whatever you like. If you can let go of the term “realistic” and allow yourself to visualize and imagine a different future, you can achieve many times more than you have in the past.

You know, the vast majority of people aren't much more successful than their parents. That is, they live essentially the same lifestyle their parents did with only a slight improvement. The reason is that they look at their parents and measure how realistic their own goals are compared to their parents' lives.

Don't get caught in this trap. Let go of the way things were in the past and dream big! Let yourself visualize what it would be like to have, be, and do all the things you want. Let your mind wander, daydream,

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and explore all the possibilities before you. Only then can you be open to the great success that already lies within you.

WRIGHT

What else have you seen that holds people back in their journey to success?

POSEY

The second thing I see repeatedly that holds people back is a lack of planning.

Webster's defines planning as a "method for achieving an end; a detailed formulation of a program of action; an orderly arrangement of parts of an overall design or objective . . ." So many people fail to hit their goals and achieve all the success they can because they cannot or will not take a small amount of time to plan how to achieve what they most want. They get distracted by what others want, by other's opinions, by what is easiest, or what is new and shiny. Most people allow themselves to get pulled away from their highest lives by meaningless, mundane activities that keep them stuck in a rut rather than propelling them toward their dreams. If they simply put their plan on paper and then execute the plan, the results will show up.

This doesn't mean that you have to spend a lot of time and energy planning. In fact, in my experience, when people are really clear about what they want and they spend even an hour planning to get there, the execution is very easy.

Imagine you were going to take a trip, say, walking across town to your favorite restaurant. Now imagine you have a map, a good pair of shoes, and some nice music on your iPod. If you just consult your map, follow the route on the map, and put one foot in front of the other, you'll get to your destination. Unfortunately, most people don't bother to get a map out and plan their route and, as a result, they just wander aimlessly, hoping to find something along the way that is close enough to what they want. Most end up settling for far less than they really want.

When my clients create their Simple Strategic Plans, they spend an hour thinking, planning, and preparing for success. Once the plans

are done, they find executing their plans is simple and easy. Best of all, they enjoy the path to success even more because they know they will succeed and they don't have to work themselves to death to do it.

WRIGHT

If you had to sum up the secrets to success in a few words, what would you say?

POSEY

At the risk of sounding like a broken record, the secrets to success are quite simple: discover your dreams, write them down, and create a plan to achieve them.

Building a successful life is a lot like building a house. Imagine you want to build your dream house. How would you go about it? You could just take a look in your bank account, pull out the money you set aside to build, and head to your local home improvement store with a big truck. Once there, you could wander the aisles picking up things you think are necessary for a house—nails, boards, windows, doors, shingles, and so on. Then you could drive the truck to your building site and start assembling the materials. Since you have a general idea of what a house looks like—foundation, walls, windows, doors, roof—it shouldn't be too hard, right?

Of course, you would never build a house that way! But sadly, most people try to build their lives that way and end up sadly disappointed with the results.

The best way to build a house is the time-honored method of design and build. Here's how it works:

First, you'd have to decide what sort of house you wanted. Do you want a ten thousand-square-foot brick rancher or a four thousand-square-foot Tudor with turrets and stone balconies? Or would you prefer something with glass and steel? How many bedrooms would you like? Is a home office something you desire? How about fireplaces and decks and interesting lighting and a hot tub? If you can have anything you want, what is on your list?

Once you know exactly what you want, then you draw up a detailed blueprint. Your blueprint contains all of the information necessary for

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a crew of people to build your perfect house. The blueprint is really just the written summary of all the decisions that were made in designing the house.

A strategic plan is just like a blueprint for a successful life. Decide what you want, commit it to paper, plan its acquisition, and then start swinging your hammer! Best of all, you don't even have to swing the hammer yourself. When all the decisions have been made and written down, you can easily hire others to help you build your life, your way.

WRIGHT

Would you share the things that have made you successful in your career?

POSEY

I am often asked why my title at Dancing Elephants is “Chief Instigator” when I'm the owner of the company. On paper, I'm the owner but my role in the company is to think things up and get things moving. I instigate ideas, actions, products, and programs. I have a team of people who do the details, finish the projects, and pick up the pieces I can't see.

My title and my role are part of my strongly held belief and my observation that successful people are both authentic and that they focus on where they excel and leave the rest to others.

Ellen DeGeneres is successful because she is authentic about who she is and what she believes. Likewise, Howard Stern is successful for the same reason. Each of these people, although very different in their approaches to the world, is successful because they are true to themselves. They live their values each day—fully and with commitment.

Similarly, Michael Jordan was a great basketball player and a mediocre baseball player. Christina Aguilera is a phenomenal singer and an average actress. What made these performers great was their focus on doing what they did best, on their core capabilities and natural talents. When they ventured outside those areas, they were just middle of the road. Each soon went back to what he or she was best at and continues to succeed.

I'm the person who comes in with the great ideas and I'm the one who can light a fire under people and get them motivated. I can get them psyched up and get them focused. I can get them energized about doing what needs to be done, but I'm not the detail person. Luckily there are other people who are great at that and they love that. So I have a team of people who are great at the implementation.

When you allow yourself to be who you truly are, to live your core values, and work in ways that tap into your natural abilities and talents, you'll find that success comes much more easily and more quickly than if you try to be someone or something that you aren't.

WRIGHT

I've heard that it is easy to be successful if you care about something. What is your experience with that? Do you see that as a key component in success?

POSEY

A key characteristic of successful people I've studied is that they are all passionate about what they do. They work because they love the work and the results, not because they are chasing money or recognition.

I'm reminded of a wonderful quote by James Barrie: "Nothing is really work unless you'd rather be doing something else."

I've had many careers in my short life. I used to cook for a number of years but stopped when I realized I didn't have the passion to become a great chef. As a result, cooking in a restaurant felt like work, not fun.

Later in life I sold cars and then insurance for several years. While I enjoyed meeting new people and the thrill of making someone happy through a purchase, I still didn't feel passionate about what I was paid to do.

I took a turn in sales management, still looking for my passion. It was there that I discovered a deep love of helping people grow and become what they are capable of being. I loved working with my agents and watching them succeed in so many ways. But working in a large

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corporation wasn't for me. It is hard to instigate change in a big company, and I am an instigator and entrepreneur at heart.

So I started my own business eleven years ago and I realized very quickly that I had found my passion. Working each day with other people who are forward thinking, who are get it done kinds of people lights me up like a Christmas tree. I can't wait to get to work each day and I often think about my clients and how else I can help them even when it isn't "work" time.

Once that passion was sparked, success came quite quickly and easily. I discovered that I can speak to audiences and write books and create programs that can change thousands of people's lives. I work with people who are focused on success and living full and meaningful lives and that inspires me each and every day. That passion fuels my days and nights.

When you can find the things that you are passionate about, you'll soon discover that each day feels successful and purpose-filled. You'll no longer be tired from working but rather energized. Vacations will happen because you want to see someplace else, not because you need a break from your work life. Finding your passion will truly change your view of work and what it means to be successful.

WRIGHT

Many people are afraid to chase success because they think if they want money, people will think they are greedy. Is that true?

POSEY

For almost everyone, part of being successful is having enough money to do what they please. Money is a great way to buy freedom. Whether it is freedom to go where they want, when they want, or freedom to make unlimited choices, there is often no easier way to get it than through having money and building wealth.

One of the biggest obstacles to success is feeling unworthy of great wealth. Many times when I'm beginning my work with clients they will ask, "Who am I to be worth so much wealth? Isn't it bad to want so much money?"

My answer to these questions is always the same. I simply tell them the story of the flow of money.

Money, in and of itself, is really meaningless. In fact, when you think you “have” money you really don’t. What you really do is “control” money. When money comes to you, you have to put it someplace (unless you really want to keep a pile of cash buried in the backyard). In a way, it is like a flow of energy. You can’t contain it, you can only direct it. Imagine money as light. You can’t contain light but you can focus it on something important to you.

There are many places you can focus your money. You can invest it in the stock market or CDs or bonds. In this case, you are loaning your money to a corporation or bank and they, in turn, are spending it or they are loaning it out to someone else. Either way, you don’t have the money, you just control where it flows. You are focusing it somewhere with the expectation that you’ll get back more than what you put in.

You can also focus your money on charitable things. You can give it away to people you think will invest it on worthwhile projects such as educating children, saving animals, feeding the hungry, housing the homeless, healing the sick, and so on. When you direct the flow of your money here, you expect to get back an emotional return.

You can also spend your money—trade it for goods and services that are important to you. In this case, you are employing people who, in turn, pay taxes that build roads and schools and parks. These people also buy goods and services and keep the cycle going. When you spend your money, you are directing the flow of it into your community and supporting many, many people.

Regardless of what you do with your money, it is never static. It is constantly in motion, flowing through society. The more money you have, the more you control the flow. If the money isn’t controlled by you, it will be controlled by someone else. Would you rather control more and know that it is going to places you think are worthwhile? Or would you rather someone else decide where that energy is directed?

My clients understand that “having” wealth means that they get to decide where to shine a light and where to promote growth and life. The more wealth they have, the more things grow and thrive.

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WRIGHT

Are there any tools you recommend to help people be more successful?

Posey

I've been a home remodeler for many years. One thing I have learned in renovating houses is that the right tool makes all the difference. Sure, you can finagle something that isn't designed to do the job and occasionally make it work but, more often than not, you end up making a mess, wasting time, and costing yourself more money than if you'd just bought the right tool in the first place.

Business tools are the same way. You can take the cheap way out and try to figure things out for yourself, but my experience is that you end up hurting yourself by doing so.

There are so many amazing tools to help you grow your business. And many of them will bring you a return that is hundreds of times the investment.

A few years ago, when I was learning about the power of planning, I searched for a good tool to help me out. I found several that were close to what I wanted but not quite right for me. That's when I created The One Page Strategic Plan for myself.

I've been studying what makes people successful for years and years. I've always been fascinated by what separates that top 20 percent from everybody else, so I found myself studying psychology and biology and neuroeconomics. I have a background in biochemistry so I'm fascinated with the science of success. What I learned in reading all these texts is that your brain needs certain inputs in order for it to create success for you. Most importantly, your brain needs to have a crystal clear vision—a picture of what you want it to create in order to begin making it happen. This process of creating a vision in your mind is called visualization. Top performers in all professions have been using visualization for years. All top athletes and entertainers use it, and businesspeople can use it as well. It is a key component for the brain to achieve success.

Another key for success is for your brain to stay focused on your vision. Getting excited about your vision is essential but what really

makes the vision turn into reality is your day-to-day behavior. When you stay focused on the vision and change your behavior so that you are doing things differently than in the past, your vision will come true.

The easiest way to reach your vision is to break it down into smaller and smaller pieces so that you don't get overwhelmed with trying to change too many things at once.

Imagine your vision as a huge boulder you want to move. In your mind, that boulder is often so big your brain doesn't know how to even start it rolling. But, if you could break that boulder into grains of sand, you could easily pick up a small handful each day and move it where you want it. Even an oyster can make a pearl with a grain of sand. Imagine if you had a huge pile of sand—you could have a huge pile of pearls!

Using this idea, I wanted to figure out how to create a pile of pearls more easily. I'm a somewhat simple person and quite honestly, like a lot of people, I'm lazy. If I can find a shorter or easier path to accomplish my goals, I'm going to take it. So I wanted to find a simple and easy tool that I could use in just a couple minutes a day to stay focused on my vision and make progress toward it every single day. Of course, it had to be something that didn't take much time to create and only minutes per day to use.

I couldn't find a tool that met all of these criteria so I created one called The Simple Strategic Plan. I have used this tool for the last several years and it has changed my life dramatically. Recently I've been sharing it with clients and they, too, have seen incredible changes. One client saw a 65 percent increase in his income in just one year and another recently reported a 50 percent increase in her business.

If you're serious about success, create your own strategic plan. If you want to check out mine, you can go to <http://mysimpleplans.com/strategic-plan>. This can be the most important tool in your kit and, if you use it diligently, it will bring you greater success than you've ever experienced! Having a plan will help you focus and feel confident and in control of your future. Success is yours!

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Laura Posey is known as America's Business Growth Expert. She is the author of *The Simple Strategic Plan: How to Focus Your Whole Business and Life with One Sheet of Paper*. Laura is Founder and Chief Instigator of Dancing Elephants Achievement Group. She speaks, consults, and creates do-it-yourself programs that drive dramatic income increases for entrepreneurs and sales teams around the world.

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Chapter Four

Achieving Sales Success

BY MARK BERNARD

DAVID WRIGHT (WRIGHT)

Today I'm talking with Mark Bernard. Mark is coauthor of the Canadian bestseller *Sales Gurus Speak Out*. He is the founder and president of Bernard Training Solutions, specializing in achieving sales success, getting the elusive first appointment and closing the sale, sales coaching, sales training, management coaching, personal development, and consulting. He prides himself on his knack of discovering people's innate ability and helping them to find methods to overcome both sales and life challenges. He provides his audiences with practical sales tools to achieve success. Mark is an authentic business-builder. He blends his expertise in sales with the desire to help awaken personal strength in others.

Mark Bernard, welcome to *Mastering the Art of Success*.

MARK BERNARD (BERNARD)

Thank you. Thanks for inviting me.

WRIGHT (WRIGHT)

As a sales expert, what do you believe one must do to be successful? Is there any strategy that is often overlooked?

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BERNARD

There is. One thing that really is missed is the planning and preparation. As a rule, we're lazy, so I'd like to introduce the five P's: proper planning produces peak performance.

I look at the strategies or the tactics of planning your physical environment and preparing your mental environment. "Physical environment" is your place of work. Let's just say you're going to make some telephone prospecting calls. What materials do you need at your work station to provide the most productive environment you can have? You really only need about eight essential items. If there are more than those, then there is too much clutter.

One item is a glass of water to keep your mouth in tune and ready to rock 'n roll. The others are a pad of paper, a pen or a pencil, your script, leads, lead generations, time management system, agenda, telephone, and your computer. I have two optional items: a mirror and a voice recorder. The mirror is for you to see the reflection of what you are doing, so you can really see what you're saying to your prospect. The recorder provides a copy of the conversation and allows you to hear how you're coming across to that prospect. That's the planning side of your physical environment.

The mental environment is your *attitude*. This is for the way you view and respond to your past, present, and future (how you see things). This is a choice. Seventy percent of the day is negative, as a rule. Attitude drives ability. A great attitude must include a high sense of esteem. There are two esteem components: self-esteem and corporate esteem.

Self-esteem is how you think about yourself. Is the glass half full or half empty? You must be self-motivated, confident, and sure of yourself. Love the person you see in the mirror. You can increase your self-esteem by seeking out professional resources and reading or listening to engaging motivational material, stretching yourself, being active, and moving into action.

Corporate esteem is planning your mental environment. This is huge and is often missed. It is how proud you are of your business card and how passionate and committed you are to your product or service. You need a high corporate esteem when you go to a call or when you

talk of your business. You must take the stance that, “If you don’t do business with me, your business will not succeed” or “If you don’t buy my product or service, I know your company and your people will not be as successful.” That’s how much passion and commitment you have to have toward your own product or service. Attitude drives your ability and esteem fuels your talent.

WRIGHT

In your list of ten, you mentioned time management, but how do you manage your time? That’s one of the problems almost everyone talks to me about. What does time management mean to you?

BERNARD

Time management is really a fallacy. You cannot manage time. You cannot give me eight hours, and I can’t give you nine hours back. The person who created the term “time management” is a great marketer. It’s a great marketing strategy.

I’d like to reframe time management as activity management and rename it as a destination. What is your destination? How many activities can you put into a day? You cannot manage time, but you can manage the activities within that allotment of time. How do you do that? You create daily and weekly destinations. There are only 1,760 business hours per year—220 days times 8 hours. That is really all you have to be in front of a decision-maker. These are your money activity hours.

Another thing I do for activity management is create power blocks or time blocks. I took this from school. My wife is a teacher and we have all been through the school system. What are the time limits of a typical session of a school period? It’s about 45 minutes per course, per session. It is because we can only handle 45 or 50 minutes before we start mentally drifting. So I took this concept into my business. Create 45-minute to 50-minute power blocks to sit down and get to work. The last 10 to 15 minutes of each hour is yours to enjoy the win—doing what you needed to do without interruption. I’ve known people to lie on the floor, go outside, look out the window, just enjoy and bring

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awareness to the fact that they just worked 45 minutes with complete focus.

As a business entrepreneur, I get more business out of my knowing there is a win at the end of each hour. When you create those power blocks, you will have more productivity. Now, once your employer understands how power blocks work and notices his or her staff is more productive, your employer will be supportive of his or her staff. I cannot manage time but I can manage activities within that time.

WRIGHT

So how important do you think it is to develop a sales script in order to become successful in sales?

BERNARD

I've talked with traditional sales trainers who say you don't need a script—just go in there and have a conversation. I say yes, you definitely need a script. My script does not leave my desk. I use it and always refer back to it. It keeps me on track when I am talking with a prospect. I mentally have it in my head when I am doing networking or marketing outside the office. The thing is that with a script, you must customize it and commit it to memory.

But what do you need in your script? First, you need an introduction. As far as I'm concerned, there are just a few words in there that you need to differentiate yourself. Let's walk through one.

In the introduction, I always use the person's first name. It builds rapport right away and means that I have done my homework.

The second statement I make is, "We've never met." The reason why I say that is it stops their mental drift of wondering, "Where do I know this guy from? How did he know my name? Where [or when] have I made contact with him?"

Then you clarify you are talking with the right person by saying, "I understand that you are the person in charge" or "you are involved with—" For me, it would be the VP of Sales or the CEO. If the name is given to me, I can go through with a few more questions. I'll come up with how to get through the gatekeeper.

Please stay away from, “Do you have a minute?” or “Did I get you at a bad time?” Of course you got the person at a bad time, and of course he or she doesn’t have a minute for you. You are indeed interrupting the person’s day. Instead, I use the statement, “You’re not in a meeting, are you?” That lays the groundwork and covers so many layers. It says to prospects that they’re important, their time is important, and that they really don’t have time for me, but I’m going to make it worth their while.

Then you move into your Unique Selling Proposition (USP). Too often this is where people drop the ball. You always say the reason why you are calling—to set up a discovery meeting. In your script, you are *not* trying to sell your product. You are selling an appointment.

Also in your script, you need outcomes for your prospect, possible objections, and what makes you different. Your script should be a living document. You should always be adding objections, so you have them if they come up—and they will always come up.

WRIGHT

Through the years, I’ve heard people say, “I don’t like canned pitches,” and I’d remind them that after it’s internalized, it’s no longer canned.

BERNARD

Boy, that is correct. I get a lot of comments like, “I’m not a telemarketer.” We are not talking telemarketing here. We’re talking business-to-business. The question that always comes up is, “Are prospects obligated to see you?” Absolutely! That’s what they get paid for. Your product or service may be the very tool they are looking for. It’s how you present yourself and how you develop and create your script that can get you their ear.

WRIGHT

So many businesses fail due to the fact that they do not have enough prospects or leads. What suggestions can you give our readers for finding and getting leads?

BERNARD

I have more than thirty name lists of prospecting suggestions of where you can get leads from. I will go through a few, however, I suggest the readers e-mail me Mark@Bernardtraining.com. I am more than willing to send them a complete list of generating leads. If they also want me to look at their script, I will do that, too, and give them some advice.

In generating leads, some great sources include newspapers, industry associations, Yellow Pages, and vehicles on the road. Keep your eyes open for vehicles driving around with their logo and contact information. Get the number and the name of the company (use a voice recorder if driving). There is your lead. Then you have to do your due diligence to find the decision-maker. There are also trade shows, the library, the Internet. At trade shows, gather business cards then Google them to find out more about the company. There is social media. I've known people in sales who are somewhat intimidated by social media—Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, and Flickr—but that is a great way of getting the specific leads you need. If you know how to use it, use it! It's very useful, as long as it's not abused.

Old files are another great lead source. I just talked with a client about keeping a file for the prospects who say “no” to you. Those are potential leads. The people you talked with six months ago might not be there now, and things can change at any given time. Not many people are loyal like they used to be, so don't throw away those old files. There can be a lot of turnover in business. People leave the business, move to new ones, retire, or are downsized. Remember that 25 percent of all customers are unhappy at any given time due to feeling neglected. There are also building directories. When you do go on a sales call, look at the building directory—either take a picture of the directory with your cell phone or write down some names. These will become your leads.

Cold-calling, when done effectively, is a huge piece of lead generation but people are often fearful of this one. Telephone prospecting and leveraged databases are great lead generators.

Here is quick example of asking for databases or e-mail lists, “I'll do a free presentation on my product or service, but for that, I would love

to have a copy of your database/e-mail list, or at least have access to it.”
You can negotiate that.

There is much more. But let me say that in prospecting, you need persistence. Success is in direct proportion to the number of prospecting calls made. You must make those calls and you must be very persistent. You must be a hunter, not a farmer. Don’t be afraid to get out of your comfort zone. Always develop new business. No matter what industry you’re in, you need to keep your sales funnel open. I’ll challenge you to continue filling your sales funnel. You still need to market.

WRIGHT

One of the questions you probably hear often is how do we get to the decision-maker so that we can actually do a sales presentation?

BERNARD

The front end people—administrators and frontline staff—are paid to syphon out the goofs, if you will, who want to see the decision-makers, because their time is valuable. So how can you differentiate yourself when you want to build rapport? I use a very simple script: “Hi, my name is Mark Bernard, and I have a mystery to solve,” or “I was wondering if you could be of service. I was hoping that you could help me solve it and I am looking for the person in charge or involved with—. Do you know who that may be?” By having a mystery to solve or needing them to be of service, or having them help me look for a person—I am differentiating myself.

You’re not giving the old cliché of just saying, “Hi, I’m [such and such] and I’m looking for—.” Why are you looking for them? You must be clear on that. You always ask for a first name and always ask for the person’s phone number. If the frontline person is willing to give it to you, I always ask for the prospect’s e-mail address.

So you want to gather four important items from your call: First, you want to get a name—first name and last name. Second, get a phone number—a direct phone number if you can. Third, obtain the person’s e-mail. Fourth, possibly the most important item, discover and

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remember the name of the frontline person. You want to build a rapport so that when you do phone back, if you have to go through the frontline person again, you have that rapport. You must remember the person's name! That person has now become an ally and that gets you in the door.

To become successful in sales seems to be a numbers game. Would you agree?

BERNARD

It is, unfortunately. There are some universal laws in selling and that is one of them. It is a numbers game, but the question I have for my clients is how can we bring the numbers down? It is quality over quantity.

WRIGHT

You are an expert in telephone introductions and prospecting, so how many calls do you think you should make a week to qualify prospects?

BERNARD

Let me just introduce the 60/40 rule first and then I'll get into that question. The 60/40 rule is 60 percent of your day is planned for scheduled events, and 30 to 40 percent of your day is planned for unexpected events. You must allow for that. This goes into activity management a little bit. How many calls are you going to make in a week? How many discovery meetings are you going to have? Allow two to four hours minimum of creative thinking and planning time.

Depending on what industry you are in, you should confirm at least three to four appointments a day. That is a great day. Even if I do traditional selling, if I have four discovery meetings where I can see the decision-maker, that is a great day. I allow two hours per meeting. That gives me the time to travel to and from the appointment and actually sit down with the decision-maker. An ideal day would be an appointment for 9:00 AM, 11:00 AM, 1:00 PM, and 3:00 PM.

What day is the best to call? Traditionally, it's not Monday mornings when companies have meetings, when the decision-makers are either regrouping for the next week or going over the last week with their staff. The best times are Monday afternoon and Tuesday through Friday all day. Most people tell me that Friday is not a very good day, but I've secured some of my biggest clients at 4:30 on a Friday afternoon. At that time, most company staff are looking at the clock. If they work until five, at 4:30, they're starting to shut off their computers. At 4:20, 4:30, 4:45, they are starting to get their jackets on, change their shoes and get to the transition of heading out the door right at 5.

I have called decision-makers—presidents, and VPs—and asked them to stick their head out of the office to see what the staff was doing. “My goodness,” says the decision-maker, “they're laying around watching the clock, shuffling, getting their jackets ready, and shutting off their computers.”

“Exactly,” I'd reply, “and what am I doing right now? I'm calling you because my work day isn't complete yet. How would you like me to teach your team to do that—to have that much passion and corporate esteem that they want to stay working up until 5?” I've secured more business at 4:30 on a Friday afternoon than probably any other day because decision-makers want that commitment from their employees.

WRIGHT

So once you make your calls and actually set the appointment with your prospect, what do you do or say at the appointment?

BERNARD

I struggled with this when I first started in sales. This is what salespeople say all the time, “I can book the appointments but I'm not closing them.” You must have a unique selling proposition of who you are, what you do, and how you do it with outcomes to the client. That must be very clear, but you also must have a system for the discovery meeting. I call it a “discovery meeting,” not a “sales appointment” and not an “appointment.” You're going into that meeting to see if you can dance—if you have a solution for the prospect.

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So you definitely need to have a system. I call it the *Four S's*. For example, in a half-hour discovery meeting, you need time to devote to each part of the four components of the discovery meeting.

The first part is when you walk in, you have *Small talk*. You thank the person for his or her time, there are pleasantries; you are breaking the ice. That should be one to three minutes max.

The next step after that is *Showing off*—what you know about your prospect, the company, and so forth. You must show off both verbally and visually. It can be as simple as going to the prospect's company's Web site and making color photocopies of their "*about us* section" or their front landing page (home page). You're showing the prospect that you have actually done your due diligence in learning about his or her company. You want to highlight areas on that page you print off—it could be a president's message, "about us," or a page about the company's products. You don't talk about it—you put it out there and you show that you have done your due diligence. That again is about one to three minutes.

After that, go back to *Stating Your Unique Selling Proposition*. Even though you informed the prospect on the phone about your unique selling proposition, you want to tell it again. For example, "I am Mark Bernard from Bernard Training Solutions—" then state your unique selling proposition—who you are, what you do, how you do it with outcomes for the client. This is one to three minutes.

We've just gone through three phases and if we use the maximum time, that's nine minutes—three minutes for small talk, three minutes for showing off, and three minutes for stating your unique selling proposition. There are another twenty-one minutes left. The fourth S is *Start Asking Questions*. If you're looking for joint ventures or you're looking at whatever business you are in, you need to ask proper questions rather than going into a discovery meeting with your own agenda. That is the number one mistake—going in with an agenda. Some of the questions might include: Are you happy with the close ratio of your team? I notice you are using such and such product. How is that going for you? How do you feel about outside vendors? When was the last time you actually brought in an outside vendor? How do you like this particular product compared to this product? Get the

prospect talking. Feature fishing is really what you are doing. You are getting the prospect to talk about what he or she needs, rather than what you think the person needs. Let the person tell you.

In those twenty-one minutes you should be asking specific questions so you can find out if you can do business together—if you actually have a client who needs your service. You’ve got to think about some specific tools in your belt before you leave. Ask for the business and also the follow-up.

WRIGHT

You just mentioned asking for the sale. Will you share what is the most practical way to ask for the sale?

BERNARD

People make this so complicated. I don’t mean this in any way, shape, or form to downplay my colleagues, but I’ve heard fifteen different ways to close. Excuse me, what do you mean by fifteen ways to close? Well, maybe that means, if the right hand goes up and scratches their head and then the left hand then scratches their nose, oh that’s a buying signal. No, I make it very practical and use five beautiful words. You know what they are, straight out, “May I have your business?” I have gotten so much business from asking for the sale. It’s amazing!

I had a telephone conference discovery meeting with a company that was in another province. After I went through the Four S’s, she decided that I was the right trainer for their company. She did share with me that they had been looking at other vendors. At the end of the call I asked for her business with the five magical words.

After I did the sales training I asked, “So can I ask you why you chose me over other vendors?”

“Mark,” she replied, “you are the only one who asked for the business!”

Her answer told me that people are not asking for the business. You must ask for the business.

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How do you segue into asking for business? Here is a good example: “Do you have any other questions for me?” If you have done your job, the prospect will usually say something like, “No, I think everything has been answered.” I would then say, “Great! I wouldn’t be doing my job if I didn’t ask you this one more thing: may I have your business?” Then I zip it and I do not say a word, until the decision-maker answers my question. There might be a minute or two minutes of silence, but don’t say a word until the person answers your question. Then, if there is an objection you can deal with right then and there you will know. Please ask, “May I have your business?” You notice I didn’t say, “Please, may I have your business?” or “May I have your business, please?” It’s straight out: “May I have your business?” Now look the person straight in the eye and stop talking.

WRIGHT

Other than the sale itself, what do you think is the most important thing you want to leave with a potential client at the discovery meeting?

BERNARD

Seasoned sale professionals often drop the ball on this: it’s follow up. What are you going to do for that client so you can keep in contact, and what is the client going to do for you? It should be a 50/50 proposition.

Let me give you an example. If the discussion leads to the technical side of things, where you just don’t have the technical equation prospects need, tell them you will get that to them. You might say, “I will get that to you within twenty-four or forty-eight hours.” Then stick to that. The next step for them is they will take your call. It’s as simple as that. You always want to leave with a next step, to make contact with them again. One thing I would suggest is not to assume prospects will call you back, even though they say they will. When they say, “Well, let me think about it and I will call you back if I decide to go with your product,” don’t leave without a next step. You will walk out with nothing, and wait for a call that may never come. Experience tells me

that prospects won't call unless they're in dire need. For example, they may call if a particular product has broken down and they need your service in a hurry.

Instead, say, "I look forward to your call, but Ted, if I don't hear from you by this coming Thursday [or if I don't hear from you by the end of the week], I will give you a call Friday afternoon or Monday morning. What works better for you?" You've just created a next step, even though the prospect said, "I will call you." People get busy and you're not on their high priority list. But if you don't hear from them on a specific date, you'd better be calling when you said you would, because that is building trust. Trust is so imperative to the sales process.

WRIGHT

So you are not only a sales trainer, you are also a sales coach. What are the three main obstacles you have most commonly found your coaching clients are trying to overcome?

BERNARD

Traditionally, I would have said years ago that they are: objections, cold-calling, and negotiations. The number one reason why people don't go into sales is because they can't handle those three tasks. I'm going to give you a fourth one—not planning. If you are working out of your vehicle, you organize your vehicle so you can have a good working station. Whether you are making calls from your vehicle, working from home, or working in an office, you must plan your mental environment as well as your physical environment.

Regarding a proper script, people have fought with me and argued saying, they don't believe in scripts—they have a conversation. They just wing it. These are the types of people who are somewhat hit and miss, and they wonder why they are so frustrated and sometimes move into desperation. They're closing sales one week and then all of a sudden the next week they're not. The reason is they don't have a sales system. They don't have a script in front of them, and they have not

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created a sales culture that will differentiate them from their competitors.

Not leaving with a next step, people just walk out of a discovery meeting thinking, “Man, that was a really good call,” but in reality, they left with nothing. They have nothing to really move the sales process forward.

You wouldn’t believe the amount of people who do not ask for the sale. They get frustrated, and if I get a client like this, I say, “Let’s walk through the sales process. Did you do this?”

The client says, “No.”

“Did you plan?”

“No, no I didn’t. I just kind of winged it.”

“How is your script?”

“Well, it’s pretty weak.”

“Did you leave with a next step?”

All of these obstacles fall under the umbrella of fear of rejection, fear of failure, and even fear of success. While I am coaching someone, I look at the whole person and really dive in and find the triggers—the fear triggers. I assist clients past these triggers so they can move forward in overcoming the fear of planning. I ask these questions: Is there a reason why you are not planning? Why don’t you believe in an effective script? Why are you not leaving with a next step? What confidence do you need to actually ask for the next step and be bold enough? Although it seems obvious that all sales professionals should ask these questions, most often they do not!

The best compliment I think I have ever had in my sales training career was from a gray-haired gentleman, ready for retirement, who had been in a sales for thirty years. He said, “Great training, Mark. I needed this twenty-nine years ago!”

When I reflected on that, I realized that we all pick up bad habits, even if we are good at what we do. We have to break the bad habits and continually review our sales skills to make them better. It does not matter how old we are or how long we have been in the business, we need to be lifelong learners. We all get rusty. We fall into the trap of doing the same old thing with the same old results. Sales coaching is a

one-on-one way to provide the resource to review the bad habits, and to learn to out-sell and out-perform the competition.

WRIGHT

If you could give one success nugget to our readers regarding sales or just business in general, what would that one nugget be?

BERNARD

That one nugget would be to listen. We don't listen enough. Most people are so into their own agenda that they don't really listen to the other person's agenda. I have broken it down. When you are talking, you are teaching; when you are listening, you are learning. We need to listen more because that's when we learn. When we learn, then we can move forward and then find solutions to what people need. We have to sit down, and humble ourselves, and listen. If there is one nugget, learn to really listen.

WRIGHT

Will you briefly review the sales process that you use so readers have a road map to use when starting their own business or growing their business?

BERNARD

I'll put the sales process in point form. You have to preplan both your mental and physical selves. You must get a lead generation system going, whatever that may be. I gave you some to use. You need to develop your script of who you are, what you do, and how you do it. Anticipate objections and know what three things make you different from your competitor and why the prospect should buy from you. Have an effective unique selling proposition. Be clear on who you are, what you do, and how you do it. You should be able to do that under a minute. When you present that, it is like your elevator speech. It must be forty seconds to fifty-five seconds or it's too long.

Pick up the phone, make the calls, whether it be a cold-call or not. Being able to make those calls is important. Getting the appointment is

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part of the sales process. What do you say at the discovery meeting? Ask for the sale. Not enough people are asking for the sale. When you provide the service, exceed expectations once the sale is done. Always get the next step. Whether you are doing business or not doing business, you always want to keep them in the sales funnel. If you get a solid *no*, that is great! Now you are not wasting your time anymore, and you can put that file away into old files. If the prospect said no, not right now, then ask when would be a good time to call to touch base again if things change. You'll get an answer. Whatever the time is—three months, six months, eighteen months—write it in your activity management schedule and then phone at that time.

If you have done all your due diligence, you've followed the sales process, and the prospect still says no, we've got to use a four-letter word: *next*. That is the sales process.

WRIGHT

I have learned a lot, affirmed a lot, and found out I have lost a lot of your steps that I am going to put back into my presentations.

I really appreciate your time and think our readers are going to get a lot out of this chapter.


ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Mark is co-author of the Canadian bestseller, *Sales Gurus Speak Out*, and the founder and president of Bernard Training Solutions, specializing in sales coaching and training, management coaching, personal development, and consulting. He prides himself on helping people overcome sales and life challenges.

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Chapter Five

Strategies for Your Executive Image

BY GINNY BALDRIDGE

DAVID WRIGHT (WRIGHT)

Today I'm talking with Ginny Baldrige, a sought-after speaker, author, corporate trainer, and internationally certified image consultant. As President of Your Executive Image, she is passionate about helping companies utilize the power of image to promote their organization's culture and values. Ginny volunteers for the American Cancer Society's "Look Good, Feel Better" program and contributes a monthly article to 501Connect, 2012 recipient of Gallop's "Year of Making a Difference" initiative. She is a certified consultant of the Association of Image Consultants International, an Executive Member of Fashion Group International, and member of the National Speakers Association.

She has co-authored *Executive Image Power*, 2009 covering the key points to building professional confidence and advancing one's career and *Inspired Style*, 2010 is a must read for women trying to identify their image style with practical advice.

Ginny believes enhancing your image is a way of lifting your spirit, confidence, and giving you hope. Her audiences leave laughing, refreshed, and with renewed confidence.

Ginny Baldrige welcome to *Mastering the Art of Success*.

GINNY BALDRIDGE (BALDRIDGE)

Well, thank you, David. It is my utmost pleasure to be here.

WRIGHT

What is the one driving motivation that helped you become the success you are today?

BALDRIDGE

I credit my success to the influence of my mom. Because of her life, it became clear to me that beauty starts from the inside out. I grew up in a small Southern town where today many of the women still reflect the charm and the grace of times gone by. Care is taken with their dress, makeup, hair, and accessories. Many women still use that unwritten code of conduct in their behavior and manners.

After my mom gave birth to her sixth child she became very weak and bedridden. After many years, she was eventually diagnosed at Mayo Clinic with a disease called myasthenia gravis. At that time, the only option had been to place a rubber tube in her stomach in order to pour water and blended food as she could not even swallow her own saliva. I never heard her complain or speak unkindly of anyone as she endured all this suffering without protest. She bore her illness with dignity and grace, and she exemplified a beautiful and loving woman of faith.

When she was able to leave her bed, she dressed like Jackie Kennedy and when she was in bed, which was most of the time, she wore lace chiffon bed jackets and took care of her hair and applied her lipstick with care. She taught me an indispensable attitude that can transform and inspire individuals and that attitude was courage, hope, and perseverance.

Two years before her death she developed breast cancer and had two radical mastectomies along with grueling radiation treatments. As a young girl, I would rub baby oil on her chest as the raw, dead skin came off in my hands. She died at age forty-two, and I had just turned thirteen. At this early age, her death had a profound effect on me in dealing with tragedy. As an adult, I grew to understand that her “sense of style” was, in essence, the life of a saintly woman.

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My upbringing had a significant effect on me and my desire to teach others to harness their inner beauty, in spite of their brokenness. One can move through life with dignity and grace. You must understand your value, and you can design your life today.

I believe your decisions about allocating your personal time, energy, and talent ultimately shape your life's strategy. My life's strategy has been to see where I was needed, overcome obstacles in my life, become educated, and encourage and care for others. Through teaching special education, parenting classes, and women's enrichment classes, as a wife, as a mother of five, and as an image consultant/coach, I have utilized my strengths, encouraging others to be effective leaders of tomorrow.

WRIGHT

Why is personal image essential to success? Is it dress or is it more?

BALDRIDGE

Personal image is managing yourself to influence others and is the quickest and most tangible way to gain credibility. Personal image has to do with the personal dignity of every individual. Every person has a sphere of influence, whether it is at the coffee shop, grocery store, the workplace, home, or school. You can positively influence others with your use of words, time, energy, and talent.

Successful executives understand the importance of creating a positive and lasting impression. We live in a visual world that perceives us through our personal image, and we're judged by the way we look and convey our energy. Consequently, everything has to start from the inside out.

The power of your uniqueness is the most appealing aspect of your image. Your personal image helps you distinguish yourself. It has to become your "uniform." You always have to be camera-ready and instantly recognized as the person who delivers on your promises, who can be trusted in all business transactions, and who will help find solutions for your friends and your clients.

Of course, we always want to look our best; however, your best personal image includes practicing principles of integrity, charity,

patience, and authenticity. The notion of elegance remains central to the professional world today. So the individual who lives with refinement and dignity, as well as remaining approachable, reflects respect for themselves and others through attention to the little details of self-care. As you grow professionally and personally, it would follow that your style or dress will change to mirror your growth. As an image consultant, I believe in raising the bar for individuals to express themselves in the most positive light because their personal image affects every impression they make and can lead them to success.

WRIGHT

So how does one develop a signature style and brand?

BALDRIDGE

That's a good question. Every day we brand ourselves by the type of car we drive, the condition and cleanliness of the car, our attention to detail, how we fix our hair, or wear our makeup, our physical shape and health, and the way we talk or even walk. A signature style identifies you as unique, attractive, and consistent.

Everyone has the chance to learn and improve, to be a brand worthy of remark. To develop a signature brand, you first have to identify your signature uniqueness. A brand is not just your logo, tagline, Web site, or brochure—it is a *promise* to others that a specific level of value, quality, and service will be delivered.

We can all rediscover what we bring to the table. What are our strengths, our skills, our work experience, our history, and our background? You must identify those elements and skills in order to build your signature style and brand. How you define your true brand depends on your purpose and your mission in life. Developing your signature style can be life-changing and a transformational process. You have to become relentlessly focused on what you do that adds value, that you're proud of and, most important, that you can take credit for.

“You have a unique gift that can bring great joy and happiness into your life. When you identify your most distinguishing trait, you hold

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the key to unlocking a future of limitless possibility,” said Todd Smith, author of *Little Things Matter*.

Keeping in mind that your actions have to be based on the value that you are promoting, you have to match your inside talent with your outside image and style. You may need to dress more professionally, classic, or conservative. Imitate successful people in your area. If you are in a creative field, you may dress more on the cutting edge or artsy side.

I believe you need to write your goals down, get a photo of the idea. What is your dream career or your dream position? Put your goal on your bathroom mirror and it will become ingrained in your behavior. Just like everything else in the world that we do, creating an image starts with practicing new habits. We can't worry if the new brand habit feels odd at first because any new habit or style, even a new shoe, feels odd at first until it's broken in, and then the new shoe or the habit becomes comfortable.

WRIGHT

How can one translate his or her brand into a physical image?

BALDRIDGE

The physical image is extremely important. Did you know that your body physiologically responds to how you think, feel, and act? Your image directly influences your thinking, what you're feeling, and your behavior. Body image is not only what you see when you look in the mirror, but also what you feel when you're thinking about your body. It has been my experience that both men and women who are taught to make little changes in their appearance will then become more positive about themselves and life in general.

Affirmative changes in your belief system can be a transitional process to help you live out your true potential, and image excellence is an essential business skill that can improve an individual's effectiveness and productivity as well as the company's bottom line.

To make a powerful physical image, you must design a wardrobe to match your position in the workplace. How do you do that? I always begin with my clients by assessing exactly what they already own. You

can pull everything out of your closet and drawers that could possibly be worn to work. Try everything on, make sure it fits well, is current, looks fantastic on you, and is in good condition. You will save time, money, and avoid frustration by not buying things that don't coordinate with items that you already own. The goal should be to have twelve to fourteen outfits in your closet. This goal allows you to appear in a particular outfit only once or twice a month. This does not mean you have to have fourteen suits, it means that you are going to mix and match your shirts, your blouses, your jackets, your skirts and pants, and build up at least twelve outfits that will comprise your executive wardrobe.

Begin with at least one great suit in one of your neutral core colors that fits you perfectly. Color is a powerful business tool that you do not want to overlook as you build your executive wardrobe. Your core colors are colors that can be identified by an image consultant. They are the colors that make you appear healthier, thinner, younger, and more vibrant when you wear them. You will find that when you wear the colors that are best for you, you will get more attention and will be taken more seriously. Perhaps best of all you will feel more confident.

When shopping, remember that quality is important and you will spend more for quality craftsmanship. Joseph A. Banks, Ann Taylor, Loft, Dillard's, or Talbots are common stores that have affordable, classic, quality clothing that will help get you started. I suggest you leave the trendier clothes for your weekend activities.

While the task of getting your closet into "executive shape" may seem daunting, this list will help you find the essential pieces to start with to build your executive wardrobe:

1. Three dark suits in one of your core neutral colors
2. Three pairs of slacks (two for women, along with a skirt) in one of your core neutral colors
3. Three solid shirts or collared blouses (not prints) in your accent colors
4. Women need two accent-colored shells that would look great under suit jackets
5. A sports jacket in an accent color, or tailored jacket for women

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6. Six to eight ties in colors that pull the shirt and jacket color together and for women, three to four scarves can give an outfit a “finished” look

By looking good and feeling great every day, you give yourself a silent advantage over 95 percent of those you will meet along your way. The power of image is that it can not only transform how you *feel* about yourself, but it can also *transform how others you meet think of you*.

WRIGHT

In your view, how does one develop a consistently refined appearance?

BALDRIDGE

The deliberate, intelligent management of your personal style requires understanding the elements of style and respecting the situation. A healthy, groomed appearance provides a silent message that you are capable of leadership. For men and women, this means paying close attention to those parts of your body that need regular maintenance. Standing hair appointments are vital for both men and women, and for men daily shaving is a must. For women, an updated cut and color that is well maintained is essential. Women should apply makeup that enhances their features, but doesn't draw attention to the makeup itself. Remove any distractions. Both men and women should keep their fingernails clean and shaped and their teeth clean and bright.

A common mistake is to wear outdated and/or dirty eyeglasses. Eyewear can be a wonderful accessory when chosen correctly, but I've actually met with men in particular, wearing lenses that are so dirty, I can't listen to what they are saying. I keep thinking, if their eyeglasses are so filthy, how they can they see me? That is a terrible mistake to make.

Every professional needs to evaluate the quality of his or her wardrobe annually. Many people start careers out of college on a tight budget, and their initial business wardrobe is usually built with discount items. Business professionals need to spend money on an updated, higher quality wardrobe. Men should consider custom-made

shirts, especially if they have longer or shorter arms, or a small waist with broad shoulders. Upgrading as you move to higher level positions, demonstrates your understanding of that position.

At work, your accessories should complete and complement your outfit, not be attention grabbers or distractions. A great handbag or briefcase can polish your outfit to perfection. Men should wear a dress shoe with leather sole and women should wear closed toe shoes, either in a low heel or flat. I also recommend a high quality watch for both men and women.

You can effectively maintain your own visual credibility by defining a standard of appearance and refusing to go below this standard. Avoid the temptation of “jeans day” at work if it means you will slip below your personal standards. Even outside the office, it is important to preserve your professional brand and consistently demonstrate a powerful appearance and behavior.

WRIGHT

What are the biggest obstacles for women?

BALDRIDGE

The woman who takes charge of her image and presence exhibits enthusiasm, positivity, and confidence, will be seen as an invested, successful executive. Media has saturated the visual world with provocative dressing for years and, therefore, some women don't realize that attire for the office should be more sophisticated and tailored. Surely clothing does not determine character, but it certainly affects what others think of us and how they respond to us.

Women need to dress with attention to detail. They have to walk the fine line between remaining feminine and looking too sexy. Women should not wear blouses that are too sheer or skirts that are too short. I suggest women do a “bend” test while getting ready in the morning to test appropriate coverage.

Keeping your clothes, shoes, and accessories in great shape and preparing your attire the night before work helps avoid stress, saves time, and keeps you looking polished. Always dress age appropriate,

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and realize that people who exhibit self-confidence are credible and likeable.

WRIGHT

Why is it important to extend your brand to all company representatives?

BALDRIDGE

Successful branding occurs *when performance matches the image*. Your captivating brand is your best investment in your business. Success and an increase in revenue have everything to do with the “know, like, and trust” factor. The more compelling your brand, the better your bottom line; it’s that simple. The total experience a client has with you and your product, your employees, or services will determine your reputation and success.

Although your potential clients make decisions about working with you in a very short time, you *can* manage the impressions your clients, or colleagues perceive of you and your business.

Your message to the public must be consistent with all materials and employee behaviors including the following:

- office stationery
- attire or staff uniforms
- marketing material
- Web site
- E-mail and correspondence
- telephone greeting
- response time
- staff conduct

If you have staff, provide training to ensure they understand how important their image is to your company’s success. Train, equip, and empower personnel with a standard operations manual about how to handle a disgruntle customer and resolve issues. This ensures everyone in the company handles an issue exactly as the CEO would. Each

employee must represent the company to the highest level and contribute to its accomplishments.

Southwest Airlines is a good example of this strategy. At a time when many airlines were folding, the employees were all given a monetary share in the airline. Each employee shared the responsibility of improving their company's success. Since that time, they've become wildly successful, earning profits while their competition continues to upset their customers with higher charges for luggage, tickets, food, and poor customer service. The employees of Southwest display higher self-esteem through programs that reward them for their quality behavior. Employees are working harder and more efficiently and effectively. I have to say I prefer to fly on Southwest when the flight is available to my destination because the staff is fun, relaxed, and provide great customer service.

When a business value proposition is clear to your potential clients, your employees reflect your company culture, and you offer quality services and products, you have the ingredients for a highly successful business. You and your employees are both the product and the package. A captivating and compelling brand enhances your marketability, your market position, and your market saturation, affecting your ability to attract and retain clients who won't hesitate to invest in your products and services that enhance their lives.

WRIGHT

When you are talking about extending your brand to all company representatives, how do you get the employees on board and where do you start?

BALDRIDGE

Your employees must communicate your brand in every interaction with clients and partners outside of the company. Encourage employees to see every communication as an opportunity to assert brand image and drive brand loyalty. Companies that live and breathe the brand promise, put training and development programs in place, along with performance management systems to promote "good brand

behavior,” will be successful in integrating its brand strategies through the company at every point of public contact.

Sometimes it takes a fresh pair of eyes with insights into areas that need improvement. Just as one would pay for a professional to review a legal document before submitting it for consideration in a court of law, one should get the professional opinion of an image consultant to address executive presence and customer relations. The process begins with an assessment of executive presence to set you up for success. Giving your employees compensation for their positive behaviors, hard work, and company success goes a long way to motivation.

A certified image consultant can coach your employees in business presence, the nuances of body language, and business etiquette savvy. Your consultant should also educate your staff on how to eliminate any distractions from your message and image. A superb professional dress, confidence, and positive attitude will increase the chances of your business brand and staff being remembered and trusted.

WRIGHT

What do you consider “business presence” is and why is it important to success?

BALDRIDGE

That is a great question, but before considering the quality of executive or business presence, it is imperative that we recognize a fundamental requirement of business leadership. Most heads of companies have integrity and their character and honor make them leaders. If you are a person who honors commitment and respects and serves others, your business will quickly reflect those qualities.

Executive presence refers to behaving appropriately in a given place and situation, and within the context of the prevailing corporate culture. It is about knowing how to conduct yourself with social grace whether chairing a meeting, hosting a business luncheon, or when standing in the reception area of an office. As stated earlier, the general public is seeking to do business with those they know, like, and trust. You can become known for having great business presence in every situation.

Using the tips offered below is a way to convey trust through executive presence:

- A smile always goes a long way to make others feel comfortable and you confident.
- Having good manners is a must. Please and thank you are always in style.
- Be on time, or better yet, be five to ten minutes early.
- Prepare yourself ahead of time for things that you may want to contribute to a business meeting. Read or take notes on any information that was given to you ahead of time. Come prepared to participate in discussions.
- Upon entering a meeting, glance around the room and acknowledge other attendees. Use a firm handshake when greeting others. Try to put names to faces if you've met previously, and try to remember names of people who have been newly introduced to you.
- Always pay attention when someone is speaking with you. This is very important and a great compliment to give the other person. Squarely face the person you are speaking with and avoid turning your body away from that person or becoming distracted.
- Be sensitive and always respect the other person's "personal space zone."
- It is good etiquette to present the attitude that the meeting is the most important thing on your agenda right now. For the duration of a meeting, switch off cell phones.
- When you do speak, be clear, concise, and stay on topic. Don't be afraid to present your point of view, but always be respectful of the point of view of others.
- Bring your positive attitude. By being upbeat and exuding positive energy, you will make a great impression and gain more respect.

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- Send handwritten thank you notes whenever possible. Use legible writing, good grammar, and correct spelling. This shows you go the extra step and are thoughtful and considerate.

WRIGHT

Would you explain to our readers why dining etiquette is so essential in a business climate?

BALDRIDGE

The ability and confidence to dine anywhere with anyone is of particular importance in business, as many relationships are built over a meal. Although this is meant to be a more relaxed way to meet, it is often a more stressful situation for many people.

The ability to project a professional and well-cultured image in business-related dining situations again speaks to your executive presence. Fortunately, there are a number of strategies you can adopt that will ultimately make you more comfortable in these situations and take out some of the guess work that is likely causing you stress.

Planning ahead of time is the key to your comfort with the business meal. You can check menus, determine the exact location and travel time, and determine the seating arrangements all before you set the date. Speak to the restaurant manager before the event to determine your costs and who will be taking care of the bill. You may also want to set an alcohol budget or determine the wine choices in advance.

Once when hosting a dining event with my husband, the wait staff swooped in before we were all seated and was suggesting champagne to the women who were happily accepting the offer. Fortunately, I noticed the bottle was Dom Perignon and called it to the attention of my dear husband. We redeemed the situation by quickly offering wine to our guests and avoided what could have been a very costly mistake.

Your Executive Image offers executive dining etiquette systems that take you through real-time dining dilemmas and shows you how to reach a new level of confidence and competency. You will be confident with handling your knife and fork, napkin etiquette, how to eat difficult foods, seating arrangements, how to offer a toast, and

understanding the five types of business meals. At the end of the program, you will confidently perform as a gracious guest or host.

WRIGHT

Sounds great. I've heard you mention incivility damaging our business; can one do anything about it?

BALDRIDGE

Incivility or rudeness is something that a lot of business owners just don't pay attention to; however, influencing others to do their best, to care for themselves, and inspire others to do the same is my true passion. So whether you have seen it, been a victim of it or need to manage it, rudeness in the workplace has reached a crisis. In many workplaces today, you'll spot employees speaking to subordinates in a condescending tone, ignoring their e-mail or phone messages, claiming excessive credit for their team's accomplishment, browsing on their cell phones or texting during meetings, or damaging another's reputation with malicious gossip.

The problem of incivility in the workplace has been compounded by an increasing tolerance of nasty behavior as a culture, David. There are so many popular reality television shows today that exhibit very aggressive and rude behavior and the public just seems to be obsessed by these shows; I really don't understand the appeal myself.

According to the authors of *The Cost of Bad Behavior*, Pearson and Porath argue that petty incidences of workplace rudeness exact a staggering economic toll that managers are foolish to ignore. With more than 9,000 research participants, findings show that a stunning 96 percent of employees in the United States have experienced incivility at work, but only 9 percent have reported it to human resources. This disparity may explain why managers underestimate the costs of incivility. Pearson and Porath also found that 12 percent of employees left their jobs because they were treated uncivilly.

BALDRIDGE

Have you ever walked into an establishment and overheard colleagues in a heated dispute?

Absolutely.

BALDRIDGE

It's very uncomfortable, isn't it? In fact, I leave that establishment as quickly as I can. So you can see the damage done from a customer point of view, but stability isn't about being nice, it's about working with mutual respect.

Did you know that it costs an employer one and a half to two and a half times an employee's annual salary to find a replacement when that person leaves? Wise employers should address poor workplace behavior before it escalates to the point where employees are leaving because of bad treatment. Businesses need to appreciate the hidden toll incivility takes in terms of reduced employee performance, team performance, increased workplace stress, erosion of the firm's culture and brand, customer flight, and damage to the firm's reputation.

WRIGHT

How can leaders equip their teams to radiate civility and confidence in every situation?

BALDRIDGE

If we could wave a magic wand and give everybody confidence, wouldn't the world be a better place? Recalling the power of your uniqueness is the most appealing aspect of your image and following these strategies will go a long way to convey confidence, poise, and a strong sense of self.

One of the most obvious ways to convey confidence is through the ability to command attention upon entering a room. Mastering body language that will urge others to gravitate toward you can easily be learned. You can demonstrate a confident posture by simply walking with your shoulders pulled back and your chin held up. Many are surprised how this posture instantly makes them feel more assured.

Being aware of the elements of body language is extremely important in displaying self-confidence. There are connections, gestures, and emotions that are perceived in body language. The

~~CONFIDENT~~ and compelling individuals do one specific thing that sets them apart—they are sincerely interested in making connections with other people. They are the first to initiate a handshake with a friendly smile and a warm word of welcome. Confident individuals act as connectors, taking on the role of host and mastering the art of introductions, asking questions to draw out a quiet individual, and offering to share a table or providing directions or assistance.

While introverted behavior can sometimes affect your ability to feel confident, most introverts like to establish deep relationships and true connections with people. They should not feel too much pressure to make contact with everyone in a room. Realize that even if you are introverted, you can exude professional presence. We must develop the ability to be comfortable and authentic with others.

One reason effective leaders and confident people can move comfortably in many circles is that they show a desire to understand and learn from others. You can easily demonstrate your interest in people by engaging them with good questions. Give people a chance to reveal themselves and their interests more fully by discovering what they enjoy most about work or what is most challenging in their occupation or what their dream vacation might entail. Listen with interest. One of the easiest ways to delight others is to use their name in the conversation and let them talk about themselves.

We live in an era where anyone can quickly gain knowledge and a wider vocabulary through use of the Internet. Use this amazing resource to expand upon your horizons and become a fascinating conversationalist, gaining assurance in every situation.

Demonstrating manners, soft skills, and finesse will enable you to become a more compelling and confident person. More importantly, becoming proficient in these qualities will allow you to enjoy self-respect and the admiration of everyone you meet and lead. Whether you are greeting a clerk at the convenience store or attending a business meeting, the brand you create for yourself is made up of little things you can control. Your brand will inspire others, and bring you success in life and in your career.

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Thank you for an interesting conversation. This has been meaningful for me. I'm sure that our readers are going to get a lot of information from this chapter, and I really appreciate that you are in this book.

BALDRIDGE

It has been a privilege for me. My hope is to inspire others, giving them the tools and confidence to be successful in all areas of their life.

WRIGHT

Today I have been talking with Ginny Baldrige. Ginny is a professional speaker, author, corporate trainer, and internationally Certified Image Consultant. Ginny believes that enhancing your image is a way of lifting your spirit and your confidence and giving you hope. She is passionate about helping companies utilize their power of image to promote their organization's culture and values.

Ginny, thank you so much for being with us today on *Mastering the Art of Success*.

BALDRIDGE

Thank you, David. I have really enjoyed it. I hope you have a great day.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Ginny Baldrige has garnered widespread acclaim enhancing the profile of senior executives, political leaders, and highly successful representatives in the financial industry, and hosting international conferences. Armed with a brilliant sense of the aesthetic between attire, presence, and poise, this Southern lady knows what it takes to put your best foot forward. As President and founder of Your Executive Image, Ginny is a sought-after speaker, a three-time published author, and she presents all-inclusive workshops to corporate groups. She regularly appears on *Working Women's Survival Show*, television, and radio, and is a favorite non-profit magazine contributor.

Ginny Baldrige, MSE is internationally certified and a board member of Association of Image Consultants International, an executive member of Fashion Group International, New York, and is a colleague at Corporate Class, Inc. Toronto, Canada.

Ginny believes enhancing your image is a way of lifting your spirit and confidence and giving you hope. Ginny's audiences leave laughing and refreshed with renewed confidence.

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Chapter Six

Turn Adversity Into a Competitive Advantage

MARK BLACK

DAVID WRIGHT (WRIGHT)

Today we're talking with Mark Black. Mark is a best-selling author of the acclaimed self-help book, *Live Life from the Heart: 52 Weeks to a Life of Passion and Purpose*. Mark is a heart and double-lung transplant recipient, he is a four-time marathon runner, and much sought-after speaker, trainer, and success coach. He learned about success early in life by facing death. Born with a congenital heart defect, Mark battled heart disease for twenty-three years before he faced the biggest obstacle of his life. In May 2001, at twenty-three years old, he saw his doctor and was given news no one wants to hear—his heart was failing fast and he had less than two years to live. After waiting on the transplant list for ten months and near death, he received a lifesaving heart and double-lung transplant. Since that day, he has beaten all odds and uses his gift of life to inspire people to live life with passion and purpose. His presentations have inspired more than sixty-five thousand people across North America. His best-selling book has influenced the lives of countless others.

Mastering the Art of Success

Mark welcome to *Mastering the Art of Success*.

So what happened when you were born?

MARK BLACK (BLACK)

Life didn't start smoothly for me. When my mom and dad learned that they were pregnant in the fall of 1977, they were so excited to greet their first-born child. These young, newlywed parents-to-be couldn't wait to add a new bundle of joy to their lives. And at first, everything looked great. Everything with my mother's pregnancy appeared to be fine, and my parents fully expected to have a healthy newborn baby boy. But shortly after I was born, they realized that something was very wrong—I started to turn blue.

Doctors rushed me away, did some testing, and determined that the problem was with my heart. They came back to my mother's room and explained to these young, first-time parents that their son had a nonfunctioning valve in his heart and that he needed open-heart surgery very soon. A short while later, I was taken by medi-chopper to a children's hospital and surgeons performed open-heart surgery on me at one day old. I was blessed that the surgery went as well as it could go and after a few months of recovery, my parents were able to take their son home for the first time.

WRIGHT

How did you cope with your illness throughout your childhood?

BLACK

After another surgery (on my first birthday), I was quite healthy during most of my childhood. There were still many limitations but it's interesting because, a lot of what might have been difficult wasn't because I didn't know any better. To me, going to the hospital, visiting cardiologists, and not being able to do certain activities were rather normal because I didn't know anything different. It wasn't until I went to school and was able to compare myself with other kids my age when I began to realize that I wasn't quite like they were. And so I lived, quite normally for twenty-two years. Then, in May 2001, my life changed forever.

I was attending my fifth year of university, studying education, when I realized that something was wrong. I was becoming increasingly short of breath and feeling fatigued for no reason. I began noticing that I was losing weight. At the end of the school year I went for a quick check-up at my family doctor's office. It was there that I learned what was happening.

My doctor told me that I was dying. My heart was in severe failure and there was nothing else medically that could be done. Without a rare and dangerous heart and double-lung transplant, I had probably less than two years to live.

WRIGHT

So how did you cope with the news?

BLACK

Learning that I was dying, especially at twenty-three years old, was hard news to hear, and initially I didn't take it very well. At the time, I was attending university and earning my second degree in education. I had a steady girlfriend and we were excitedly making plans for our future. Now suddenly I was being told that I had to forget my future plans and sit on a transplant waiting list, unsure if a donor would be found in time.

WRIGHT

What in the world was it like waiting for a transplant?

BLACK

Difficult, to say the least. It was probably the hardest year of my life. After four months of waiting, my condition grew worse and I was admitted to the hospital to be monitored more closely. I ended up living in that little hospital room for six months. It was a very difficult time because I didn't know if the call would come the next day or in two years. I didn't know if I was going to live to see the day the call came or not.

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WRIGHT

Wow, how did the transplant happen?

BLACK

Finally, on September 6, 2002, at 10:15 PM, my nurse came to the door and said that there was a call for me at the nurse's station. I walked down the hall and picked up the phone. The lady on the other end of the line gave me the news that changed my life: "I think we have a set of heart and lungs for you."

I walked back to my room and called my mother to let her know what was happening so that she could come to the hospital and be with me. She arrived a short while later and we hugged, cried, and prayed together for a while.

About six hours later, surgeons came to the door and took me away for surgery. I was in surgery for several hours and was blessed that it went incredibly well. A week after the surgery, I was up walking around; sixteen days later, I was released from hospital.

Since then, life has been incredible. I've been blessed to find the love of my life and we've been given two beautiful children. I've also been able to run some marathons—something that I could not contemplate before the surgery. I've been able to travel all across North America speaking to thousands of people.

I have been blessed with the health and future I have because of the gift of a total stranger. Because someone decided to be an organ donor, I am alive today. Every year, hundreds of people die needlessly because of a shortage of organ donors. If you aren't already, please consider _____ you could save a life.

WRIGHT

So what has life been like since the surgery?

BLACK

Incredible. Certainly I don't want to paint an unrealistic picture—there have been some ups and downs and there have been some obstacles to overcome—but for the most part, things have just been

incredible. I've been blessed to run some marathons, something that I could contemplate a stair before the surgery and traveled all across North American speaking to thousands of people.

WRIGH
T

So what do you do now?

BLACK

In 2003, I was invited to speak at a high school graduation. I agreed, not knowing what I would say or that the fifteen-minute address I would deliver would change the course of my life from that day forward.

After the graduation ceremony, the father of a graduate approached me afterward and said, "My company hires people to do what you just did, all of the time." Those words opened up new realities for me. I'd never really considered speaking professionally as a viable career until that moment.

When I learned that is was indeed not only possible, but that you could make quite a good living in this line of work, I set out to become a professional speaker. I started very small. The first year, I did one presentation for a few hundred dollars at a local middle school. Not a big accomplishment really, but for me, at that time, it was everything. I was a paid speaker!

Each year I built the number of clients and engagements I did until recently I was able to leave my other job and work full-time as a speaker. I've had the privilege in the eight years I've been in this business to meet thousands of people from all around the world, and hopefully, been able to serve them with a story and lessons that empower them to live life more fully.

I've been able to visit some interesting places from big cities, to tiny towns, from one coast to the other. I've spoken in high school gymnasiums with fifty students where a local farmer presented me with my check because he sponsored the presentation. I've also spoken in big arenas on the same stage with Sir Richard Branson, Stephen Lewis, and Craig Keilburger.

WRIGHT

So what is your expertise?

BLACK

I show people how to turn adversity into a competitive advantage.

WRIGHT

Well, your story certainly does get people's attention. What do you teach them in your presentations?

1. **Perspective:** The way that we look at things affects how we deal with life. Our outcomes in life are greatly dependant on our approach. My time waiting in hospital taught me this valuable lesson. Being stuck in a hospital for six months was not fun. There was every reason to spend that time being resentful and angry, but while I spent a short time doing that, I was blessed to move to a place where I focused more on appreciating everything that was going well in my life. I realized that despite my situation, I realized that despite the negative things that were happening, there were many positive things as well.

In my presentations, I challenge people to face adversities with an attitude of, let's look for solutions instead of focusing on the problem. No matter what you are faced with in your life, there are things to be thankful for, things to learn, and ways to turn the negative experience into a positive one.

2. **Be present:** So many people get caught up in the trap of worry. Today's hectic lifestyle can create an environment where we are so busy trying to fix tomorrow's problems that haven't happened yet that we miss out on the only thing we can do anything about, which is this moment right here.

When I was told that I was at risk for sudden cardiac death, I realized quickly that I had two choices: I could sit around and worry about if and when my heart would stop, but if I did that I would go crazy. My other choice was to realize that I couldn't control what might happen in ten minutes, in ten days, in ten hours. What I could control, however, was how I lived this moment, right here, right now. I figured

out that if I lived each moment as fully as I could, then the other things would take care of themselves.

When I was able to really do that well, my world changed—stress disappeared because you can't be stressed if you're really living in the moment. When you are living in the moment, there is no such thing as fear or worry because that is all in the future.

There is a second part to this lesson as well, though. While I was waiting for my transplant, wondering how much time I had left, I spent a lot of time thinking about the things I wanted to do in my life that I hadn't gotten around to yet. It made me realize that we can't wait for a magic day or a special time to start really living life. Too many people live with a philosophy of, "someday I'm going to start living life." The problem with this philosophy is that we never know when our last tomorrow will be and far too many people run out of tomorrows before "someday" comes. So I encourage people to take advantage of every moment and live it as best as they can.

3. Go big! I challenge people as often as I can to shoot for big goals and push their limits. This is a critical step to success because most of us carry around limiting beliefs about ourselves and about life. We start out life as a blank slate where anything is possible; but as life progresses, we are told in a variety of ways that we *can't*. Maybe a teacher discourages us because of a poor grade or maybe a parent tries to protect us from disappointment by encouraging us to have smaller dreams. Whatever the form, limitations are placed on us so often that soon we take over and begin to place them on ourselves. For most of us, the biggest obstacle we ever face on our road to success is not the things we have to overcome in the world, but rather the self-limiting beliefs we carry around in our heads.

I challenge people to shed those beliefs; I challenge their negative thinking and remind them of what they are truly capable of doing. Showing people a picture of myself post-transplant with all of the tubes and wires involved, and then a picture of me crossing the finish line of my first marathon, shows them a powerful example that anything is possible. I try and show and tell people that they're capable of a lot more than they think they are; I think everybody is and if we push those limits, I think we will surprise ourselves.

4. Refuse to Quit: The last lesson is the power of making the decision that you will not give up, no matter what. I call it “refuse to quit” because I want people to realize that it is a decision—you either accept quitting or you don’t. By deciding you will refuse to quit, you decide that no matter what you come up against, no matter what you have to overcome, you just keep going. I often will share with people the story of my first marathon.

I ran my first marathon in a hurricane. After training for four months, the event day arrived and it was pouring rain with winds gusting up to seventy miles an hour. Because I had trained for so long, and I was committed to the goal, I went out and ran anyway. It was hard the whole way but there were a few moments that were particularly difficult—moments where I was exhausted and unsure, moments when I wondered what the heck I was doing.

Thankfully I was prepared for those moments. I had some things written on my hand to remind me of why I was doing what I was doing. I would look down at my hand and read the names of three friends who had died waiting for a transplant. Reading those names was my why. Developing a compelling why is critical to achieving long-lasting success. As J. W. Von Goethe said, “If you have a big enough why, you can endure any how.”

So I challenge you to know what that why is for you, because many people don’t have one, or they haven’t thought about it enough to articulate what it is; when times get tough they crash because the why isn’t there to hold them up.

WRIGHT

Would you tell our readers more about your concept of how adversity can be an advantage?

BLACK

I firmly believe that our greatest challenges can become our greatest strengths and adversity can be an advantage. People who tend to excel and reach the highest peaks are not the ones who had smooth rides to get there. If you read about any great successes in history, you discover that they all had challenges to overcome. What’s more, it is precisely

because of the challenges they had to overcome that they became the people they are. These challenges have enabled them to attain their achievements. Would Martin Luther King Jr. have been the hero and role-model he is if he hadn't had to overcome the racism and social environment he lived in? I don't think so.

Here in Canada, one of my heroes—especially as a runner—is Terry Fox. Terry was diagnosed with cancer at a young age and instead of giving up, he decided to run across Canada to raise awareness and money to fight cancer. Because of his illness, he had to have one of his legs amputated, but he still ran halfway across the country on one good leg. Would this story be as inspiring if he had been able to do it with two good legs?

I think that when people are trying to figure out what they're called to do, and they're trying to figure out where their greatest strength is, they should look at their challenges and see what they've had to overcome. It may well be that what you have learned and how you have grown because of what you have overcome is exactly where your greatest strengths and gifts can be found.

WRIGHT

So how can people turn adversity in their lives into an advantage?

BLACK

There are a couple of key things they need to do. First, they need to change their thinking. Instead of focusing on the adversity—instead of focusing on the obstacle and the challenge—start to focus on the solution.

You don't sit there and stare at the wall in front of you, you figure out a way to get over it or around it; by doing that, you start to think in a solution-minded way and become more innovative and more creative. Some of the greatest innovations and inventions of the world came because people were trying to solve a problem rather than being defeated by it.

The next thing that people can do is create a compelling vision of the future. We often become stuck. Obstacles slow our progress and get us into this mindset and emotional environment where we feel stuck

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and we feel that we can't make a change and things are always going to be this way. If we feel that there is no hope, then the odds of overcoming are greatly decreased. Studies show that the difference between the people who survived the holocaust successfully, and those who survived physically but never recovered mentally, was that those who were able to move on were always able to hang on to hope. Those who survived successfully were able to create a compelling vision that someday things would be better.

So create a vision for yourself and make it as specific and as descriptive and as vivid as you possibly can. People need to take the time to sit down and really describe what they want and what that vision looks like. So many people wonder why they never achieve goals when they don't really know what they're trying to achieve in the first place; well, no wonder. If we know where we're going and what we're trying to achieve, we have a lot greater chance of getting there. So casting the compelling vision is vitally important.

Thirdly, surround yourself with like-minded people who support your vision. Many people wonder why they don't get where they want to go. One reason is because they spend most of their time with people who are dragging them down, discouraging them, and telling them they're no good. Don't make your life harder than it needs to be. If you have negative people in your life, it doesn't mean you need to abandon your family and friends completely, but you can control to a great extent how much time you spend and with whom you spend it.

I challenge you to surround yourself with people who are supporting, uplifting, and encouraging as opposed to the opposite. If you do those things, your life changes; it's really that simple. The change that can happen in your life from doing just those three things is incredible. In the end, there is no great secret or single insight that will totally transform your life. It is the culmination of many small actions and changes that will make the difference. Often, many of those things are things you already know—you just have to execute on them.

WRIGH
T

So tell us about your book.

BLACK

The book is titled *Life from the Heart: 52 Weeks to a Life of Passion and Purpose*. The book is fifty-two chapters of three- or four-pages each with exercises at the end of each. It was written that way for a couple of reasons. Research shows that people buy books all the time and don't ever finish reading many of the books they've bought. I think part of the reason is that they get bogged down or never find enough time to sit down and read an entire book or even a whole chapter if they are really busy.

I've written the book so readers can sit down and read it for five minutes at a time. Readers can put it in the bathroom if that's the only quiet time they get in the run of a day. They can get through a chapter in a few minutes, and there is an action activity at the end.

Concepts are great, but if we don't apply them, they're not very useful. The action step at the end is meant to help readers apply the concept that has been taught in the chapter.

The feedback from the book has been incredible. People have shared some amazing stories with me about how it's influenced their life and made a difference to them. That really touches me and. I do what I do because I love to do it, but also because I want to make a difference. When I get feedback like that, it makes the effort of writing the book worthwhile. It's been a very rewarding experience.

WRIGHT

I'm a parent of three children myself and I've been thinking about how your ordeal affected your parents. They must be so proud of you, but how did it affect your family?

BLACK

I will probably never fully understand that, to be fair, because I think they did such an excellent job as parents in shielding me from any sense of responsibility of what my difficulties took from their lives. There is no question that for a good chunk of the first two or three years of my life, their lives were completely interrupted by my health. They had to take time off work and move to another city for a period of time, so it created, from a practical perspective, a great disruption.

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The same thing with my transplant—when it came time for my transplant surgery, my dad came with me. My mom stayed home with three of my brothers, so it split up our family for a year. My parents were both teachers, so they were both off during the summertime. They both came to stay with me, so my brothers were without parents for two or three months. They were all teenagers and in their early twenties, so they were actually in some ways really quite happy with that because they got the run of the house for a couple months. But the truth of the matter is, my health has not only disrupted my life but theirs also. They have been very kind to never make me feel guilty about that.

The greatest gift they gave me was the belief that nothing was impossible—I could do anything I wanted to do and my health and size and all of those things didn't have to stop me from what I wanted to do. Many parents with young, ill children react by protecting them, putting them in a bubble, and trying to prevent them from having any further problems to deal with. They don't want them to get hurt. I was fortunate that my parents let me run and fall down and they let me play sports as much as I was physically able to. They allowed me to push myself, within reason, even though it was maybe not the safest thing to do all the time. Thanks to them, I had a sense of autonomy and independence that I otherwise wouldn't have had, and it served me so well in the rest of my life. I thank them for their strength in doing that because I'm sure it was not easy to watch this fragile child with a heart problem running on a soccer field not knowing if he might collapse. Certainly they never went against doctor's orders, but they took risks that others might not have taken, which made a big difference in my life.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Mark Black is a sought-after motivational speaker, success coach, and best-selling author of the acclaimed self-help book, *Live Life from the Heart: 52 Weeks to a Life of Passion and Purpose*. Mark is also a heart and double-lung transplant recipient, who overcame his illness to become a four-time marathon runner. In May 2001, at twenty-three years old, he saw his doctor and was given news no one wants to hear—his heart was failing fast and he had less than two years to live. After waiting on the transplant list for ten months and near death, he received a lifesaving heart and double-lung transplant. Since that day, he has beaten all odds and uses his gift of life to inspire people to live life with passion and purpose. His presentations have inspired more than sixty-five thousand people across North America. His best-selling book has influenced the lives of countless others.

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Chapter Seven

Stretch, Push Yourself, & Reach Futher

BY LES BROWN

DAVID WRIGHT (WRIGHT)

Today we're talking with Les Brown, internationally recognized speaker and CEO of Les Brown Enterprises, Inc. He is also author of the highly acclaimed and successful books, *Live Your Dreams* and *It's Not Over Until You Win*. Les is former host of the *Les Brown Show*, a nationally syndicated daily television talk show that focused on solutions rather than on problems. Les Brown is one of the nation's leading authorities on understanding and stimulating human potential. Utilizing powerful delivery and newly emerging insights, Les's customized presentations will teach, inspire, and channel any audience to new levels of achievement.

Les Brown, welcome to *Mastering the Art of Success*.

LES BROWN (BROWN)

Thank you very much. It's a pleasure to be here.

WRIGHT

Les, you've been a role model for thousands of people down through the years because of your triumph over adversity. Tell our readers a

little bit about your early life and who was responsible for your upbringing.

BROWN

Well, I was born in a poor section of Miami, Florida, called Liberty City. I was born on the floor of an abandoned building along with a twin brother. When we were six weeks of age, we were adopted. When I was in the fifth grade I was identified as EMR (Educable Mentally Retarded) and put back into the fourth grade. I failed again when I was in the eighth grade.

I attribute everything that I've accomplished to my mother. Whenever I give a presentation I always quote Abraham Lincoln by saying, "All that I am and all that I ever hope to be, I owe to my mother." I saw a sign once that said, "God took me out of my biological mother's womb and placed me in the heart of my adopted mother." I love my adopted mother's faith, her character, her drive, her dedication, and her willingness to do whatever it took to raise seven children by herself. She only had a third grade education but she had a Ph.D. in mothering.

WRIGHT

If I remember correctly, you were diagnosed at the age of thirty-six with dyslexia. How did that happen?

BROWN

No, I was never diagnosed with dyslexia; but I was in special education from fourth grade all the way through my senior year in high school. My formal education ended at that time; but I became very much interested in personal development tapes and books because of a high school teacher who challenged me to do something in a class. I told him I couldn't do it and he insisted that I could.

Finally, I said, "I can't because I'm Educable Mentally Retarded."

He said, "Don't ever say that again. Someone's opinion of you does not have to become your reality."

This teacher's name was Mr. Leroy Washington and he's still around today. One of the things he emphasized to all of his students was that

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you don't get in life what you *want*—you get in life what you *are*. What you achieve—what you produce in life—is a reflection of your growth and development as a person. So you must invest in yourself.

He often quoted scripture by saying, “Be ye not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind . . . ” (Romans 12:2). He said most people fail in life because “they don't know that they don't know and they think they know”—they suffer from mental malnutrition. He said take the time each day to develop your mind, read ten to fifteen pages of something positive every day, and find some goals that are beyond your comfort zone that can challenge you to reinvent yourself. He told his students that in order to do something you've never done, you've got to be someone you've never been. He told us the possibilities of what you could achieve by developing your mind and developing your communication skills (because once you open your mouth you tell the world who you are). You can really begin to climb the ladder of success and do things that will literally amaze you.

WRIGHT

So your education is self-education.

BROWN

Yes.

WRIGHT

Listening to tapes and reading books and that sort of thing?

BROWN

Yes. Going to seminars and then testing and experimenting. I think it's very important that people experiment with their lives and find out what it is that works for them—what gives their lives a sense of joy and meaning. What is it that brings music to your life? That way you're able to discover some talents, abilities, and skills you don't even realize you have.

WRIGHT

I remember reading your first book, *Live Your Dreams*. This bestseller is helping people even today. Can you tell us what you're trying to say in this book and why it is important?

BROWN

What I'm doing in *Live Your Dreams* is challenging people to look at their situation and ask themselves some crucial questions. Is life working for me? Is it really giving me what I want?

When most people get out of high school, they end up doing things that other people want them to do. Albert Schweitzer was asked a question, "What's wrong with humankind today?" He replied, "Men simply don't think." He meant that statement in a generic sense. Men *and* women simply don't challenge themselves to think about what it is that really makes them happy and gives their lives a sense of meaning, purpose, power, and value.

I want to challenge people to think about what it is that really gives their lives a sense of meaning and power. Once you determine that, assess yourself. What are your strengths? What are your weaknesses? What is it you bring to the table of life? What help? What assistance? What training? What education? What resources? What do you have to tap into that will help you to become the kind of person that can produce those results?

Then next is to commit yourself. Don't ask yourself, "How am I going to do it?" The "how" is none of your business—what is most important is to get started—the how will come. The way will come. Everything you need to attract—the people, the resources, and the assistance—will come to be available at your disposal.

WRIGHT

What do you think about goal-setting? There has been so much written about it lately.

I think it's very important that people set goals because what that does is allow you to focus your energy. It helps you to put together a game plan and a strategy and an agenda for your life. If you don't have an agenda for your life, then you're going to be a part of somebody else's agenda; therefore, you want to set some goals. There's a quote I love very much that says, "People who aim at nothing in life usually hit nothing dead on the head."

WRIGHT

Oh, my.

BROWN

Yes, so you want to have some goals you are setting in each area of your life. You want to monitor those goals after you put together a plan of action to achieve those goals. Break those goals down into manageable increments: long-range and short-range goals, three-month goals, thirty-day goals, and weekly goals. You should have daily tasks and activities you engage in that will move you in the direction of your goals. Dr. Robert H. Schuller said something that is true, "By the yard it's hard, but inch by inch anything is a cinch."

As you begin to look at the big picture and come back to where you are right now, looking at the completed big picture of where you want to go, then you can begin to put together a strategy of things and activities you need to do each day to move you in the direction of those goals. As you get closer to those goals you have set for yourself in the various areas of your life—your physical life, your emotional life, your spiritual life, your financial life—then you can begin to push the goals back. Continue to stretch—continue to push yourself—and reach farther.

WRIGHT

A few years ago you had a nationally syndicated television talk show. It's next to impossible to get a show of that nature on the air. Tell us the circumstances that helped to get your show on the air.

BROWN

I believe I'm coming back, I don't think it's impossible to get back on again. I wanted to go in a different direction. During the time I ventured into it, television was based upon a formula the executives were accustomed to which they'd always implemented—the show must be based upon conflict and controversy. So you had Phil Donahue, Oprah Winfrey, Sally Jesse Raphael, and Geraldo. My show was based upon solutions. I believed you could have a show that was not based upon conflict and controversy—you could have a show where you would look at what challenges people are facing and who has gone through a challenge and come out on the other side? Talk to that person and find out how he or she got there. Interview a guest who is in the middle of a challenge and find one who's just approaching that challenge. Have an expert work the person through that process during the hour of the show, asking what is it that brought you here? There's an old saying that goes, "Wherever you find yourself, at some point and time, you made an appointment to get there."

The other thing is that success leaves clues. What we must do is talk to someone who's had the same problem you've had and find out from his or her experience what is it you can do to implement a game plan. What help and support will you need to work through this problem?

The *Les Brown Show* was very successful. It was the highest rated and fastest cancelled talk show in the history of television. It was cancelled because, even though it had successful ratings, the producers of the show wanted me to do a show based upon conflict and controversy and sensationalism—fathers who sleep with their fourteen-year-old daughter's boyfriends—and subjects like that. I decided to be true to my concept and not venture off into those other areas to do those Jerry Springer type shows, so they cancelled the show and brought someone else in who was willing to cooperate with what they wanted.

WRIGHT

Did you learn any lessons from your highly competitive talk show?

Yes I did. The lesson I learned was I should have been the executive producer. I was hired talent and “the hand that pays the piper calls the tune.” Had I been the executive producer of my show like Oprah Winfrey, then I could have done what Oprah did after she saw the success of my show—she changed direction and used the formula I’d come up with and the rest is history.

If I had it to do over again I would’ve put my own production company together, continued to do the show I was doing, and would’ve found someone else to syndicate the show nationally. If I couldn’t find someone to syndicate the show nationally I would’ve set it up to do it locally and then rolled it back out nationally myself.

WRIGHT

I bet you still get stopped on the street by people who saw your commercials on the PBS station for many years. Those were some of the best produced I’ve ever seen.

BROWN

Well, thank you. We’ve gotten a lot of response from PBS. We just did one show four months ago called, *It’s in Your Hands*. In fact, I end the show with my children because five of my seven children are speakers as well; they’re also trainers. What we’re doing is teaching people how to become responsible for their careers, their health, and for their family life. The response has been very, very successful on PBS.

WRIGHT

So you’re growing your own speakers, then.

BROWN

Yes, and I’m training speakers—I’m more of a speech coach. I’ve developed a reputation as a speaker, but I have a gift of helping people tell their story and to position it so it has value for an audience. I have people’s stories create special, magical moments within the context of

BROWN
the presentation so that those stories can create a committed listening audience and move them to new heights within themselves.

WRIGHT

Yes, you don't have to tell me you're a sought-after speaker. Some time ago we were planning a speaking engagement in Ohio and the two people who were requested more than any others were Stephen Covey and Les Brown. They really came after you, so you do have quite a reputation for helping people.

BROWN

Thank you.

WRIGHT

A lot of our readers have read many books that advocate focus in their career. I know you've done several things and you've done them well. Do you advocate going in one direction and not diversifying in your career?

BROWN

I think that you have to find one area you want to focus on and as you develop momentum in that area and reach a certain measure of success, then you can branch off into other areas.

WRIGHT

Les, you had a serious bout with cancer several years ago, right?

BROWN

Yes.

WRIGHT

How did this catastrophic disease affect your life?

What cancer did for me was help me live life with a sense of urgency that tomorrow is not guaranteed. It helped me reprioritize my life and find out what's really important. When something major like cancer happens in your life, you spend more time focusing on those things. So, even though I always practiced and advocated that people live each day as if it were their last, my cancer battle helped me to focus even more so on priorities. That's what I began to be about the business of doing—thinking about my legacy, spending more time with my children, my grandchildren, friends I cared about, and working on the purpose I've embraced for my life.

WRIGHT

My wife was going through cancer at the same time you were, I remember. I heard her say recently that even though she doesn't want cancer again, she wouldn't give anything for the lessons she learned going through it.

BROWN

Yes. It helps; it gives new meaning to life, and you value things you used to take for granted.

WRIGHT

So, you gained a lot of insight into what's important?

BROWN

Oh, without any question I did.

WRIGHT

Your book, *It's Not Over Until You Win*, was long awaited, of course. Would you tell our readers what it's about and what you're trying to say?

BROWN

I think what people must do is challenge themselves to overcome the inner conversation that has been placed in them through their conditioning, through their environment, and their circumstances. We live in a world where we're told more about our limitations rather than our potential. We need to overcome and defeat that conversation.

If you ask most people if they have ever been told they can't achieve a goal they envision for their life will say, "Yes." My whole goal is to help people learn how to become unstoppable. Yes, it's going to be difficult—it's going to be hard. You're going to have obstacles thrown in your path. You will have setbacks and disappointments. But you must develop the mind-set of a winner. You must come back again and again and again. You must be creative and flexible, versatile and adaptable, and never stop until you reach your goals.

WRIGHT

I read many years ago that 98 percent of all failure comes from quitting. Would you agree with that?

BROWN

Yes, I agree with that without any question. Most people become discouraged and they see delay as a denial. I encourage people to go back to the drawing board in their minds, regroup, and get some fresh thinking. Einstein said, "The thinking that has brought me this far has created some problems that this thinking can't solve."

Sometimes we have to allow other people to be a part of the process—to look at the situation we're battling with new eyes that can help us overcome the challenges we're facing.

WRIGHT

As I have said before, you have been a role model for thousands of adults as well as young people. Do you have any advice to give our readers that would help them to grow in body, mind, and spirit and live a better, fuller life?

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Yes. I think it's important for people to raise the bar on themselves every day. Look at your life and understand and know you are greater than you give yourself credit for being; you have talents and abilities you haven't even begun to reach for yet.

Jim Rohn has a quote I love, "When the end comes for you, let it find you conquering a new mountain, not sliding down an old one." So, therefore, we have to raise the bar on ourselves constantly and assess ourselves.

The other thing is I believe it's important we ask for help, not because we're weak but because we want to remain strong. Many people don't ask for help because of pride. "Pride cometh before a fall" because of ego. E-G-O means edging God out.

I think that you also have to ask yourself, what is your plan for being here? Most people take their health for granted; but living a long, healthy life is not a given—pain is a given—you have to fight to stay here. You have to have a plan of action to stay here. So what is your plan for being here? Put yourself on your to-do list. Develop a plan of action on how you're going to take better care of yourself and spend more time with people you care about. Focus on living the goals and dreams you've envisioned for yourself that are the calling on your life.

WRIGHT

Down through the years, as you've made your decisions, has faith played an important role in your life?

BROWN

Yes, faith is very important. I think you have to believe in yourself, believe in your abilities, believe in your dreams, and believe in a power greater than yourself. There's a quote I love which says, "Faith is the oil that takes the friction out of living." Do the best you can and leave the rest to a power greater than yourself.

BROWN

Les, you don't know how much I appreciate you being with us today for *Mastering the Art of Success*.

BROWN

Oh, thank you so much.

WRIGHT

Today we've been talking with Les Brown, an internationally recognized speaker and CEO of Les Brown Enterprises. He's the author of *Live Your Dreams* and *It's Not Over Until You Win*. I suggest you run down to the bookstore and look for both of them. Les has been a successful talk show host and as we have heard today, he is now coaching speakers.

Thank you so much for being with us, Les.

BROWN

Thank you, I appreciate you very much.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Les Brown is an internationally recognized speaker and CEO of Les Brown Enterprises, Inc. He is also author of the highly acclaimed and successful books, *Live Your Dreams* and *It's Not Over Until You Win*.

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Chapter Eight

From Miserable to Millionaire: finding The Winner In You

BY LISA WILBER

DAVID WRIGHT (WRIGHT)

Today I'm talking with Lisa Wilber. Lisa has been selling and recruiting for Avon since 1981. She worked the business part-time until '87 when she got laid off her secretarial job. In 1993 her earnings soared after joining Avon's network marketing program. She has consistently been in the top ten money earners with almost two thousand team members and cumulative earnings of nearly \$4 million. A professional member of the National Speakers Association, her story has been featured in dozens of magazines, newspapers, and books. Lisa was named one of the Most Influential People in direct sales by DirectSellingLive.com. She is also an author and an entrepreneur.

Lisa, welcome to *Mastering the Art of Success*.

LISA WILBER (WILBER)

Thank you, David. I'm glad to be here.

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WRIGHT

Between '81 when you started with Avon and '87 when you were full-time, did you work at other nine-to-five type jobs?

WILBER

Well, I think saying nine-to-five is probably being generous, but I worked many different kinds of jobs. I was a waitress, I cashiered at a bank, I also designed wedding invitations. I think the lowest paid job I had probably was working third shift in a convenience store.

I wanted to tell you that because I think the low point of my life came one night at the convenience store. I was working there from eleven PM until seven AM and I was earning only about \$3.35 an hour. That included the 10 cents extra for working third shift. I worked there by myself, and I was trying to take college classes during the day.

I was so tired one night that I made an agreement with myself to only lay my head down on the counter for a minute—I was just too exhausted from juggling school and work.

So I laid my head down for a minute and the next thing I knew, when I looked up, there was a gun in my face. At that moment I thought to myself, that there just *has* to be a better life than this. Luckily, at the end of the gun was a police officer. He had driven by the convenience store and when he saw my head on the counter he thought I had been shot; he was actually securing the premises. But in that moment of time, I think that one thing was the worst thing that has happened to me. It also made me change the direction of my life because I knew I didn't want to end up being the one whose shooting they were investigating. So yes, I worked a lot of different jobs, that's for sure.

WRIGHT

What made you change to direct sales, after losing your secretarial job in '87?

WILBER

What's funny is that after I left the convenience store I moved to New Hampshire. I got this great secretary job and I thought that was

just the end all and be all, because at the convenience store I earned so little. I think I took in six thousand something for a year and when I applied for the secretary job I was offered \$15,000 a year to start with full benefits. That was just an unbelievable amount of money for me at that time—it was like hitting the lottery. I was so excited.

I worked that job for, I think it was, two and a half years, and then my entire department was laid off. You might remember that in the late '80s, the country was also in a recession. I actually had been selling Avon all that time but I had never met anybody who was doing it full-time, I only knew people who were doing it for “pin money,”—playing around money.

The reason I did full-time isn't for a good reason—I didn't set out to do Avon full time, I actually did it out of desperation. I couldn't find anything else because of the recession. I couldn't find another job and I even went to a temp agency to try to get hired and, as a secretary, that's like the lowest place to go is a temp agency. They actually wouldn't hire me because I didn't type fast enough.

So it was out of total desperation that I turned to Avon. I had already been selling Avon and I said well, I guess this is it; I can't find anything else. So I actually chose it out of desperation. I wish I could say it was some big dream, but it wasn't.

WRIGHT

The direct selling association reports that only 8 percent of direct sellers earn \$50,000 or more per year, why do you think you've beat the odds?

WILBER

I think it was being naïve and actually I highly recommend it! If I had thought more about my choice of doing it full-time or found out how many people earned the higher money, I probably wouldn't have attempted it. At that time I was in my early twenties, I was driving a Yugo, living in the trailer park, and eating macaroni every night because that's all I could afford. My neighbors actually said, “You want to do Avon full-time? Did you know that in those network marketing businesses, only 5 percent of the people really make a lot of money?” I

was so naïve, I just thought, “Oh well then, all I have to do is make sure I’m always in the 5 percent.” I didn’t think of it as though it indicated no chance and I’ll end up in the 95 percent, so I guess being naïve is what truly helped me and I highly recommend that.

WRIGHT

Boy that is naïve. Somebody told me the other day they’d always heard that the glass was half full or half empty and then they faxed me a drawing of a half glass of water and they had put water in half of the glass and at the bottom it said it’s a 100 percent full because the rest of it is air. So that’s the way you were thinking.

Tell our readers more about when you first started your direct sales business full time, what are some of the steps you took immediately?

WILBER

Well, in my little naïve sheltered world, I actually hadn’t heard that Avon was known for door knocking. Believe it or not, It hadn’t gotten around to me and I never did that. What I did was when I had to do it full time I looked around to see what other businesses in my area were doing to attract customers. Now door knocking didn’t even dawn on me because I knew the restaurant owner didn’t do that, he didn’t go to a door and knock on it and say “will you please come to my restaurant tonight,” and then go knock on the next door and say “will you please come to my restaurant.” I knew that I wouldn’t be able to earn a whole bunch of money doing that—that’s how I looked at it.

So I looked to see what companies were doing in my area and then I tried to find ways that I could do it on a smaller scale, in a little bit different way in order to do it for my direct sales company. To give you an example, and this actually is something that I’m known for in my area, is putting signs on my vehicle.

The first thing that I looked at out my window in the trailer park was a big delivery truck and I walked up to it because it had the company name on the side and I felt it and realized that it was just stickers, they had the company name on the side of the truck in stickers. I thought “wait a minute, I can put stickers on my car!,” so I

went and bought the letters and lettered my car, so my car had Avon and my phone number on it.

Over the years it's just gotten more and more elaborate—my car is like a rolling billboard. It has my name, my company name, and my phone number and now it has the Web site address, too. I have gone from the lettering to magnetic signs. I also have a sign on the roof, like a pizza sign, that says Avon. Right now, I have a complete car wrap, the entire car is wrapped with a sticker. I see other companies doing that, that's why I do it.

I do things like that such as the adopt a highway program in my area because it has Avon and my name right on the sign. I'm in the chamber of commerce because I see other companies doing it. I have a big sign on my lawn, I wear logo shirts because I see other companies doing it. I run ads in the newspaper. I continuously look to see what other companies are doing and then I adopt those ideas, sometimes in a different way or on a smaller scale to fit my direct sales business.

My goal was to make sure at the beginning that everybody within a ten-mile radius would know that I was the Avon representative here. It was funny because when I first moved here, there were seven thousand people and fifteen Avon representatives. When I first heard that number, I thought, "Oh geez, this could go one of two ways—either I'm going to sink hard and not do anything or I'm going to convince everybody in town that I'm the only one.

So I chose the second option. What's funny is I actually had some proof that this has worked out because when I moved a few years back out of the trailer park, somebody had sent a bill. It just said W & W Building, which is my ex-husband's company. Somebody had written on there, "Forward to the Avon lady." that's all they put and they brought that letter to me, and it didn't have my last name on it or anything and even though there are still fifteen Avon representatives in Weare, New Hampshire, at the post office, they brought it to me. To me, that was proof that they thought I was it. That's exactly what I want is for people to see the company name and to immediately think of me. So I think everybody can do that. It's called branding. They're trying to get everybody in their area to know that they're the one.

WRIGHT

So you think that some of these ideas can work for people outside of direct sales?

WILBER

Absolutely, because to me marketing is marketing. I actually speak to companies outside of direct sales. When they see that I do well in direct sales, they ask me about it. When they find out that it's just regular marketing, I've been asked to teach classes. One of my recent ones was for frame shop owners—people who assemble frames and sell them to customers. So I think marketing ideas and the way that people come up with them applies to all kinds of businesses.

WRIGHT

I see that you're a member of the National Speakers Association; how did you get involved in the speaking business and what do you speak on?

WILBER

It's funny—when I started to have some good results with my Avon business, Avon themselves were asking me to go around the country and speak for them and it was taking a lot of time away from my own business and my own sales, and I thought to myself, "I wonder if people do this for money?," That way it would be worth it to take all that time away.

I did some research and, sure enough, people do speak for money. I found the National Speaker's Association that way and in 1998 I contacted them and asked them how I could get professional credentials. They told me that to qualify I'd have to do twenty-five fee-paid speaking engagements in a twelve-month period. So I went into the speaking business backward.

I like their motto, which is, "Experts that speak." It's not that you are speaking about something you don't know about—you know about something and that's why you're speaking about it.

But I personally like to go around, in direct sales in particular, to make sure that people who need to or want to do this full-time know

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that it's possible. I didn't realize that people were out there doing this full-time because I hadn't met anybody who was doing it, so I really like doing it for that reason.

WRIGHT

The mission statement on your Web site reads, "To empower women through education, resources, service, and by example." Will you tell us how you came up with that and what it means to you and your business?

WILBER

When I started doing the speaking, one of the things that I learned from the National Speakers Association was that people who are speakers usually have their own authored books and materials relating to what they're speaking about. My topic is marketing and I show people how to market their small business and in direct sales.

When I came out with a Web site, www.WinnerInYou.com, I wanted to target specifically women. I think women are an underserved population. I don't think people take women in business as seriously as they do men. I still meet people today, even though I'm one of the top earners in a Fortune 500 company, and they'll ask, "What do you do?" or I'll sit next to somebody on the plane and they'll ask, "What do you do?" I'll reply, "I'm an Avon representative" and they'll say, "Oh, so you're a housewife, then?"

So I want to show other women that you can earn whatever you want to work hard to get. It's all up to us and we have to set a good example. I think that's why I want to have resources and products and services that help people build their own businesses—especially women.

WRIGHT

What do you think is the biggest obstacle you have faced to date?

WILBER

This is an easy one because the biggest obstacle is, has been, and always probably will be me. I've been my biggest obstacle all along;

there is no doubt about that. I think that in the beginning, the problem was that I didn't have any belief in myself. I didn't think that I could do it and I didn't see myself as anything but a "trailer park person." I don't know how I got into that mind-set, it was just being that poor. I'll just give you an example.

I was in the trailer one day waiting for the electric guy again; I kept getting the electric shut off because I didn't have enough money to pay the bill. If you call the electric company they say, "Well, you can have thirty more days if you meet the guy with your cash before he gets up the pole, you can get another thirty days without getting it shut off. So I waited for the guy, but the phone rang and I missed him.

So I ran outside when I did see him up the pole, and I said "Wait a minute, I've got the cash here, I've got the cash!" and the disgusted look he gave me on his face showed that he was thinking, "Oh, you trailer park lady." It was just so humiliating. I think that does something to your self-esteem.

I didn't want to be that trailer park lady. I'm always having to make sure that I work on myself so that I don't sabotage myself. As my checks have gotten bigger, I have to make sure that I feel that I'm worth that kind of money. If I don't, I'll sabotage myself and my checks go back down. So I'm always having to work on myself.

WRIGHT

If self-esteem and attitude are so important, how would you suggest our readers work on theirs?

WILBER

There are lots of ways to do it and I think you have to do whatever fits you individually. One of the things I do is to read often. As a matter of fact, I have a motto—I read more than anyone else I know personally. When I do that, I probably will be earning more than anybody else I know.

Some of the books that have meant a lot to me include, *The Success Principles*, by Jack Canfield and *Live Your Dreams*, Les Brown. I love Les Brown's audio tapes, too. He says, "You've Gotta Be *hungry!*" I love that. There is the *One Minute Millionaire* by Mark Victor Hansen. There is a

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new book that I like lately titled *It's Not About You*, written by Bob Burg and John David Mann. They have a go-giver philosophy that I love. I listen to a lot of CDs. My favorite one is still *Lead the Field* by Earl Nightingale. The “Acres of Diamonds” story made me believe in myself.

I also attend many training sessions, especially ones outside of my own company. I think it's important to have a bigger view of our industry. The Direct Selling Women's Alliance, DSWA.org, has many excellent speakers and great motivation. You get to see a bigger picture of the industry and the marketplace and not just within your own company bubble. I think it's important to see a big selection of movies and books and speakers to keep you motivated and keep you thinking.

WRIGHT

I've heard that you believe in the “pay it forward” philosophy. Tell me how that has helped you build your business and why do you believe in it?

WILBER

You know it's funny, it goes along with the go-giver philosophy. I have always wanted to just help anybody who asks me, so even today if somebody calls me on the phone, I don't wonder if the person is in my down line or not, I just want to help. Just as my mamma told me, what goes around comes around; that's just the way it is. Even from a business perspective, I think it's important to help people, not just because it's the right thing to do, but because it's a smart business move, too.

I would say at least a dozen people on my team now were people I have helped over the years when they were not on my team and for some reason they had left the business and come back again. They may have left the business for ten or fifteen years and then, when they decided to get back in the business, I was the one they remembered because I helped them when it didn't benefit me.

I think that even as a business strategy, always helping other people just because it's the right thing to do, helps your business, too. I just think it's the right thing to do.

WRIGHT

You know a wise man told me many years ago that if I were walking down a road and saw a turtle sitting on top of a fencepost that I could bet he didn't get up there by himself. Are there any people in your life, in your background, who have helped you become the person you are and who have made you the success you now are?

WILBER

I'm not sure I could point to one or two. I think there have been many people. I can think of times when I was really depressed and didn't think this would go that far. One little word from my mom would help me a lot.

I had a very close friend in South Carolina and on one of the nights I worked at the convenience store, it was my birthday. I was working in the store in a bad neighborhood. It had the bars on the windows and a dye pack in the cash drawer. My friend showed up with a birthday cake that night—in the middle of the night. There was another person who helped me push-start my car on the side of the road when I was out making Avon deliveries. There are so many people who have helped me down through the years that it's almost overwhelming to try to think about. I want to help other people to the same extent that I was helped. All those little acts of kindness have made a huge difference in how my life has turned out.

WRIGHT

Well, this has been an interesting conversation, Lisa. I have learned a lot here. You have simplified branding and marketing so that everybody can understand it.

I appreciate all the time you've taken to answer these questions. Not only did I learn a lot, but our readers are going to enjoy this chapter in our book.

WILBER

Well, thank you; I enjoyed participating.

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WRIGHT

Today I have been talking with Lisa Wilber. Lisa has been selling and recruiting for Avon since 1981. She is a professional member of the National Speakers Association. Lisa's story has been featured in dozens of magazines, newspapers, and books. She has been named one of the most influential people in direct sales by DirectSellingLive.com.

Lisa, thank you so much for being with us today on *Mastering the Art of Success*.

WILBER


Thank you, David.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Lisa M. Wilber brings thirty years of direct sales and network marketing experience to other direct sellers and small business owners who want to increase their earnings using branding and marketing. She has conducted seminars worldwide including Ireland, England, Canada, and all across the United States touching thousands with her message of empowerment. Named one of the “50 Most Influential People in Direct Sales” by DirectSellingLive.com, she has shown a willingness to share her knowledge and work on behalf of direct sellers and network marketers in and outside the company she represents.

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Chapter Nine

Success: When Passion and Purpose Dance

BY SONYA WARE

DAVID WRIGHT (WRIGHT)

Today I'm speaking with Sonya Denise Ware, entrepreneur and owner of Blue Beagle Consulting, a coaching and consulting firm. Blue Beagle is a partner in helping to discover natural talents, define personal brand, and deliver bold results. Typical coaching uses tools and assessments to teach the client new behaviors. Blue Beagle's approach is purpose-centric, which means that in addition to standard tools and assessments, their work aligns with the client's natural talents and ensures maximum effect and sustainable results. Blue Beagle is the strategic thinking partner to senior professionals, mid-level managers, and small business owners. Their niche is working with clients who aim to reinvent themselves. Reinvention happens through a signature process that helps the client embrace their personal brand and achieve career, business, or life success. Sonya has a bachelor's degree in Entrepreneurship from the University of Houston and a master's degree from The University of St. Thomas. She is an International Coach Federation Associate Certified Coach with fifteen years' experience working with senior leaders in Fortune 500 companies and non-profit organizations. Sonya is a partner in

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possibilities, authentic leadership, and courageous living. She is married and has two sons.

Sonya, welcome to *Mastering the Art of Success*.

WARE

Thank you, David. It is my pleasure to visit with you today. You are spot on in describing the services that Blue Beagle Consulting offers to our coaching and consulting clients. We work with clients in one of two ways: Our niche is to partner with clients to reinvent themselves. This involves using their natural talents and embracing a personal brand that gets results! When you do something you are passionate about or just really good at, you achieve success. We help clients identify their passion and put it to work! As consultants, we work with organizational leaders, senior managers, mid-career professionals, and small business owners as a strategic thinking partner. We are that objective voice that creates a safe space to ask insightful questions, offer bold challenges, and be an accountability partner to achieve the results they set out to achieve.

WRIGHT

I know you've heard many definitions of success from many different people but how do *you* define success?

WARE

Success is always achieved when we live our talent. When we leverage our talent in our work and in the community, we position ourselves to leave an indelible mark on the world. Talents are simply a combination of passion, abilities, and experiences. Together they create a perfect storm for true success and bold capacity to make the world a better place. It is from this place that we have an opportunity to affect the world.

Most people miss out on true success because they are asleep at the wheel, never taking the time to explore and leverage their unique gifts. I had a coaching client who hired me to work with her on leadership development. In the midst of our work, her company reorganized and her job was at risk. A funny thing happened with the reorganization.

Our coaching relationship shifted into high gear and we began to work on her *personal brand*. Through personality assessments and discovery coaching, she was able to understand and articulate her personal brand in such a way that her track record, talent, and value spoke for itself.

But hadn't personal brand always been a factor? A reputation just happens. A personal brand is a reputation that is proactively managed. Personal brand always matters and it is built on a foundation of gifts, talent, abilities, and experiences. Here's how the story ended, the client was able to define and articulate her personal brand and nailed every internal job interview landing in a dream job that came with a promotion! We were made to shine! Marianne Williamson says it best,

“Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate. Our deepest fear is that

we are powerful beyond measure. It is our light, not our darkness that most frightens us. We ask ourselves, who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous, talented, fabulous? Actually, who are you not to be? You are a child of God. Your playing small does not serve the world. There is nothing enlightened about shrinking so that other people won't feel insecure around you. We are all meant to shine, as children do. We were born to make manifest the glory of God that is within us. It's not just in some of us; it's in everyone. And as we let our own light shine, we unconsciously give other people permission to do the same. As we are liberated from our own fear, our presence automatically liberates others.” (From *A Return To Love: Reflections on the Principles of A Course in Miracles*, Marianne Williamson.)

WRIGHT

So what would you say would be the highest contribution to your professional success?

WARE

The highest contribution to my professional success has been, what I call, “staying in my lane”—recognizing and leveraging my personal strengths and talents to deliver results. When leading others, it was also important to acknowledge the strengths, talent, and contributions of each and every team member. Placing people in the right role maximizes results. This is not to say that we don't pay any attention to weaknesses or areas of opportunity, but our goal, where weaknesses

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were concerned, was to ensure that we developed the weaknesses so that they didn't render us ineffective.

Our talent builds a moat around us. Warren Buffet, as quoted in a *Forbes* interview, said, "*The best moat you can have is your own talent. They can't take it away from you; inflation and taxes can't take it from you.*"

As human beings, we crave meaningful work, clear purpose, and a contribution that matters.

WRIGHT

A wise man once told me that if I were walking down the road and saw a turtle sitting on top of a fence post I could bet he didn't get up there by himself. So aside from personal role models, will you name some people who have served as your role models for success and put you where you are today?

WARE

Wow, I love that. Well, two of my role models have had an indirect effect on me. I don't know either of them personally but I'm always impressed with "game-changers"—the ones who fundamentally change the way we play the game. There are a couple of people who come to mind:

Jay-Z, one of the most respected and influential artists of our time, he is a rapper who raised the bar with thought-provoking lyrics and powerful delivery. He is an undisputed entrepreneur. He climbed out of the housing projects and into the palace. A true example of talent at work, he didn't just cross over with his music but he brought mainstream into his world through his apparel line, his music, and many other projects. Jay-Z is a game-changer; he fundamentally changed the way we experience rap music.

Joel Osteen is an author and a televangelist who lives in Houston, Texas, my hometown. He's the pastor at Lakewood Church. His ministry reaches more than seven million broadcast media viewers weekly in more than one hundred nations around the world. He's preparing now to appear on a reality television show highlighting mission trips all over the world. Joel Osteen's work is admirable. He, too, is a game-changer, forever changing the way we view *church*.

Today

Sonya Ware

his church houses tens of thousands. It is a former Houston sports arena. When it was up for sale, millions of Houstonians drove past it on the freeway but only one had a vision for it as a place of worship, Joel Osteen. He's a visionary, a game-changer, and he inspires me to be my best self.

Game changers cause me to beg the question, "*What innovation and boldness do I need to bring to my work and my life today?*"

Closer to home, my mother and father instilled in me a work ethic that lent itself to integrity, wisdom, and authenticity. I never forget who I am and where I came from. It is my obligation to reach out and help others up, to teach what I learn, to share the blessings I have been given with to those less fortunate.

We lived in a blue-collar neighborhood. With working parents, we kids came home after school, and usually an elder neighbor peered across the street to make sure we went inside and stayed there until our parents arrived home from work. The street corners were littered with a handful of harmless middle-aged men who were down on their luck, swapping funny stories, one upping each other and taking a swig from a bottle of cheap liquor known as Mad Dog 20-20. A fortified wine produced by Mogen David wineries that contained 7.5 percent to 18.0 percent alcohol and was anywhere from 15 to 36 proof. However, to kids walking home alone from school, passing the corner mob was sometimes scary. Imagine loud voices bursting into laughter and an awkward silence falling over the streets as you walk by, with your eyes focused on your home just a few feet away. We had come to feel disrespect for these guys, calling them "thugs"—behind their backs of course.

When my father found out that we felt this way and said such things, he was appalled. He threatened to punish us if he ever heard us make such awful comments or be afraid of these guys. He explained to us that we didn't know any of their journeys, what rejection they had experienced, or their pain. And further, it wasn't for us to judge another person's experience. We were to love them into wholeness and to treat them with all due respect. I have come to know my father's lessons as life's truths. People are people and deserve to be held in respect and deserve to be treated as kings and queens. Even when the

odds are stacked against them, they deserve respect—respect even in trying times of conflict and chaos.

There was a time when someone stole a toolbox from our garage. It was a nice toolbox with all the essentials. My brother and I were so sure that the only people that would have done such a thing were the “thugs.” My dad calmly called over an influencer in the group and started up a respectful, caring conversation with him. After a few pleasantries, my dad said, “Junior, I am really disappointed in you. I believed that we had a different kind of relationship—one of trust. Word on the street is that you stole my toolbox from the garage.”

“No sir,” Mr. Spann, Junior replied emphatically, “I would never do that to you because you are so kind to us even when others are not. I will find out who stole your toolbox and return it to you.”

Dad explained to us that he didn’t believe that Junior stole the toolbox but Dad knew that Junior would find out who did. My dad was wise. He knew that people want to do right. They want to make a valuable contribution to their work, the community, and to life. And each person deserves respect and to be treated as a human being and nothing less. We desire honor, respect, and a solid reputation but life doesn’t always predispose us to this privilege. And it was clear to us that it was a part of our responsibility as humans to be inclusive and respectful to everyone, in any situation.

Well, you may have guessed it by now—Junior returned later that day with the toolbox. All was well. Oddly enough, it cost him \$5 to retrieve it. Dad gladly replaced Junior’s \$5. People rise to our level of expectation. Expect the best in others and give all due respect. This is only one of the many lessons I learned from my mother and father. They have had the greatest influence on my life and I thank them for that. Rest in peace, Dad. Mom, I love you.

WRIGHT

What do you think are the biggest obstacles people face in trying to become successful?

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WARE

When I hear that question three things come to mind. The first is this: people face obstacles in becoming successful when they don't have a clear definition of what success is, or worse, they define success by someone else's measure.

The second obstacle is fear. For some, the fear of being successful is more frightening than continuing to exist in a cramped comfort zone.

The third obstacle is when they believe that, similar to your turtle example, they're going to get there all by themselves. We've got to fundamentally believe in something bigger than ourselves, even if it's the power of human energy to achieve something that we couldn't do by ourselves.

When I exited corporate America to pursue my dream of owning my own business, I felt successful. One year later, I was invited to have lunch with a few former colleagues and I was hesitant to accept the invitation. I discovered that I didn't feel successful enough—too few clients, not enough gross revenue, and on and on. I stopped the internal babble and sat down to a blank sheet of paper and I begin to scribble why I left corporate America in the first place, what my goals had been when I left, what I had accomplished, and what milestones had been achieved. By the time I finished, I realized that though I wanted the business to have more revenue, the reality was that the business had done pretty well in year one. In fact, gross revenue had increased 400 percent from the previous year when I operated the business as a part-time gig while working full-time.

WRIGHT

Would you tell our readers a little bit about what drives you to be successful?

WARE

Human beings crave meaning and purpose. I live with a double portion of the quest for meaning and purpose. I want my legacy to be that of one who lived a life filled with prosperity, great relationships, and health. I meditate on peace and wholeness when I am serving others. When this comes to light, it drives me to bigger and better

things including more philanthropy—more ability to help make our world a better place to live. When the lights go out and I settle the dash between birthdate and death date, I want the world to acknowledge that I left an indelible mark that gave people *hope*.

WRIGHT

What is the message you want people to hear that will enable them to learn from your success?

WARE

The message is consistent: There is a higher power that we need to acknowledge. It's a power that births our purpose, grants us our being, and renders us fearless. Success requires us to be bold and to be fearless, challenging the status quo and doing what people would say is "*unheard of and certainly not the way we do things.*" And doing so even when we are afraid. Julio Olalla, Newfield Network founder, was a mentor for me when I got my first taste of coaching the human soul. He often makes a statement that I love: "A life without boldness is a life filled with regret." So success, however you define it, once it has been accomplished, should be relished without regrets.

WRIGHT

How do you help your coaching clients accomplish success and create the life they've always wanted?

WARE

It's quite simple. First, we do it by working with them to get clarity on what's in their toolkit, as I mentioned earlier, their strengths, what their natural gifts, and unique experiences. Some of those experiences might have been painful but there is a wealth of resources in our painful experiences. We find the skills and abilities they have, their certifications, and training. We take that information and combine it to brand who they are. We also use it to understand their mission and purpose.

Secondly, we work to articulate that brand so that people understand what they're bringing to the table and how we can help

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them advance their business bottom line or make their nonprofit successful.

Then we help them to embrace it. Often, the very thing people are naturally good at and where they can offer the world their best gifts are the things that they take for granted and overlook. We help our clients learn to embrace it, to own it, and then live in that strength.

WRIGHT

In leadership, especially on the subject of success, we hear a lot about and read a lot about passion and the importance of passion. Does everyone have passion?

WARE

Everyone has passion, or they have something they're really good doing. If you are, you're betting on something you're very good doing or if you're betting on something you're really passionate about, then you're guaranteed a return on investment that is phenomenal. So in answer to your question, we each may call it something different, but I think we all have something we're really good doing or extremely interested in.

WRIGHT

You speak about being fearless or you speak about fearless leadership and how it's the main factor in attaining success. Is being fearless alone truly enough?

WARE

The answer is no. Being fearless, or bold, is foundational to fearless leadership, so if you don't have the boldness then all the other characteristics don't matter because you don't ever get to the place where you get to put them to work. There are other things that come into play like wisdom, authenticity, and vision; but without a foundation of boldness, or fearlessness, they don't get the opportunity to show themselves.

I remember when I was a young adult and house parties were a hot event. I had gone to a party with a couple of co-workers and as soon as

we entered the party, we noticed a guy who stood out. He had long hair that had been processed with a chemical relaxer. He was dressed very nice and his shirt seemed to be unbuttoned to his navel.

He asked me to dance and I am not afraid to try what others will not (within reason, of course). We started to dance; he would make a certain move and I would follow his lead. We were looking good on the dance floor. Suddenly his moves became more exaggerated and I followed suit. Before long, everyone gathered around, clapped and cheered as we danced. I thought to myself, “What if I can’t keep up with him?” He must have seen the look on my face and he leaned in and sang, “Don’t get scared until I get scared.” I burst into laughter and begin to relax and to lean in.

The same is true for life, give it your best shot, bring in your talent, rustle up some boldness, and live completely. Learn to take life by the reigns and “lean in.”

WRIGHT

How did you begin your career in speaking and why did you choose fearless leadership as your main topic?

WARE

I started speaking when I was about fourteen years old. I grew up in the Baptist church and if you couldn’t sing or usher you were invisible. I literally asked God to show me what my gifts were because we’d learned in Sunday school that everybody has a gift. Shortly thereafter, I was asked to do a brief talk and expound on the program theme and the rest is history. My calendar was chock full with church speaking presentations. I went from there to Toastmasters and leadership positions that required me to address global staff around the world. Speaking has always been something that was there from the beginning and an answer to a prayer to learn of my gifts.

I chose the topic of fearlessness because at the time it was what I needed most as I stepped away from corporate America to become an entrepreneur. I didn’t grow up with “a silver spoon in my mouth” or lots of money in my bank account, so I didn’t have anything to fall back on. The fearless leader characteristics are applicable to any journey

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where we step outside our comfort zone and demonstrate our faith in something bigger than we are.

WRIGHT

In your opinion, is boldness and fearlessness the same thing or is there a difference between the two?

WARE

Boldness is foundational to being fearless. The other characteristics that sit on top of that foundation are wisdom, authenticity, vision, and energy. The culmination makes you a fearless leader. So it's not one or the other. It is true that without a foundation of boldness all the others aren't as powerful. I like to say that together they spell the acronym, BWAVE. In the voice of cartoon character Elmer Fudd, to be a fearless leader, you have to BWAVE. The B in BWAVE is for boldness, which takes first place.

WRIGHT

As we think about your coaching career and your training sessions, what makes your perspective unique?

WARE

Most of my career was spent in corporate America less a few retail stints and an ear-piercing gig at the mall. In corporate America, words like love, passion, and embrace were considered soft terms and didn't seem to have a place. I was always authentic and confident enough to have to keep those words in my conversations, in my arguments, in my leadership style. I think it wasn't so much the conversation, but the finesse to appropriately challenge, to go against the status quo, and win people over to a new way of thinking about something they've seen a million times before.

To do that and leave people whole and feeling really good about the conversation is success because I've handled them in a way that still lets them be completely human. Maya Angelou who said, "People will forget what you said, they won't even remember what you've done but they'll never ever forget how you made them feel." My personable

nature comes into all of the work that I do and into the conversations that I have. This makes working with me an intoxicating experience that brings learning to life, along with sustainable change.

WRIGHT

Is it important to balance professional success in your life, and if so, how do you balance success with your life?

WARE

I think it's important, David, to balance success in life. It starts where we began in this conversation—defining what success is for you before you even try to attain it.

That word “balance” reminds me of a juggling act, so there is an imbalance. I like to think of it as integrating my professional success with the rest of my life, so by default I have built my business around my life.

When I took the time to reinvent my life, going from working in a corporate environment to being an independent entrepreneur, I took the liberty of creating the life I wanted to live. Every day that shapes a little bit and forms a little bit. I got more clarity as I continued on the journey, but that integration made me look at the value of family time and the value of personal time to reflect and to recharge.

WRIGHT

Well, what a great conversation. I've learned a lot here today; however, I didn't learn how you came to name your company Blue Beagle consulting.

WARE

That's so funny. Yes I've actually signed clients because they had a beagle and they knew that was a sign to work with me.

WRIGHT

The Lord moves in mysterious ways!

WARE

Blue is one of my favorite colors. Beagle is my mom's maiden name, and her brother, Thomas Beagle, was very influential in my life. He was around six feet five inches tall—a big guy. He always dressed nice and smelled nice. The thing I remember most about Thomas Beagle is that he loved unconditionally. He could love you whether you were fat, skinny, educated or not, in trouble, out of trouble, Thomas Beagle loved you. He died shortly before I launched my business part-time. I combined blue, my favorite color, with Beagle, unconditional love. It stands for the experience I want my clients to have when we work together, and even after our work is done. They will know that they are loved unconditionally and I become their favorite.

WRIGHT

That would be nice to work with someone who loved you unconditionally and you were their favorite. That's great.

I really appreciate your spending all this time with me today to answer these questions. I'm sure our readers will learn a lot from this chapter.

WARE

Well, thank you, David. It's been my pleasure.

WRIGHT

Today I've been talking with Sonya Denise Ware. Sonya is an entrepreneur and owner of the Blue Beagle Consulting Company, a coaching firm committed to partnering with her clients to deliver breakthrough results. Sonya partners with her clients to find possibilities in authentic leadership and courage.

Sonya, thank you so much for being with us today on *Mastering the Art of Success*.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Sonya Ware, owner of Blue Beagle Consulting, is a reinvention coach who helps her clients make the most of their talent. In IT, she worked in oil/gas where she quickly rose through corporate ranks to regional lead with \$25 million in projects. After leading teams through IT outsourcing, she shifted her career to organizational effectiveness. Sonya left the corporate environment to pursue Blue Beagle Consulting where she is a reinvention coach to professionals, mid-level managers, and business owners. Sonya has a BS from University of Houston and MA from University of St. Thomas. She is an ICF accredited coach who works with senior leaders in Fortune 500 companies and non-profit organizations.

Sonya is happily married with two lovely sons.

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Chapter Ten

Quit Dreaming: Take the Proven Route to Successful Entrepreneurship

BY JACK DALY

DAVID WRIGHT (WRIGHT)

Today I'm talking with Jack Daly. Jack is an expert in sales and sales management with more than twenty-five years of experience starting from the CPA firm Arthur Andersen to the CEO of several national companies. He has participated at the senior level on six de novo businesses, two of which he sold to the Wall Street Firms of Salomon Brothers and First Boston. His mortgage firm was recognized as Entrepreneur of the Year by Ernst & Young and rated Number 10 on the Inc. 500 List of The Fastest Growing Companies.

Born in Philadelphia, Jack resides in San Clemente, California, and has completed ten Ironman competitions on five continents.

Jack Daly welcome to *Mastering the Art of Success*.

JACK DALY (DALY)

Thank you, David.

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WRIGHT

So if you could pick only three key ingredients of successful entrepreneurship, what would they be?

DALY

I've had the opportunity to look back in the rearview mirror of life, David, and I think that knowing where you're trying to go is so valuable. In a word, that would be "vision." A second key is key people in key spots because, as we all know, you can't do it all by yourself. Then the third, and maybe most important of all, is culture, which has to do with the environment you create in your business in such a way that people inside the company look forward to the journey.

WRIGHT

Would you break each one of those down for our readers into more detail, perhaps beginning with vision?

DALY

When I talk about vision I don't necessarily mean a mission statement or values, albeit those are important. I'm looking at something grander, something bigger, something that was the motivation for the entrepreneur to get excited about taking the leap of risk into building their business. There was something that caused that individual to step up. There was a vision—I'll call it a painted picture—something very visible and indicated that it was worth risking it all, going out there and making it happen. I use the words "magnetic" and "compelling"—something to get people inside the company and outside the company excited about what the company is all about.

When I think about a vision, I'm looking for something that is down the road and yet something I can transfer over to the rest of the workforce that gets them equally excited. It's the vision that gets us through the tough patches that we are bound to run into as we go about our entrepreneurial journey and build our business. The potholes along the freeway are easily overcome by a magnetic, compelling vision.

A second part of that vision is to tell people in the company not only what the vision is but how the company makes money and what its role

is in making that money. The clearer we get about that, the better our company has an opportunity to excel.

WRIGHT

Key people in key spots was next. Would you explain your fervor for sales in this regard?

DALY

I've spent decades building businesses and today I run into literally hundreds of entrepreneurs and hundreds of CEOs who are aspiring to grow their business. When they're growing their business and they have that aspiration, I want to know what they mean by "growing their business." The feedback I get is they want to grow their revenues. Another term for that is growing your sales; in most business, if you want to grow your sales, a very simple answer is to grow your sales force in quantity and in quality. If you grow your sales force in quantity and in quality, they, in turn, will grow your sales.

I look at the key roles of an organization—the key people in key spots—who are reporting to the entrepreneur/owner of a business. In my opinion, if the mission is to grow your business, then the person who is in charge of growing your sales force is a vital key player. I've witnessed three sins of sales management that cause businesses to not be all they could be.

One is where the CEO/owner/entrepreneur is wearing the hat of the sales manager. By definition you are basically relegating both the CEO job and the sales management job to a part-time role and, in effect, you're saying "I'm going to grow my business part-time." That just makes no sense to me because if you have a business that has an opportunity to grow, the way to grow it is to grow your sales force. The person who should be doing that should be full-time.

The second sin of sales management, committed regularly out there, is to take the best salesperson and then make him or her the sales manager. Now, have I ever seen that work? The answer is yes, but not very often. What often happens is we lose our best salesperson and we get a mediocre sales manager as the tradeoff; the role and the responsibilities are entirely different.

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A salesperson's role is to win new customers, grow the ones you have, and differentiate you from the competition. Sales management is recruiting, training, coaching, building, and developing. Just because a salesperson is good at the sales role doesn't necessarily mean he or she is going to be good at the sales management role. A further handicap is that salespeople live in a world of immediate gratification—they get a deal and then are anxious to get another one—whereas the sales management role has no immediate gratification. Recruiting a top salesperson could take you more than a year, and so could training, coaching, and developing. You therefore take a person who is accustomed to living in a world of immediate gratification, you move him or her to a world with no immediate gratification, and eventually the person becomes disenchanted. The person loses his or her zest for the sales management job and eventually will go back to sales, probably working for a competitor.

The third sin of sales management is probably the most grievous of all. The best salesperson is made a sales manager, *and* he or she is also required to continue booking business. I have no idea how you would judge that person's success or how that person spends his or her time. It is absolutely ruinous. Very often what happens is that the person becomes nothing more than a glorified salesperson who happens to throw a few bones on the pile called sales management.

Each one of the three sins is defacto, minimizing the sales management role and effectively holding the company back from achieving its vision of growth. Small to medium sized businesses tend to go in one of two directions: they stay small to medium or they go out of business. When you ask why, it most often comes down to violation of one or more of the three sins of sales management. Having key people in key spots is absolutely the secret to success.

WRIGHT

We hear a lot these days about culture. What is your take on the culture of a business?

DALY

When I think about culture, I think about how I could create an environment in my company. An environment, a culture, where people that work in the company don't get up in the morning and say, "Oh my God, I've got to go to work again today," as though they'd rather be anywhere else. Rather than creating that kind of environment, how about creating an environment where the people who work in it get up each morning and say "Hot Dog! I get to work at this company!" If I were to summarize it, it would be "I get to go to work here" as opposed to "I have to go to work."

A second way of describing culture would be if I could create, as an entrepreneur, not only an environment where my employees came in and gave me their minds and their bodies, but they also walked in and gave me their hearts. In that case, I'd have a competitive sustainable advantage.

I confront entrepreneurs all of the time with this challenge: what are you doing to win over the hearts of your people? If you win over their hearts, you have a competitive, sustainable advantage.

The last definition of culture, in my opinion, is that I think we have to reinject the F word into our business—fun. Make it more fun.

WRIGHT

As an entrepreneur, what's in it for me when it comes to focusing on culture?

DALY

When I think about culture and the things that are in it for me, there are four key things. One of them is revenue growth. The effect that culture has on businesses has been studied and if we were to focus on culture, our revenues would be in excess of three times the amount if we focused on the culture side of our business. But it gets better than that.

The second thing is the stock value of the company. It has been shown that in culture-rich companies, stock value is actually more than twelve times the stock value of companies deficient in the culture area of their business. In effect, as an entrepreneur, if you were looking at

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your enterprise as something you were interested in eventually selling, the studies we have seen have shown that if you spend the time on the culture, at exit you'll walk away with a multiple in excess of twelve times what you would have walked away with if you had not spent time on the culture.

The third thing that's in it for me is net income—cash and profits. The studies suggest that culture-rich companies' income over a ten-year period have increased 756 percent versus 1 percent in the culture deficient enterprises.

The fourth and last what's in it for me, from a culture standpoint, is job growth. Job growth increased 282 percent in culture-rich companies versus 36 percent in the others.

There is so much to be said to encourage the entrepreneur to spend time on the area of building a winning, dynamic culture.

I challenge my entrepreneurial clients with this. Do you have a culture by design or do you have a culture by default? The successful enterprises today—the successful entrepreneurs—are spending time identifying what they want as their culture and then going about making sure that they have the systems and processes in place to make sure it lives, day in and day out, in their enterprise.

WRIGHT

What are some of the top initiatives we can take toward building a winning culture?

DALY

I would say that there are four distinct legs to the chair of a successful culture. One of those legs is recognition systems—what are your systems to ensure regular, ongoing recognition? The challenge that I give to my entrepreneurial audiences is to imagine this scenario:

I am the speaker for the day. All your employees are in a ballroom and I ask for the leadership team to sit in the back. I walk up and say, "I'm excited to be with you today. I have a lot of good things to share; but before I do, let me ask this question: by a show of hands, how many of you are overly recognized?" I think the visual would be a room without a lot of hands going up. I then say to entrepreneurs, "If, when I

asked that question, the entire room stood up and screamed and yelled and shouted with glee, you've got the makings of the first leg of the chair of culture—recognition.” What are your systems to ensure regular, ongoing recognition? You don't leave it to chance. You don't ensure it is taking place only when you happen to be in a good mood. What are your systems to ensure regular, ongoing recognition?

The second leg of the chair would be communication systems. The number one employee complaint is that there isn't enough communication going on in the company. Where is the company going? How is the company doing? We need to be straight with our folks. Employees are indicating that they need to sort through what is spin and what is real. Be sure that there are systems in place to ensure regular ongoing communication—daily, weekly, monthly, quarterly—in different means using a variety of methods. The more we can increase the importance of culture, the better our companies will run.

The third leg of the chair in terms of culture are personal and professional development processes. People today are looking at the world differently than they did ten, twenty, and fifty years ago. And one of the ways they're looking at the world of business is, “Is this company helping me grow personally and professionally? And if it is, then I'm anxious to join it and I'm excited to stay with it; but if it's not, then I'm going to keep my eyes open for another opportunity.” Not only will they switch companies, but they'll switch industries and switch careers. We have an opportunity as entrepreneurs to attract and retain people by implementing processes in our company that help our people personally and professionally.

And the fourth leg of the chair is empowerment processes. Creating an environment in the company where the people working in it feel comfortable making decisions as if they were the owners, instead of relying on books of regulation and getting approvals. Our customers are looking for online employees to be able to make the call. If we were able create freedom for our people, I think the culture would be much more powerful and a lot more fun.

In review, those four legs of the chair were recognition systems, communication systems, personal and professional development processes, and empowerment processes. When I look at those four legs

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of the chair of culture, I say the reason that so many entrepreneurial companies are deficient in the area of a proactive winning culture is because of this sentence: people and companies tend to underperform to their capabilities because we rush to the urgent at the expense of the important. The difficulty with the things that fall under the umbrella called culture is they aren't urgent, just incredibly important.

WRIGHT

You have been clear on the importance of sales to building a successful business, will you give more of a breakdown of the difference between sales management and sales?

DALY

As I mentioned earlier, there is a huge difference. The best way to explain that difference is my definition of sales management. A sales manager's job is *not* to grow sales. A sales manager's job is to grow salespeople in quantity and in quality. If sales managers grow their salespeople, the salespeople will grow their sales.

One of the very first things I do when I go into a company is to learn who's in charge of growing the sales force and what percent of the time they are trying to go out and win business and what percent of the time they are growing their people. The key to robust growth as an entrepreneur is not to do it all yourself; but rather, to grow other people in quantity and quality, and specifically, grow the salespeople in quantity and quality because that is where your business is going to come from.

The role of a salesperson, on the other hand, is to be in front of the customer, the prospect, the client. Going wide, going deep, winning new customers, growing the ones you have, and differentiating you from the competition.

Sales management and sales are entirely different jobs and the company and entrepreneur who gets it right is the one who will go to the winning window.

WRIGHT

Give us your top three areas for sales management excellence.

DALY

Three is not easy, but we'll give it a go. My first one is that minimum standards of performance need to be negotiated with each individual salesperson. Quite frankly, I think that's a mouthful right there. I go into companies and I ask what the minimum standards are and frequently I get one of two responses: either they don't have them or every salesperson has the same minimum standard. There are two key words in the sentence I just gave you. One of those is "individual"—customizing the minimum standards for a salesperson based upon his or her capabilities for a moment in time in their specific territory.

The second key word is "negotiate." You can't effectively dictate a minimum standard to a salesperson because you'll miss the most important ingredient—their buy-in. People will fight for the goals they set. So getting my salespeople involved in agreeing on what their minimum standard is step number one. Along with minimum standards is measuring their performance against those standards, and giving them feedback on how they're doing and what needs to take place going forward to improve. Things that get measured get done and setting minimum standards of performance is the first criteria.

A subset of minimum standards is this: when we look at sales performance we see the bottom quartile of most companies' sales forces are producing less than 6 percent of the sales. So if a company has a sales force where the bottom quartile is producing less than 6 percent (and I might mention here that the top quartile is very often producing more than 60 percent), and they were asking me as a consultant for advice on how to improve the company, I would recommend that they find something else for that bottom quartile to do or suggest that they be let go. Anytime when I have taken that action, I found that performance has gone up and, in fact, the response of the rest of the workforce is, "What took you so long?"

In minimum standards, which is the first of the three acts of a sales manager, the thing I would suggest is four words—hire slowly, fire

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quickly. The longest time in a manager's life is the day between the time when the manager loses faith in someone and the day he or she does something about it.

Let's move on to the second of three things that are critical for sales management and that is recruiting. Recruiting is a process and not an event. It needs to be ongoing and continuous. It is the lifeblood of the success of our organizations and it's all about going after the A players. As an entrepreneur trying to grow your business, each person who is responsible for growing the company's sales force should have a minimum of fifteen targeted top producers they would like to have come on board in the company. And I recommend fifteen whether or not there are fifteen open positions. The caliber of the person we're looking to recruit is the caliber of person that is happy doing what he or she is doing right now and not looking to make a move. However, these people will come into the marketplace, they will make a move, and they will move when "life happens to them." "Life happens" when their company runs into financial difficulty, the culture changes and they're not pleased with it, their compensation plan changes and they're not pleased with it, someone got promoted and becomes the boss who is difficult, or the industry is facing difficulty. Any number of things comes under the bandwidth called "life happens," and when life happens that's when those people tend to move and they tend to move to the person or company that has been courting them along the way. As a result that's why we need a list of, say, fifteen people because we just don't know when life is going to happen to any one individual.

The second piece of recruiting that I would suggest being put as a point of emphasis is to start them right. Starting them right means having an orientation program in writing so that they don't bang around the hallways lost. What we should have is a way of bringing people into our company where they go home after their first day, sit down with their significant other, and say, "I made the best decision I could have ever made. I love this company and this is why, because this is what happened to me today." This is unlike most situations where people start a new job and it's less than what they were hoping for because they were, for the most part, ignored on their first day.

The third item in sales management is coaching, training, and pre-call preparation. It's all about being out in the field with other salespeople doing joint calls, training calls, coaching calls, and role practice. Pre-call preparation has to do with the concept that there is hardly anything that goes on in a sales call that you couldn't anticipate before you get there. As a result, when we have studied the top ten percenters of sales we found that their responses are canned—they say the same thing, the same way, each time they encounter a certain situation. The beauty is that it doesn't sound canned, it sounds as if it's the very first time they've ever said it, but they have figured out what works.

So there is no excuse for a salesperson in the field to not be better prepared for any objection that they're going to encounter because the majority of objections are less than fifteen. There is no reason to not know why customers should do business with your company and how to make it unique from the competition.

So, as sales managers, we could sit down with our salespeople and discover what we need to be prepared for before we go out on a call and then coach, train, and practice with our salespeople. A guideline I recommend is for each salesperson on your team to have a *minimum* of four hours a month one-on-one time in the field.

So in summary on sales management, it was minimum standards of performance, recruiting the top best people, and then coaching and training them to be better at what they do.

WRIGHT

You've given us your top three areas of sales management; how about your top three areas for sales excellence?

DALY

Now I'm going to put on the hat of salesperson. Wearing that hat, I look at the three items. The first item is the game-maker and it's also the game-breaker. Salespeople who are looking to enjoy success have to have goals and the goal-setting process has four key component parts.

First, their goals must be in writing. If your goals are not in writing, they're dreams, and dreams don't often come true; written goals do.

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Being specific about what our goals are is absolutely essential to success as a salesperson.

So often at the beginning of each calendar year many, many people adopt New Year resolutions. Here's one that I hear quite frequently: be healthy in the coming year, join a health club. So what we find is health clubs all over the world are packed in January. By March, and then for the rest of the year, they're back to normal. The reason that New Year resolutions aren't successful, and the reason that so often people's goals are not successful, is they're missing one of the next three items, or maybe all three. So let me give you the next three pieces of success when it comes to goals.

The first is that they need to be in writing. The second is a written plan on how you're going to achieve those goals. It is absolutely, without a doubt not sufficient enough to just write your goals down, but you need the written plan on how you're going to achieve them and that written plan must be activities focused. For salespeople, it's all about activity, activities, activities, activities. Identify the right activities, perform the right activities, and you will enjoy hitting your sales goals. Where you get the specific activities is by watching, interviewing, and discovering what the top producers are doing from an activity standpoint.

About 10 percent of my year I am in front of audiences of the top producers who have been awarded with some type of a trip where, for their sales excellence, they're going off to Hawaii, Cabo San Lucas, or the Caribbean and being recognized and rewarded for delivering the goods and delivering exceptional results.

The frustrating thing about attending those events is that the same people tend to win, year after year. Obviously those people are doing things differently than the rest of the sales team. If I were a salesperson who wasn't one of these top producers, I would want to know what those activities were.

Once the activities are identified and set, and once goals are established, what is necessary then is to not only work on them annually, but they should be broken down by month and then by week. There should be a weekly list of activities that should be done. For

example, there should be a set number of the following activities in order to hit your numbers:

- outbound calls ,
- face-to-face appointments,
- presentations that need to be made,
- tradeshow to participate in,
- networking events to be active in,
- marketing initiatives that we're going to undertake.

In each business, we can discover what those specific activities are that are incumbent upon our being successful and then go about doing those activities and the rest will take care of itself.

The third step in goal setting for effectiveness is a system of measurement. The system of measurement is if we're going to have a weekly list of activities that need to be done, we should keep track of whether we did them or didn't do them and then measure against it accordingly.

The fourth step is a system of accountability. Find four or five key people who will visit with you at least quarterly. Stagger these visits on a monthly basis so that at least once a month someone is sitting down with you and holding you accountable to what you said you would do from a goal-setting and from an activity standpoint.

I have completed eight Ironmans. Along the way I've also completed fifty marathons. Whether we're talking about an Ironman or a marathon, you can't wake up one morning and read the paper and say "A-ha, tomorrow they're doing a marathon in my city. I think I'm going to run in that." You just don't get up one morning and do that, but if you were to break down the three months prior to a marathon into weekly activities and then identify the number of training miles you need to put under your belt on a weekly and then daily basis and get up every morning and do these things, three months later you could actually show up at race day and pull it off.

The same is true of sales. As a salesperson, when you set your annual goals it's no different than setting a goal to do an Ironman or to

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run a marathon. In order to do that, just break the elements down into their components. If you separate it into specific activities, measure whether you're doing the activities, and then have four or five people who are holding our feet to the fire from an accountability standpoint, I think you would achieve your numbers. That's number one in sales.

The second item in sales is proactive pipeline management. I suggest that salespeople maintain two baskets. One basket is a basket of prospects. Prospects are people whom we wish were doing business with us but they never have. Customers are the conduit to the second basket and customers are good to have. They are people who occasionally do business with us. Maybe they buy something from us once every three months. We offer ten products and they buy one every other month. It's good to have customers, but there is a better thing out there and that's my second basket—the client. Clients are people who regularly do ongoing business with you and do a lot of business with you. We represent and sell ten products or services and they regularly, every month, are buying seven or eight of those products or services.

Successful salespeople build a clientele so what we need to have in writing is a list of our prospects. List them in order of priority: who is the number one prospect—a client whose business would make life very good? Who's number two? Who's number three? And you work it on down the list. Next, who's your number one customer? Who's number two? Who's number three? You work on down the list.

Do the same for your prospects: Who's your number one prospect, number two, number three, and on down the list. Once you have those lists, ask yourself when you last touched base with them. How often have you contacted them and what's standing in the way of those prospects becoming either a customer or a client of ours? If salespeople were to sit with someone else holding them accountable at least once a month and inspect the baskets, I guarantee that you will win the day and you will win more sales.

The third area that is critical for the success of a salesperson is to differentiate yourself from the competition. One of the key ingredients in differentiating you from the competition is creating perceived value. What perception of value are you creating in your marketplace that will

cause people to go out of their way and/or pay a premium to do business with you? The key word in that sentence is *perception* and perception becomes critical on first-time sales.

The first time people buy from you they can't buy real value—you can only buy real value on second and subsequent purchases. The first time is a matter of a leap of faith—"I perceive doing business with this salesperson [or company] will render me these benefits." So a professional entrepreneurial salesperson will be well served if he or she takes the time to work on how they're going to create perceived value.

An example of a company that has done incredibly well here in this area of perceived value is Tiffany's and their little blue box. Put that little blue box under a Christmas tree and your significant other, without even opening it up, already has fond feelings about you. That is called perceived value.

Harley Davidson has created perceived value by making an environment where people will literally wait months for their bike to be delivered and they'll pay a premium to go and get that bike; it is all about perceived value.

Steve Jobs at Apple created perceived value in those products such a way that people would line up for blocks in the rain to make a purchase of something that no one had ever seen before and no one had ever used. That is all about perceived value.

Companies are not alone in having perceived value—individual salespeople have perceived value. It's witnessed by the fact that some people will wait to meet a salesperson because they've done business with that person, even though someone else is more readily available to meet with them. So perceived value will start to differentiate you from the competition.

The second part of differentiation is creating a touch system. A proactive touch system is one whereby you use a variety of methods—personal visits, phone calls, e-mails, voice mails, snail mail, or social media. Reach out to your prospects, clients, and customers using a variety of different ways, with a variety of different things. These things could include information about you, your company, and information that could help the people on your list in their business from a specific industry standpoint, in their business from a general

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business standpoint, specific things that are about them that are unique to their person, and things that are just fun. If salespeople were to develop a contact management system where they were regularly touching base with their customers, prospects, and clients in a differentiated way, then I think that would spell success.

In summary, my three things are: goal setting, proactive pipeline management, and then differentiating yourself from the competition.

WRIGHT

How about one word that is all important to the successful entrepreneur and would you tell our readers why?

DALY

My favorite word for entrepreneurs is *leverage*. I got into sales when I was seven years old. I owned the market and charged twice the price that every kid I competed with charged. By the age of twelve, I built my first company and at thirteen I had five employees.

That first company was my initial entrepreneurial venture and it was a newspaper route. I had thirty-two customers initially, but a year later I had 275. Now, 275 customers was a lot of work after school in the dark, cold, wet, and snow. I didn't like the work but I sure liked the money. I needed to figure out how to get back into selling because I was so busy delivering papers that it stunted the growth of my newspaper business. So I found eleven-year-old kids to deliver the papers and that freed me to go out and grow my business. In effect, I was leveraging those folks.

When I think of entrepreneurs, I think of some key initiatives, key words, key areas that an entrepreneur can leverage.

The first is systems and processes, systems and processes, systems and processes, systems and processes. My area of specialty is sales. I go into organizations and I see a tremendous amount of progress made throughout the organization with systems and processes—until I get to the sales area. It looks like the wild, wild West with every individual doing his or her own thing. The largest sales force I ever had responsibility for leading was twenty-six hundred salespeople. I'm infamous for sharing this: there aren't twenty-six hundred best ways to

sell a product, so let's figure out the best way and have everybody do it that way. Systems and processes enable us to leverage our company into success.

When I was in college, I pursued an accounting degree and worked at Arthur Andersen. I became a CPA -- but what I'm going to say would probably result in my being tossed out of the accounting profession (I would not be offended by the way). There is no such thing as the category of expenses in business. What you need realize is the fact that "expenses" are actually investments. Everything we do in our company should be looked upon as whether it is delivering a proper and satisfying return on investment. I have seen so many good ideas shot down because they were "too expensive." When you look back you'll realize that some expenses should have been made (invested in) because there would have been a tremendous return on investment.

I remember suggesting to two of my younger partners years ago that we should have a sales contest where the top salesperson would win a Mercedes 450SL to be used by him or her for the month. My two younger partners thought that the project sounded too expensive. When you came down to it, however, the least payment was a thousand dollars a month, but the additional business we would create as a result of that contest would render \$60,000 a month in profits. So, \$1,000 a month investment for a \$60,000 return? I think I could find enough people to stand in line for that one. When we first announced that we wanted to have a car giveaway as a contest it sounded too expensive, but you have to weigh investments versus expenses.

The third area in terms of leveraging a successful entrepreneur is that we don't have all the answers. I will tell you that other people often have a good many of them. So I would encourage entrepreneurs to either have a one-on-one CEO coach, and/or join a group of CEOs. There are many CEO groups out there in the world who get together on an ongoing basis and work to help each other in their respective businesses. That would be leveraging.

I was in one of those groups for five years when I was building one of my businesses. The amount of money and time it saved me, and the amount of money and sales that increased as a result of ideas that were

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shared by my colleagues in my groups and with my coach was absolute leverage.

Then the fourth is sales management, which goes back to the newspaper boy example—grow your sales force in quantity and quality and they, in turn, will grow your sales.

WRIGHT

We all know there are many uncontrollables in the entrepreneurial journey; any advice in dealing with those?

DALY

The first thing that I recommend is this: you will be a lot less stressed if you focus on that of which you have control rather than be all wigged out about those things that you don't control. Focus precedes success and the entrepreneur who spends time all worked up about things that are outside of their control is a lot of diffused energy and not with any return. I think there are two big principles that are in play in dealing successfully as an entrepreneur with uncontrollables. First is keeping your head about yourself. Fifty percent or more of success is a head case. Fifty percent is getting up in the morning and saying "Despite any of the uncontrollables, I am going to accomplish X, Y, and Z."

I say that there are five key components to keeping our wits about us.

One is self-discipline—doing what we say we're going to do when we say we're going to do it, whether we want to or not.

Second is responsibility, and recognizing that we are responsible for the outcomes we experience.

The third is the law of attraction. I've never met anyone who has been a success in any dimension of life who doesn't believe in the law of attraction, which simply states if you really believe you can be, have, or do something, you will create the circumstances and find the people to allow you to be, have, or do.

The fourth is the law of expectations, which states that our life is a direct result of our expectations. I suggest to entrepreneurs that they regularly raise the bar.

And the last of the five key component parts to keeping our head together is belief and focus. Focus precedes success. That's the first component of dealing with uncontrollables—keeping our wits about us, keeping our head together.

The second component is staying physically fit. There is no doubt whatsoever, that because of my fitness program, I have been enabled to compete successfully in triathlons, Ironmans, and marathons. I'm also able to deal with the day-to-day uncontrollables. By doing a marathon or an Ironman and staying fit, you are able to keep your wits about you, even though you are regularly confronted with uncontrollables. So keeping your head in good shape and keeping your body in good shape goes a long way to dealing with the uncontrollables.

WRIGHT

Is there anything else you would like to add?

DALY

There is one thing I would add to the mix when it comes to entrepreneurialism—fun. I mentioned this when I was talking about the culture area. I'm going to leave it as a standalone item. Every entrepreneur needs to understand that if you're going to walk in the footsteps and create the path of entrepreneurialism, you can't do it unless you view the journey as fun. You've got to enjoy the journey. You've got to understand that regardless of those uncontrollables and those potholes along the way in that journey, you are never, ever, ever to give up on your vision. Make it fun in spite of those uncontrollables and those potholes.

I can give you an example of doing an Ironman where I was on the bike section. I was on a three-loop bike course, doing 112 miles. After the first loop, I was in first place in my age group. Then, in the next two loops, I encountered three flat tires. You can't give up, it's somewhat like running into cash flow problems and competitive problems in my business. I love the journey and I love the challenge. Every other person who didn't have those flats didn't have anything near the race that I did. I went across that finish line after handling three flats. I only had two spare tubes with me but after that second flat, when I encountered

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the third flat, I had to walk two miles to an aid station to make a phone call to a race official to find me. At that third flat I could do nothing else but laugh about it and then say, “Let’s get this job done. Get this flat fixed and move on to the finish line because there are not going to be many people who are going to finish this Ironman and have the story that I’m going to have—three flats and still finished this thing.”

I say enjoy the journey, never give up, and then last is think big. If you think big and act big, you will be big. All of that is bundled up in something that says, “Go out, shake it up, and have some fun.”

WRIGHT

As always, Jack, this has been a great conversation. I could listen to you speak and train all day long.

DALY

I appreciate that. It’s obvious, I think, that what I do is exactly what I’m talking about—I have fun.

WRIGHT

In a culture where the word expert is used a lot when introducing speakers and trainers, I have found that you indeed *are* an expert.

I appreciate all this time with me today to enlighten our readers. I have learned a lot from what you’ve said; I have been taking many notes here.

DALY

Thanks so much.

WRIGHT

Today I have been talking with Jack Daly. Jack is indeed an expert in sales and sales management and has more than twenty-five years of experience. He started with a CPA firm of Arthur Andersen and moved to be the CEO of several national companies. One of his companies was recognized as Entrepreneur of the Year by Ernst & Young and it ranked number ten on the Inc. 500 List of the Fastest Growing Companies.

Jack Daly

Jack, thank you so much for being with us today on *Mastering the Art of Success*.

DALY

It was a good journey.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Jack Daly is an expert in sales and sales management, inspiring audiences to take action in customer loyalty and personal motivation. Jack brings more than twenty-five years of field-proven experience from a starting base with the CPA firm Arthur Andersen to the CEO level of several national companies. He has participated at the senior executive level on six de novo businesses,

two of which he has subsequently sold to the Wall Street firms of Solomon Brothers and First Boston. As the head of sales, Jack has led sales forces numbering in the thousands, operating out of hundreds of offices nationwide.

Among a career of highlights, here are some noteworthy examples:

- In 1985, Jack relocated to California from the East Coast and started a mortgage company with three colleagues. As CEO, Jack lead the company through robust growth in its initial eighteen months to 750 employees, with twenty-two offices nationwide, producing \$350 million per month in mortgages. During its first three years, the company reported profits of \$42 million.
- In 1998, working as a senior partner in a five-year-old, privately held enterprise, Jack helped the company to be recognized as Entrepreneur of the Year by Ernst & Young and ranked number ten on the Inc. 500 list of the fastest growing firms nationwide.

Personal highlights include:

- Jack has been married forty-three years to his high school sweetheart.
- In 2007, Jack completed his first Ironman in the United Kingdom.
- Jack has now completed ten Ironmans in eight countries, on five continents.
- Jack has played golf at more than eighty of the top one hundred golf courses in the United States.
- To date, Jack has completed fifty-three marathons in more than thirty states in the United States.
- Jack has bungee jumped the world's first and world's largest bungee jumps.

Born and raised in Philadelphia, Jack currently resides in San Clemente, California.

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Chapter Eleven

KEYS TO SUCCESS

BY VANESSA ALI

DAVID WRIGHT (WRIGHT)

Today I am talking with Vanessa Ali. Vanessa is a successful entrepreneur and founder of All-U-Need Personnel, a temporary staffing agency located in Washington, DC. She is also the founder of Vanessa Ali Ministries, a non-profit organization dedicated to empowering and transforming the lives of low income, inner-city residents.

Vanessa, welcome to *Mastering the Art of Success*.

I've heard many definitions of the word "success," but how do you define it?

VANESSA ALI (ALI)

Success is many things to many people. People have misunderstood success and prosperity. Some people even think it's wrong to be successful. When you say the word "successful," everybody thinks of luxury cars, large houses, and huge bank accounts. You can have all these possessions and still remain unsuccessful. Merely having possessions does not necessarily mean you are successful. Some people define success in terms of power, position, prestige, and popularity. The external picture of success does not necessarily guarantee internal happiness.

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I remember reading the history of Alexander the Great. He went out with his armies to conquer the nations of the world. Records say that after the last conquest had ended, Alexander wept because there were no more worlds left to conquer. He had achieved all of his goals, but did not find abiding satisfaction and happiness.

The simplest definition of success to me is fulfilling and attaining God's goals for your life. A successful life is one that is happy—becoming what God wants you to become, doing what God wants you to do, and possessing what God wants you to own. As you achieve the goals that God has set for your life, then you become successful. Real success is not a destination, it is a journey. It is a movement. It is joy created by progress. It is the enjoyment of today—the now. Real success is keeping the schedule God has for you and His assignment for your life.

WRIGHT

What is your strategy for success?

ALI

We live in a microwave generation. Everyone wants things to happen fast—in an instant. My strategy for success is doing what God wants me to do and on His timetable. We want immediate financial success, but the price you have to pay for success is dedication, hard work, and a passion for the things you want to see happen. I don't get in a hurry to give my customers good service. I never settle for just "good." Good is never enough. You must strive to be excellent in your skills or business.

Don't just make a customer. Learn the customer, know what your customers like and dislike. Listen to what they have to say. Don't just strive for a single sale, make relationships. Just like a close friend, your relationships with your customers must be nurtured. Don't be afraid to fail.

I didn't have the industry experience, financial resources, or educational background to start my own staffing agency. I had a passion to learn the industry. I had passion for what I was doing. If you

love what you do, you'll never work a day in your life. Keep focused and have fun along the way. Never give up.

WRIGHT

What direction did you take to help you jumpstart your career?

ALI

I was working for a company that lost its contract with a federal government agency. I found myself unhappy with my situation and where I was in my life. My heart was starving for fulfillment and satisfaction. I was bankrupt in my mind. I had to dare to embrace change.

I needed a job, but I was divinely inspired to start my own business that would help others find employment. I asked myself, "What do I enjoy doing? What things do I dread? What brings me the greatest fulfillment?" I knew I enjoyed helping people with their career path, so I decided to start my own staffing agency. The most successful businesses are those that adapt to new policies, produce new products and services, and stay informed.

Growing means change. I had to change my mind from being an employee to becoming an employer. I had to challenge myself to learn the staffing industry. This is how I jumpstarted my career.

WRIGHT

What do you do when times get tough and you are going through a setback?

ALI

The first thing I do when I am going through a tough period in my life is to encourage myself in the Word of God. Some of the best conversations I've ever had have been between the Lord God and me.

The Word of God states that faith comes by hearing. So I hear myself confess positive results over my situation. In other words, I breathe in my own encouragement and it is like oxygen, lifting me up.

Faith in yourself and God is vital to success. My faith is what opens a pathway of hope for me. You can't worry or fret because it only makes

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you feel worse. You have to see yourself overcoming the situation and coming into your victory.

I never look at where I am, I always look at where I want to go. If I'm down, I start looking up. If you want to be successful, you have to start painting pictures in your mind of coming victories. Inhale encouragement and exhale defeat. No matter what is going on in my life, I have the power within me to rise above it and throw off the heaviness.

So when I am tempted to get down in the dumps and stay there, I just stop for a minute and remind myself that I am never alone and there is an amazing well of power within me and available when I use it.

WRIGHT

What successful person do other people tell you that you most resemble?

ALI

Most people who meet me think that I am a celebrity or that they have seen me on television. People who have met me think that I resemble Janet Jackson. The reason I was excited about this book project is because so many people already thought that they have seen me on a cover of a book. I have been approached on several occasions and people asked me about my book, and I had no idea of what they were talking about. I know that I'm destined toward national television. This book is only the start of me becoming a nationally recognized author.

WRIGHT

Do you despair at the prospect of continuing your monotonous nine-to-five job? Do you fear job insecurity and the future?

ALI

I do not despair of job security or the future because my faith is not in this worldly system, but in God. I know that He is in control and that everything I go through is taking me to my divine destiny.

Anyone can succeed in their passion regardless of their background if they have the right mindset and determination to succeed. Many people dislike their everyday jobs. They leave early every morning and return home late at night. Many worry about job security and the future. Most people fail to take the necessary action to make lasting changes to their lives. This change can offer a way to achieve both their personal and career goals.

One example of success is Oprah Winfrey. She came from a humble background and went on to become a very successful businesswoman. She showed good entrepreneurial skills from a young age and went on to build a very successful talk show business. She simply copied what other successful talk show hosts were doing at that time, but she managed to sell her program to the everyday housewife and mother and she enabled the less affluent in society to be able to relate to her program. She has since gone on to become a very successful entrepreneur and even has her own television network, encouraging other individuals to compete for the opportunity to become part of her business. Oprah is a good example who proves that even people from humble beginnings can succeed in life by working hard, not giving up, and believing in themselves and their dream.

WRIGHT

What is a setback and what do you think are the biggest setbacks for people in achieving success?

ALI

A setback is an unexpected reverse, defeat, hindrance, reversal, impediment, delay, or hold-up. In reality, it is not the end. It is a temporary situation that can be turned around. The biggest setback, I believe, is giving up on your dreams. In order to find success, you have to do something that most people never do. You have to persist until the end—no giving up, no backing down. You're in it to win it, or you're not in it at all. That's the attitude you have to take with you. Sure, you're going to get knocked down and yes, obstacles are going to obstruct your path. People will also tell you that your path is impossible. That's fine because you're going to get back up, you're going

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to turn the other cheek, and you're going to climb that mountain anyway. No matter how many times you fail, keep getting back up. Expect to win, refuse to lose, and never give up. That's how you persist, and that's how you achieve success.

WRIGHT

What do you hope the readers of this book learn from your success?

ALI

I hope the readers will believe that whatever they want to achieve is possible. I want them to dream big and believe in themselves and pursue their passions. What is it that makes them get up every day? What do they think about most of the time? What is it that they would do whether they got paid for it or not? This is their passion. They must pursue it with all their heart. Don't let people talk you out of your dreams. Take action every day on achieving your dream. You have to have vision, desire, and action. The minute that you decide to take action, you're on your way to achieving success.

WRIGHT

How do you see yourself?

ALI

I see myself as a positive, popular, productive, and successful businesswoman. My self-image is my inner mirror. If I see myself as confident and successful, then this is who I become. If I have a poor self-image, then I will see myself as not being popular, confident, or attractive. My negative self-image will cause me to feel clumsy, awkward, and inadequate.

One of the most important habits that I practice is feeding my mind with positive pictures and images of myself. One of the most important factors in becoming successful is the words you say to yourself and the words that you believe about yourself. One of my habits is to daily speak to myself in a positive way and declare that what I see in the mirror is the picture of success.

WRIGHT

How do you find meaning and purpose in your life?

ALI

I find meaning and purpose in life through my relationship with my Creator. I know that He wants me to be successful. He plants the motivation in our hearts and gives us the desire to contribute, add value, and connect with others in a meaningful endeavor.

Finding purpose in our life requires seeking God for direction to the questions: Why was I born? What purpose do I serve? It is our responsibility to fan the flame of the gift God has placed inside of us. We must take a leap of faith to pursue our passion. God is constantly leading us.

God did not call us to work the majority of our lives just to survive, earning a paycheck, and exist from weekend to weekend. God created each of us for a specific task and purpose. He has equipped each one of us with the perfect combination of talents, skills, and abilities required to find fulfillment for our lives. This perfect combination God has equipped me with is the key to my fulfillment and professional success. My purpose drives everything I do. It gives me a reason to get out of bed every morning and gives direction to my days. When you find God's calling, then you will find your purpose. Most people long to find meaning and purpose in their work. My purpose is to honor God in all I do and to help others develop their God-given purpose and to grow profitably.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Vanessa Ali is a Human Resources Expert, President of All-U-Need Personnel, and founder of Vanessa Ali Ministries, a non-profit organization that empowers low income, inner-city residents. Vanessa is a dynamic and inspiring speaker, radio personality, and successful entrepreneur. She has more than seventeen years of human resources experience. She has been an entrepreneur and successful business owner since 1995 and possesses a passion and enthusiasm for life. Vanessa provides organizations, associations, and other groups with practical strategies that make the difference in their performance and business success. Vanessa is an author and a well-requested motivational speaker. Vanessa facilitates extensive programs for organizations throughout the United States to empower and inspire people to live their dreams, improve performance, and achieve greatness in life. Vanessa is an excellent communicator. Vanessa has an ability to combine practical content with a dynamic and humorous delivery. Vanessa has been married to Hussein Ali for twenty-nine years. They have four adult children who have all attained university degrees.

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Chapter Twelve

Daydream With Direction – Own Your Legacy

BY RALPH FORD

DAVID WRIGHT (WRIGHT)

Today I'm talking with Ralph M Ford. Many know him as a co-author with Mark Victor Hansen ("Mr. Chicken Soup") of the successful personal growth book series of the eighties *Build A Better You*. Ralph has consulted and presented to thousands of professionals in organizations across America from textbook editing at the American College in Bryn Mawr Pennsylvania to presenting at Rev. Robert Schuller's Crystal Cathedral in Garden Grove, California. His clients have included such venerable organizations as the American Business Women's Association, Fellowship of Christian Athletes, Optimists International, and the National Association of Insurance and Financial Advisors National Convention.

Ralph's background includes his proud service in the United States Marine Corps, a degree in Business from Northwest Missouri, and a Marketing degree from Southwestern University, where his treatise "How To Start a Business" was adopted as a teaching aid for undergraduates. Ralph's experience as a teacher, coach, banker,

consultant, insurance agency owner, business entrepreneur, and author have made him a leading mentor in the area of personal development.

Ralph Ford, welcome to *Mastering the Art of Success*.

RALPH FORD (FORD)

My honor and distinct pleasure to be invited to participate by this august assembly of mega-entrepreneurs. My only regret is that one of my mentors you mentioned, Rev Robert Schuller, is facing such financial adversity in his ministry at the time of this interview. Speaking of adversity, I understand you are recovering from cancer surgery. I can identify with that challenge and am extremely pleased you are getting back on your game.

WRIGHT

Yes, I am, thank you.

In my workshops and seminars, students come from diverse backgrounds and bring their own concept of success. Would you share your definition with us?

FORD

Oliver Wendell Holmes once said, “Many people die with their music still in them.” Too often this is because they are always getting ready to live. Before they know it, time runs out. I believe an individual is a true success if the person has expended all his or her positive energy when he or she dies.

We should have shared our spirituality with as many people as we pass in this life. I think we should share our knowledge in and on any subject that is helpful to others, and guide them in the positive use of that knowledge. When we lead the field financially and receive the pins, plaques, trophies, and trips that go with any industry, others say we are successful. This is just the outward sign to our peers and the public. The real success comes from how we have touched others in a positive way. The success is not the company Presidents’ Club ring you wear to the corporate meeting; but, rather the fact that as a financial

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professional, for example, you put in place enough life insurance to make a difference in peoples' lives.

It always amazes me that when the cornerback, who gets paid millions because he is athletic and can knock down a pass, has thousands of cheering fans saying how great he is and, "Isn't he successful?" Of course he is talented and may be successful financially. However, I believe his real success comes when he uses his position to be a positive role model for young people or fosters a charity. On the other hand, when a life insurance agent can, with a few drops of ink, send children to college, save a home by paying off the mortgage, or establish a lifetime income stream for a widow, he or she knows he or she is successful. Unfortunately, life insurance agents must be limber enough to reach around and pat themselves on the back and say "at a boy" because most people only see the trophy and have no concept of their real success.

Success is not what your peers say or think about what you have accomplished, rather, it is how you feel about what you have accomplished. It is not necessarily in having money but creating it where there was lack. What good is world acclaim if you are filled with self-disdain? I believe success is to the brain as embezzlement is to a bank—it's an inside job. While worldly success is measured by the perception others have of our individual achievements, it is in the contribution we make to the circumstances and betterment of others that gives accreditation to our lives, creates our legacy, and is the real success of our existence.

WRIGHT

So, are you saying it's your philosophy that our legacy is the hallmark of our success?

FORD

Like you, I had my start in banking. I'm sure you worked to leave it better than you found it. I consider that a form of a legacy. Of all the ways people have tried to explain it, I believe Linda Ellis's example of the tombstone is most revealing.

That' a familiar name in the speaking business. Would you expand on that for our audience and our readers?

FORD

Of course. You know Ellis as the very successful author, poet, and speaker. I use the word "tombstone" to remind me of the truth of Linda's words. She wrote a poem titled *The Dash*. In 1996, it was read by an announcer on a nationally syndicated radio program. It was based on the fact that the hyphen between the birth and death year on a tombstone is much more important than the dates themselves. It was an instant hit. Her new book, *Live Your Dash*, magnifies the message of the original poem.

Senator Bob Dole said "the dash" is a reminder to live with all we've got, appreciate the blessings we've been given, and do everything possible to make our time on Earth meaningful." To me, that means to make a positive difference in the lives of others. I believe it is the inherent duty of parents, coaches, teachers, mentors, and entrepreneurs to make sure their child, athlete, student, mentee or employee can do more, have more, and be more than they themselves. This is Legacy—this is success.

WRIGHT

You have a laundry list of achievements in the financial arena with your primary company. For example: You have a million dollar producer trophy from your first year in business. Mark told me you qualified as a President's club member, attained the Chairman's Circle recognition, and were a trophy recipient at the Mutual Fund Leaders Conference at the national meeting of Barclays International in Huntington Beach. In addition, in 1979, you were inducted into the State Farm Life Insurance Hall of Fame. Don't you consider that success?

WRIGHT

Any modicum of acclaim I managed to garner in the secular arena only has real significance if used to implement a program to share and promote growth in others. Success is in seeing all the agents, athletes, students, and families with whom I've worked, accomplish their goals, hopes, and dreams. This has been the main focus of my career; whether from the aspect of a financial professional, author, speaker, or consultant. So I guess you could say after a few decades of influencing the lives of others, I am almost an "overnight success."

WRIGHT

I now know why Mark calls you "Mr. State Farm." The mystery is how did you find yourself in the speaking and consulting arena?

Ford

That was purely by accident. It was the summer of 1980 and the company was having a sales and marketing meeting in Hutchinson, Kansas. One of the features was a panel discussion of four agents. We had the urban agent, rural agent, older established agent, and a new agent. The topic was to be an analysis of the business climate titled "Outlook for the '80s." Each agent was to give an outline, lasting about five minutes, on how they would implement marketing, customer service, and operations in the new decade, and then get into the discussion. Unfortunately for them, but fortunately for me, they had no notes and no track to run on and the panel was to last another hour. The moderator called a quick stretch break and asked me about my twenty pages of notes and wanted to know if I could carry the meeting. I agreed reluctantly but evidently he was quite pleased with the result.

We were seated at the table of Cal Roebuck, the Regional Vice President for State Farm Insurance. The evening's keynote speaker turned to me and said, "I heard great things about you and I want to talk to you about a challenge and an opportunity." That was the first time I met Mark Victor Hansen, who kept me up half the night. He said he had a friend named Cavett Robert and before I knew it, he had me attending one of the first National Speakers Association Meetings in California. The rest, as they say, is history.

Cavett is an icon in the speaking business and was actually considered the founder of the National Speakers Association as well, wasn't he?

FORD

That and much, much more. Most people don't know he reinvented himself many times over. His career started as a teacher, then a gas line installer. After going back for a law degree, he became an attorney and judge. He was once the assistant District Attorney to Thomas Dewey. After moving to Arizona for his health, he became the spokesman for Edison Power Company and his love of speaking was ignited.

The NSA was created to establish high ethical standards for the professional. He was a loving man who was more interested in others' success than his own. He was insistent that there were more opportunities than people to take advantage of them, and we could all learn from each other. He promoted his "OPE" (Other People's Experience), as a method to broaden our knowledge base to impact our clients in a positive way. The highest award a professional speaker can achieve is a gold statue of him, similar to an Academy Award, called, of course, The Cavett.

WRIGHT

How has he as a mentor influenced your life experience?

FORD

If you had no other take away from your exposure to Cavett, you would know this principle: "It's not how much of the pie you get; but, rather how big can we make the pie!" He once told me that clients are more persuaded by the depth of our conviction than the height of our knowledge and that we should sell from the heart. So in answer to your question, I'd say he molded my philosophy to be afraid to die until I contributed all I could to those who would seek my council and benefit from any exposure to my experiences, and the OPE I could bring to the table.

~~W~~RIGHT

It seems apparent that Insurance and Financial Services have been the genesis for all the other endeavors you feel passionate about. Is there anyone like Mr. Robert who had a major affect on you in that profession?

FORD

The name Ben Feldman jumps right to the front of the list. He graced the Earth for about eighty years and was the most prolific Life Insurance salesman in the history of the industry. He shared his enthusiasm and techniques with all who would listen.

He was once asked how he sold so much life insurance and he replied “I do not sell life insurance. I sell money. I sell dollars for pennies apiece. My dollars cost three cents per dollar per year.” He would challenge the new agents by giving them a dollar with the quote, “Dream big dreams,” and his signature on the back. This practical advice is certainly transferable to many professions, but particularly to life insurance. Among many things, I learned to look for the problem and understand the cost of doing something versus doing nothing about it, match solutions to the problem and, above all, keep the solutions simple.

If we limit the list to most enormous, bigger than life influencers, I should, out of total respect, mention W. Clement Stone. His legacy looms large in the industry. Not satisfied with being at the pinnacle of the Life Insurance industry and while on his way to his one hundredth birthday, he took time to write some of the best “sales bibles” ever penned. They include *Success Systems that Never Fail*, *Believe and Achieve: W. Clement Stone’s 17 Success Principles* and *Success Through Positive Mental Attitude* (with Napoleon Hill). One of the best things he taught me was that to be more productive, you must limit the time for your efforts and if a client cannot make a commitment in the designated time, you must move on to someone who will act on your advice. This should be the mantra of all those in a sales endeavor.

In any undertaking, there seems to be a natural order of things. You have visited this concept with your premise of “the four seasons of life.” Will you tell our readers about this?

FORD

It’s just seems to be common sense that we first should be students—students of our surroundings with observations of those around us and, in the case of achievement in a certain discipline, a sponge for the information offered by those who have done it.

We move from being a student to being a player. We try to emulate those who we admire and have a proven track record. Next we become the “expert,” not just because we are from more than fifty miles away, but because we have mastered the challenge on a consistent basis.

Last, but certainly not least, we enter the phase of the mentor. Yes, we still do our job. Yet we realize that when it’s time to carve out more mental space, we consult with those who carry on the good work and become a positive extension of ourselves and an integral part of our legacy.

WRIGHT

This sounds to me as if you are convinced that being more successful, more competent, more engaged, and more profitable is something that can be learned. Am I wrong?

FORD

No, David, you are not mistaken. Your workshops only add credence to that premise. When we are first the student, we demonstrate the basic example of unconscious incompetency—we don’t know what to do, but we don’t know that we don’t know. A baby sucking on its shoestrings is a good example.

When we get into the game and become a player, we move into the realm of a conscious incompetent. We know we don’t know, but we know we want to. This would be relative to a child holding the strings and attempting to tie its shoes. We’re learning and we are inquisitive.

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WE want a good sales call. We want to make a good presentation. We just need practice, which brings us to the next level.

Now we feel like we have it all going on. Let's see now if, as the old shoe-tying lesson goes, "I can take the rabbit around the tree and send him into the hole," and so on. We can get those shoes tied! We can make that call with a word track or, as the new e-training calls it, "electronic game plan" or "laptop coach." We have just graduated to the level of a conscious competent. When we concentrate and do self-talk or use a good script, we are in business. Of course, we want to reach that point when we can drive down the street, talk on the cell phone, wave at our friends, and tie our shoes at the same time. We have become that unconscious competent that seems to have the amassed knowledge of the world at our fingertips, and a problem solving solution for any scenario. Now we are in the mentor phase of our life, and if we have not yet been privileged to share and cause that rising water to lift all boats, now is the time. Let the music out.

WRIGHT

In your seminar, "Be the Architect of Your Future," you invite the audience to synchronize with successfulness. Why does this have so much effect on one's road to success?

FORD

David, I suppose you're familiar with the old Victor Borge story about when he encountered a couple looking for Carnegie Hall where he was going to perform. When the man asked him how to get to Carnegie Hall, Borge was said to reply, "Practice, practice, practice." My contention is that practice only makes practice. As a former coach, I have seen many athletes working on a particular move over and over, but it was not done correctly. So they were merely reinforcing a technique that would not bring the desired result.

We must then, by necessity, align ourselves with those who are the unconscious competent—the mentors, the gurus, the experts, and those who can put us in the shade in a direct competition. You cannot become a better tennis player if you always play with someone you can

beat. It may give you a short-lived euphoria but you will not improve where it counts.

You're off to a fantastic start if you are reading the great motivational, spiritual, and professional training books that are ubiquitously available. You find them in hardback, soft cover, on the Web, in your Kindle, and on audio book. There's no excuse not to get the information. It is in this way you can synchronize with greatness across the country and across the ages.

Some suggestions would be *Think and Grow rich* by Napoleon Hill, *Dailey Power Thoughts* by Dr. Robert Schuller, *Success Through Positive Mental Attitude* by W. Clement Stone, *Dig Your Well Before Your Thirsty* by Harvey McKay (a great study on building a referral system and centers of influence), *Reinvention: How to Make the Rest of Your Life the Best of Your Life* by Mr. Sales himself, Brian Tracy, and to create subtle changes in self, read a little Emerson.

WRIGHT

I know many people in all walks of life who read constantly but don't seem to be growing as a person or a professional.

FORD

That's due to the fact that acquiring the amassed knowledge of all the best writers one can assemble is not enough. Many "also-rans" believed that the knowledge itself was the power. This could not be further from the truth.

The real power comes with the ability to assimilate and direct that knowledge to a great purpose to the benefit of all concerned. I can think of nothing more detrimental to the financial health of a client than to try to apply a money formula that didn't fit his or her circumstances or did not take into account long-range economic goals. All too often, I have seen the dismal, devastating, retirement-derailing results of what should have been a comprehensive family security plan being offered by someone who was more concerned with doing *some* thing, instead of doing the *best* thing.

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We all know the Little League coach, who lives vicariously through his child and the children of others, who doesn't understand proper conditioning and kids get hurt. Or he played the game as a young person but was never a student of the game, therefore his team always loses. Now we have sad children, upset parents, and a humiliated coach.

Emerson says, "Our Knowledge is the amassed thought and experience of innumerable minds." Look to Google, Apple, Microsoft and Intel. These are companies whose expertise in their field was the product of thousands of bits of research done over time, with thousands of minds, and put to a practical purpose by a few entrepreneurs. Some of our greatest achievements (think NASA and the space program) have come by adding water to the clay of others.

Dr. Schuller says in his short readings lesson, "Winning is Beginning," that he had learned one important thing about living. He said we can do anything we think we can, but we can't do anything alone. "I am able to do all things through Him that strengthens me"—Philippians 4:13. As Charlie "Tremendous" Jones would say, "All great readers aren't leaders, but all great leaders are readers."

If you are a slow reader or too on-the-go to be a reader, get an instant tutor. Throw a CD in while you are driving or download it to your iPod and take it to the gym or while you're doing your morning neighborhood walk. Technology allows us to invite the top achievers into our homes, our offices, our car, and on our train ride to work. This is all done on our timetable, where we want, when we want, and how we want. You can bring Dr. Wayne Dyer with his information on how to *Pull Your Own Strings*, Earl Nightingale telling you how you can *Lead The Field*, or the great Brian Tracy lifting your sights with his book on *Maximum Achievement* in your home for a long weekend—without the worry of where everyone is going to sleep.

WRIGHT

I know many people on a growth path who feel they have so many unanswered questions that they must make personal contact with their heroes. Do you find this is worthwhile?

FORD

People learn in a myriad of ways. Sometimes, if you are a Doubting Thomas you must “see the man to get the plan” and go to seminars. If it is someone you want to adopt as a mentor, go to the head of the class. That is, sit up front, approach him or her on break time, and if the person is providing material, buy it all and hang back to express your interest in the individual’s discipline. Then start the e-mail Q & A. There are thousands of seminars held every year on a kaleidoscope of topics and professions. Everything from *achievement* to *zeal*. Attending seminars with *big hitters* can bring you instant vision with precision.

I once attended a sales caravan in Kansas City where Art Linkletter, Paul Harvey, and the late, great, Red Motley were speaking. Red said, “Nothing happens until someone sells something to somebody.” You must sell yourself to your mentors and show them how sincere you are about pushing the envelope on your learning curve.

It took my personal contact with Paul Harvey to help me realize that it takes much less time to say what’s wrong with America than what’s right with America. It is still the land of opportunity. I say synchronize with successful mentors and, as Paul said, “You can out-do you, if you really want to.” No matter how often you attend seminars, if it’s your passion, they get your juices flowing and your adrenalin going.

You must learn from the leaders. Samuel Clemens once said, “I’d rather have an old second-hand diamond than none at all.” With tongue in cheek, Mark Hansen said, “If you steal as many ideas as I do, they call it research.” The point is well taken. We must never falter in our educational triathlon.

Cavett Robert advised me to be a human engineer and practice the art or science, depending how difficult it is for you, of “*humaneering*.” Be a student of human nature. Be a good listener. Imitate all that is best in each pro you know. Imitate until you can emulate and emulate until you can surpass. Remember, the great leaders want you to excel and fly higher than they themselves have ever flown. To absolutely max your learning curve, start mentoring those who have not reached your level of expertise, even if it’s not all that much. We always teach that which we need to learn the most. Every time I write a lesson plan and

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teach a semester of insurance marketing, I'm sure I get more out of it than my students.

WRIGHT

I'm sorry I missed your PBS public service television show a few years ago.

FORD

Admittedly, it was an exhilarating yet humbling experience to have a one-hour program on national distribution. It actually began when a University of Missouri professor heard me speak at NSA. She presented an outline of my talk on Life Planning and wrote the grant request for the University. They received \$450,000 to hire a production crew, record the program, and distribute it to all thirteen Federal Reserve districts for airing on PBS for six weeks.

WRIGHT

Would you share some of the concepts from that program with us?

FORD

According to Emerson, "The Universe is composed of nature and the soul . . . all things betray the same calculated profusion." I took this to mean that we live in a No-Limit universe, that the only limitation is that which we find between our own ears. So this was the opener for the program. The idea being that the audience would start work on themselves with a clean canvass. In Matthew 25:29 we read, "For the man who uses well what he is given shall be given more, and shall have abundance." Whatever we are ready for is ready for us.

A useful definition of wealth, for example, is an abundance of things desired. If you want wealth think about it, think what it means to you. Is it money, is it health, is it loving relationships? Whatever your painting on that blank canvass is there waiting. Auto-suggestion is the cell phone connection between conscious thought and the subconscious mind. If money is what you want and you know there is an unlimited supply, then see yourself with it. Paint it into your canvass. Reiterate

your desire for it, communicate with your subconscious about it, and you will create the money habits that have been proven over time by others to be effective.

However, money can't be your God, but it could be for your good. The good of money is in the spending, then someone else has your good and passes it to yet another. There is no lack of money, only lack of habits that create it. If wealth is good and you also want abundant health, then it's there for the asking. Think about it and you will install the proper habits to guarantee it comes to you.

Because we have self-love, we have self worth and we have the confidence to turn our problems into personal triumphs in the unlimited universe of our mind. Whether we believe we can, or believe we can't create the wealth factor we want, we are correct. Remember that the subconscious cannot take a joke. What we think about comes about. Sometime after he was a reporter for the Kansas City Star, Walt Disney coined the word "Imagineering." He said that first we must visualize what we see as the end result. This must be our daydream and our night dream. Next we must verbalize the result as though it has already manifested itself. Lastly, we get to actualize it. Thus, we have imagineered it in the no limit space of our mind and it becomes a reality.

WRIGHT

Is there a special attitude involved in the approach to the blank canvass to make that painting appear?

FORD

David, I'm convinced after much research on the subject that one must concentrate on the positive aspects of any situation. NMA (negative mental attitude) versus PMA (positive mental attitude) is really no contest. It takes way more muscles to frown than it does to smile. After all, a smile is an inflation fighter. The cost to smile never goes up, and the value of a smile never goes down. We get the action or results we reinforce.

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No one probably demonstrates that better than Dr. Michael Le Beuf of the University of Louisiana at New Orleans. He tells a story about a Cajun man who was going fishing on the bayou in his pirogue. It seems he rowed out to a tree stump, tied off, wetted his line, and ate his sandwich. About that time, there was a knock on the side of the boat. When he looked down there was a snake with a frog in its mouth. Feeling sorry for the frog, he grabbed the snake, set the frog free, and was feeling proud of himself. Now he started to feel sorry for the snake whose lunch he had set free. So he looked around for a crumb of his sandwich. Finding none, he gave the snake a drink of the Old Crow he had in his back pocket. Now the frog was happy, the Cajun was happy, and the snake was really happy. He went back to his fishing and in a short while he heard another knock on the side of the boat. He looked down; and there was that snake with 2 frogs in its mouth! A silly story you may say, but the behavioral principle is identical in the human experience.

When we listen to a news broadcast, without realizing it we are being bombarded by negative energy. The weather forecaster says 30 percent chance of storms instead of 70 percent chance of fair weather. Why not say 70 percent chance that the sun will shine all day? The news story is the 20 percent of students using drugs, not the 80 percent red-blooded all-American students, athletes, and volunteers.

In the definition of the word “news” we find such modifiers as “strange, unusual, and unfamiliar.” I say, if news is negative and news is the unusual and it can all be said in thirty minutes, minus twelve minutes of commercials, then most everything else must be okay. Being positive is not an attainment, but a lifestyle. It is a byproduct of healthy self-image.

If we see ourselves as deserving a continuing bounty of good things, then everything affects us in a positive manner. All our actions are in tune with our self-image. A man who considers himself a victim of circumstances is actually the creator of his circumstances. A pioneer in self-image psychology, Prescott Lecky, tells us that ideas that are inconsistent with our ego system are rejected.

Use your imagination to place yourself where you want to be and give yourself what you want to have. Meditate and daydream with

direction. Use that PC in your head to expand your parameters and redefine and refurbish the arena of possibilities.

I knew someone who did just that, Dr. Joseph Panzarella of Long Island, New York. He ran a rehabilitation center for victims of accidents and crippling diseases. He taught at New York University School of Medicine and visited twenty patients a day. He regarded himself as a good doctor with a positive philosophy of life to share. His outlook reflected his “in-look.” In 1977, he won the Presidential Award as the Handicapped American of the Year. Yet at sixty-one, Dr. Panzarella had spent more than thirty-five years as a victim of multiple sclerosis. He had to be shaved, dressed, fed, and wheeled by someone else to teach and to consult with his patients. What we call a major handicap, he considered an inconvenience. He saw hope in everything. Hope is very positive stuff.

We have to gather our positive emotions and give them a job. Make them work for you. There are enough interruptions in the world trying to work against you. To be successful in any area of life, we must gather a team of desire, faith, love, enthusiasm, and hope and match it with a powerful Super Bowl—our own mind. We parlay that combination into a great idea, that idea into an action, that action into a habit, and that habit into our destiny. Positive ideas become winning habits.

WRIGHT

You seem to place a great deal of credit for all success on this *positive attitude*. I have seen people in stores or the workplace who have an expression on their face that seems to indicate they have been weaned on a pickle. Is this positive attitude something one just has or doesn't have?

FORD

Oh no! This is an exercise in self-talk and must be reinforced regularly. Art Linkletter told himself, “Things turn out best for people who make the best of the way things turn out.” Vincent Van Gogh expressed it this way: “If you hear a voice within you say ‘you cannot paint’ then by all means paint, and that voice will be silenced.” Earl

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Nightingale said, “We live up to our expectations.” Brian Tracy admonishes us to “never say anything about yourself you don’t want to come true.” Norman Vincent Peale had this advice: “When you get up in the morning, you have two choices: either to be happy or to be unhappy. Just chose to be happy.” Finally, Emerson summed it up well when he said, “A man is what he thinks about all day.”

In each case, these great dispensers of OPE (other peoples’ experience) say in a different way that we can and must be positive for true growth to occur. Positive and negative emotions can’t occupy your mind at the same time. In my study of Motivational Psychology at Southwestern, I learned you can’t even dream dreams of success if you continually and consistently turn people off with your negative emotions.

Success comes from a position of positive strength and power. It’s even imperative that you don’t go to sleep right after watching the late news. You know the subconscious cannot take a joke and it will work on your last conscious thoughts—that horrific car accident on the freeway or the convenience store robbery or the child accidentally killed in a drive-by shooting. All night long you will be restless and awaken in the morning tired and expecting to have a bad day. Mark Hansen assembled a great little book he called *Future Diary*. In it, you get to write down all the great, grand, and glorious things you will be doing in your life. Of course, it has a positive ending because you write the story instead of waiting for a stranger to write your biography.

WRIGHT

Many of my mentors like Paul Meyer and Bill Gove had such great focus and direction in their lives. These are great people. Do you think there is something in their genes or is it possible for any of us to harness our dreams just as successfully as they have demonstrated?

FORD

I believe we can achieve that level of focus if we would crystallize our goal commitment and use the rifle approach instead of a shot gun. I believe our goals are problems turned inside out. Without problems,

there is no progress, without progress there is no “art of success.” Problems exist to be focused upon, addressed, and conquered, so we can build positive strength. We then get more focus and attain success to tackle bigger problems.

Max Gunther wrote an entertaining book on the exciting subject of money. In *The Very Very Rich and How They Got That Way*, he tells us there is a common thread that winds its way through the lives of the super successful. People like Howard Hughes, Steve Jobs, Conrad Hilton, Steve Wynn, and Donald Trump had focus when promoting their ideas. Many of their ideas began as dreams on which they focused and wrote down. They dreamed of the problems and when they focused on them they became opportunities. A common definition of these promoters is “one who takes the preliminary steps or initiates an action.” A real promoter focuses, promotes, perpetuates, and relishes consummate realization of a problem solved (think goal attained).

If your mind were on trial for having a goal, would there be enough real evidence to convict? I submit that if you don’t have focus and foresight to write it down, the case would be a mistrial. It makes no difference how you write it down—either on paper or in stone—as long as you focus on the end result; the writing makes it real.

I believe Brian Tracy was talking about crystallizing the commitment and intensifying the focus when he taught us that successful men and women are big dreamers who imagine what their future can be, ideal in every respect. Then they work every day, focused on their vision, goal, and purpose.

My friend Cavett Robert knew we needed focus and commitment to meet the challenge to be better than we were. He warned us that any person who selects a goal in life that can be fully achieved has already defined his own limitations. I took this to mean that success is the journey and not the destination. I bought into that idea, sold myself on the solution, and cashed in on writing it down.

WRIGHT

Many people have identified their goals and have written them down. I have found, however, that the follow-through leaves something

to be desired. What can they do to keep from paving their road to failure with good intentions?

FORD

To me that means they must elevate their PQ. I have previously defined that as the Persistency Quotient. As IQ is the measurement of intelligence, it is considered by many as the leading indicator of future success. PQ probably comes much closer to being an accurate yardstick. It synthesizes down to that unyielding continuation of effort, to the fulfillment of one's goal. I measure persistency in "did-its" similar to degrees centigrade. At one hundred degrees, water expands sixteen hundred times and becomes steam. Now we have the power to catapult F-18s from carrier decks, power the grid and invest in electric vehicles. From one to ninety-nine "did-its" you show no apparent results but on the one-hundredth "did-it" you get it!

When instructing a sales or marketing class, I call that the "close." When sales managers, supervisors, or trainers ask, "How many times do I ask the customer to buy?" the correct reply should be, "One more close than they have nos."

Whenever I feel like the goal will never be attained, I think about my friend James Jeffrey and his son, Neal. Neal had a congenital speech impediment which caused him to stutter uncontrollably. When he was in the fifth grade he stuttered so badly that he could not even say grace. Yet with a laborious effort, he would say, "I will be a great quarterback." James thought. "No chance." Even though Neal had all the talent, it broke his dad's heart to think about the rejection he would face.

Neal had faith and that PQ of which I preach. By seventh grade, he was throwing the ball eighty or a hundred times a day. (In the winter he threw at a mattress hung on the basement wall). He then led Shawnee Mission West High School in some of their greatest seasons and went on to Baylor University. The University's team hadn't won a championship since 1924.

All this time he was taking speech therapy, learning that if he sang the words came rolling out. Can you see this big strapping man, standing in the huddle singing the cadence? He made his coach the happiest man on the planet in 1974. That was the year he led the

Baylor Bears to the Southwest Conference Championship and the Cotton Bowl. Later that year at the Fellowship of Christian Athletes Conference annual dinner, I watched from a table with Tom Landry as Neal was named the Athlete of the Year. Now, finally, through the vehicle of PQ, his acceptance speech was eloquent. Neal was later drafted by the San Diego Chargers and played three years in the NFL before graduating from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary and moving on to his higher goal, which was to be a youth minister.

Whatever shape your Persistency Quotient takes on—throw more footballs, make more prospecting calls, do more network building, paint more pictures, or attend more workshops—your success is the next attempt. Thoreau said, “I know no more encouraging fact than the unquestionable ability of man to elevate his life by conscious endeavor.”

WRIGHT

Just what is your next endeavor?

FORD

I’m currently working on a children’s book on persistence that every adult should read.

WRIGHT

It’s been said by many who have had the benefit of your seminars, that you have a way of bringing down supposedly complex concepts to easy-to-understand principles. Before we bring this interview to its conclusion, would you share your precept review that you are now using in your one-on-one consulting sessions?

FORD

From the “for what it’s worth department,” these are the thoughts I leave with them:

- Like attracts like.
- The Universe has no limit.

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- Your “I-cans” are always full.
- If you fail to plan then you plan to fail.
- Even water over time wears the stone.
- As you sow, so shall you reap.
- Beginning is half the trip.

David, I’m convinced that Albert Einstein had it right when he said, “Try not to become a man of success. Rather become a man of value.”

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Ralph Ford escaped from the Banking business forty-six years ago to start from scratch his Multi-Line Insurance Agency. His office now bills out over \$3 million a year in casualty premium and has produced more than \$300 million in life benefits. He has specialized in Estate and Retirement Planning for the last twenty years. He has qualified for Chairman's Circle and is a member of State Farm Presidents Club, which recognizes the Top 50 Life Premium Agents of seventeen thousand nationwide. He has been inducted into the State Farm Insurance Hall of Fame.

Ralph is a Charter Member of NAIFA and currently holds the office of Vice President of the Missouri Association of Insurance and Financial Advisors. He is a regular recipient of the National Quality Award and National Sales Achievement Award. Ralph was co-editor of the American College Textbooks used to teach financial professionals: *Retirement Planning*, *Planning for Seniors*, and *Foundations of Estate Planning*. He co-authored with Mark Victor Hansen and others, the self-help book series, *Build a Better You*.

During his twenty-five years in professional speaking and consulting, he has given positive direction to millions, both from the podium and through the medium of television. Ralph's Public Broadcasting Station television program, *Life Planning*, ran on PBS around the country for eighteen months as a public service message.

He has a degree in Business Administration from Northwest Missouri, a Marketing Degree from Southwestern University, and an Experience degree from the United States Marine Corps and Life. However, Ralph says he owes his success to the support of his brilliant

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wife, Judith Ann (prefers Judy), his friendship with Mark Victor

Hansen, the mentors he discovered through the National Speakers Association, membership in the National Association of Insurance and Financial Advisors, State Farm past president Edward Rust Sr. and agency manager Bob Mathison. He is currently doing personal consulting to industry professionals—both new and established—to help them clarify and reach their goals. Look for another book from Ralph in the not so distant future.

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Chapter Thirteen

the life you deserve

BY MARK VICTOR HANSEN

DAVID WRIGHT (WRIGHT)

Today we're talking to Mark Victor Hansen. Some call him America's Ambassador of Possibility. In the area of human potential, no one is better known or well respected. For over 26 years, Mark Victor Hansen has been helping people from all walks of life reshape their personal vision of what is possible. You may know Mark as the "Chicken Soup for the Soul Guy." If so, you will be surprised at the many successes that have propelled him into the world spotlight. Mark, welcome to *Mastering the Art of Success*.

MARK VICTOR HANSEN (HANSEN)

My great pleasure. I couldn't be happier to be here.

WRIGHT

Mark I've heard about as many different definitions of success as people I've asked. Since it seems to mean different things to different people, what does success mean to you?

HANSEN

Success means realizing your dreams, making a difference and leaving a legacy.

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WRIGHT

In that order?

HANSEN

Heard that before? I just made it up today just for you. I thought I'd come up with a brand new definition. I thought I ought to meditate, cogitate and ruminate on this and come up with something new. I tried to say how you could do it comprehensively so it would cover all success. I mean, realizing your dreams in marriage or at work or spiritually—it fits. If you can make a difference in each one of those dimensions, with your family, your kids, your business, your life or your charity that means you leave a legacy, and that's really good. Our poster boy is Paul Newman. Here's a guy who everybody loved his dressing. He created Newman's Own and now he's giving \$125,000,000 to charities like Hole in the Wall Gang and Make a Difference Day, which is held by *USA Today*, and Make a Wish. I'm saying that every one of us can do that. It's not just Paul Newman. You can do it in your own inimitable way and I'll gladly talk to that if you want.

WRIGHT

You know, back when I was younger my first, middle and last thought was always of myself. As I get older, that legacy thing is really becoming more and more important to me. I have three children and it really is important.

HANSEN

I've got two kids and a great wife. I'm going to deal a seminar called, *Residual Philanthropy*, which means you work once for the philanthropy, but you get paid back a thousand times. I can give you the Paul Newman example. In the book business you've got Dave Barry—who I think is the funniest guy writing today—and Steven King and Amy Kent, and they got together and did the Rock Bottoms Remainder Group. They charge \$100 a ticket. They say they're no good, but everybody will come out because they're famous. One day a month

they all perform in their band. If they came to Knoxville, TN., you'd probably pay \$100 for you and your wife to go see them.

WRIGHT

Oh yeah.

HANSEN

And I would too. They raise \$1,000,000 a year to end illiteracy. The naysayers say, "Well, you want to end illiteracy so that more people will buy your books." No, these guys are fed. The deal is you get your future days paid for so that you can really leave a legacy that serves everyone. I believe that most baby boomers are saying, "How do we get everyone educated? How do we get healthcare for everyone? How do we really take care of our fellow human beings?" That is the high level of success. That is the high benchmark; it seems to me, on a go-forward basis.

WRIGHT

You know, because of the phenomenal success of the *Chicken Soup for the Soul* series, many people think you're an overnight success.

HANSEN

I am.

WRIGHT

Well, I know you've been teaching, training and helping people for over 26 years. How did you get started, and what is the focus of your career?

HANSEN

Well the focus keeps modifying. Today the focus is on leaving a legacy of creating 7,000 professional speakers. We have a population on the planet of about 7 billion right now. What I want to create is 7,000 speakers because I believe leaders are born at seminars. Have you ever been at somebody's seminar that just caught you on fire inside and

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turned you on your ear? All of a sudden you were saying, “I can do this and take a new vector.” Has that ever happened to you?

WRIGHT

The man’s name is Paul Meyer.

HANSEN

Paul and I are good friends. As you know he did *Chicken Soup for the Grandparent’s Soul* with us. Paul and I have been at tens of meetings around the country together and do a lot of business. I think Paul is just a genius. So did his stuff do it for you or did he?

WRIGHT

Actually, he did a lot of things for me personally. He took me under wing when I was a kid. He took me from a million-and-a-half company to about 40 million in five years. It was basically his advice.

HANSEN

Can I hear what that advice was?

WRIGHT

He put me on a goal-setting system. Every time he would write a leadership program—he had a company called SMI in Waco, Texas—I would go down twice a year for the executive seminars. In addition to that, I was on a list that every time something new came out they didn’t have to ask, they just mailed it and I paid for it.

HANSEN

That’s the way I think every person who wants to grow should be with my stuff, your stuff, and Paul’s stuff. What I’m saying is that if we had 7,000 superstar speakers at my level or above, you could literally get to 7 billion people. We could get the people out of the ghettos, we could get to the people who aren’t fed and don’t have a glass of water or a bite of food—which is just ridiculous because we have a planet that can do plenty. We just have vested political interests and other kinds of

interests that are keeping people enslaved. What I want to do is end that mental tyranny once they change their picture and idea—like you 40x your idea by getting under the tutelage of our friend Paul. I'm saying everybody can do that. If you do multiple people, like if you get under Paul and Mark and Dave and whoever else it is, if you get in front of 100 of them, one of them will just take you. If each one of them multiplied you just once that would be great, but some of them are going to multiply you 10 and 100 times. Yesterday I took an intensive training with one of my peers, just he and I. One idea he gave me yesterday is going to be worth \$50 million. He showed me how to do something I didn't know I knew how to do. He said, "Look, here are the seminars you are doing, this is how big they can become if you'll just do one more thing." I went, "Dang, that's so easy. I can do this."

WRIGHT

Time Magazine calls *Chicken Soup for the Soul* the publishing phenomenon of the decade with over 80 million books sold in North America alone. You've now had years to reflect on the success of the book. Have you come to any conclusion as to why it was so successful?

HANSEN

Yes. What we teach at our Mega Book Marketing University, which we hold once a year at our Mega Speaking University, is that to be successful with my book or the book that you are writing here, you've got to have instantaneous behavioral change. That happens in books like, *Who Moved My Cheese?* We wrote *Chicken Soup for the Teenage Soul*. Our publisher says, "I've got teens and they buy cd's, concert tickets and clothes. You blew it this time, pal." We sold 19 million teenage books. If you and I are 15 and we go, "What's happenin' man," or whatever we say to each other, we don't go deep, but if you will read out loud a story to me like, *I Wish I Had a Brother Like*, what it does is open up your heart and soul and then we have a heart to heart, soul to soul, core essence to core essence experience with one another. It's no longer "Hey, man that was a cool movie." Now it's "I'm a real human being and my brother isn't treating me quite like that," or sister or father or whatever. Does that make sense? So because of instantaneous

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behavioral change, and because we did it bite sized, while we were rejected by 33 publishers, our agent fired us, and we had 133 more turn downs from Jack and I going to the Book Expo ourselves. We decided to suck it in and tough it out and now we've got 72 different copies of *Chicken Soup* out in one decade, which nobody else has done that many best sellers in a row, ever. The *Guinness Book of World Records* says we're the world's best selling non-fiction authors right now.

WRIGHT

Well I'm one of those clod dads who should have written you a thank you note. I've got a 14-year-old daughter. About a year ago I went into her bedroom, which I'm only allowed in if I beat three times and announce myself first. But she was sitting on the bed crying and I looked and she had *Chicken Soup for the Teenage Soul* in her hands. I started questioning her about it and she was so moved by those stories. If it didn't change her life it certainly did change a lot of her actions. So I really appreciate you guys writing that one.

HANSEN

Well, let me do three things with you. Number one is I'd ask you to buy the whole series. There are five of them now. Make sure she gets the teen journal because we ask the questions. We tested it against 6 million teenagers—thanks to our partner Nickelodeon—and we found the questions that kids want. The reason we did it was that Jack and I had kids calling us and saying, "Mark I've got a gun in my oven and I'm going to kill myself if I don't get to talk to Mark Victor Hansen or Dr. Jack Canfield." I went, "Holy smoly." Neither of us are psychiatrists. But these books open their hearts and they figure the guys who could write a book that has such depth of feeling and emotion like what you saw in your daughter—that, by the way, happens to everybody because we have found the classic stories. The story has to cause a heartfelt tear. That's why we did the book, of course. A prisoner wrote us, "Dear Mark and Jack, I've been in prison five years contemplating killing the guy who put me here. Then my sister sent me your book and I read it six times. When I get out in five more years, I no longer want to kill the guy who put me here."

Don't you wish you were the judge who was going to get dusted and say, "I want that book given to every prisoner." It's not because it's Mark and Jack, it's because we found a zone that no one's ever touched before. I'm saying that everybody has a book in them. Everybody has a story. What our books do, and I may be over answering your question, but it goes along the zone of what your book's doing, and that is you've got to read somebody else's story to sharpen yours. Dreams sharpen dreams, stories sharpen stories, and we're in the first time in history where the game is changing so fast that you've got to keep reinventing yourself. Isn't that what you've had to do lately?

WRIGHT

Absolutely.

HANSEN

You didn't have to reinvent the business once and blow it to \$40 million. You invented the business once and then you keep reinventing and reinventing.

WRIGHT

You know, a few weeks ago my family and I were kicking back in Florida watching the ocean. I was channel surfing and caught you on a religious television program. It was a large audience and you were teaching principles of faith. How important has your faith been to your business, as well as your personal life? Do you think faith and success are connected in any way?

HANSEN

One of my favorite lines in the Bible is Hebrews: 11. What it says is faith is substance. "*Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see.*" You saw that \$40 million before it came to pass, correct?

WRIGHT

Right.

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HANSEN

I saw that for Jack and I—and I’m the visionary of the two of us and Jack agrees with that, but he’s a genius. I’m so lucky to have three genius partners, if you count my wife. If you get one friend that gets to exercise his or her genius with you it makes life better, but I’ve had three and I’m sure I’m not done because I’m going to live to be 126 with options for renewal. So, faith has been critical to me. When I was bankrupt and upside down luckily I went to see Dr. Norman Vincent Peelle at church, and two guys said, “We’re going to take you up to Harlem to see this guy Reverend Ike.” We went to him and every Sunday from then on I went to two churches. Now my wife goes to one church down here and I go to a giant church up in LA with 9,000 per service, and I’m on the board of directors at Agape.

WRIGHT

Wow.

HANSEN

The fact is that I’m poured full of, not religion, but spiritual understanding because I want to have spiritual discernment. I believe we’re all spiritual beings in a spiritual universe. If you will acknowledge that you will get to have a profound, blessed spiritual experience. Could I go a step further?

WRIGHT

Absolutely.

HANSEN

The book I’d ask you to read that fits that little model I shared, which is instantaneous behavioral change. It is *Prayer of Jabez*. Have you read my friend Bruce Wilkinson’s book?

WRIGHT

Absolutely. Yes.

HANSEN

Well, I do that every morning when I wake up and before I go to sleep because the anecdote he shares is that if you don't ask for your blessings, you don't get them. Duh! I've got a 15-year-old at home who goes, "Duh, Dad." Does yours do that?

WRIGHT

Absolutely.

HANSEN

If I am blessed, not only do I have a blessing, but I can show you where the blessings are so that you can get blessings too.

WRIGHT

Tell us about your new book *The One Minute Millionaire: The Enlightened Way to Wealth*. Do you really think that it is possible to inspire the creation of one million new millionaires in 10 years?

HANSEN

Unequivocally, yes. The way we're doing it is that the book is a rocking best seller. Every week we've been in the *Wall Street Journal*. It came out October 17 and we went to number one, and stayed there for a long time. We're trying to make it number one again for this Christmas. Then, we'll get a sequel behind it called *The Last Minute Millionaire: When You Need Money and You Needed it Yesterday*. Notice the *One Minute Millionaire's* subtitle is, *The Enlightened Way to Wealth* because we want rich people to come out of enlightenment, which means they come from abundance and create massive value for other people and leave a legacy. That's what it looks like to us. Our fastest millionaires so far are Karen Nelson Bell and her husband Duncan. They have gone from 0 to \$1,000,000 in four months and nine days. They both got fired from good jobs, said that they were going to read this book of Mark and Bob's and we're going to go to their seminar. They went, "who, Las Vegas." We teach four ways to do it. You can do a Real Estate Money Mountain, a Business Money Mountain, an

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Investment Money Mountain or Internet. We don't care which way you do. There are some basic principles. One is you've got to live below your means and another is that you've got to save 10 percent of your income. Well, if you just save one dollar a day, over a lifetime that's \$25,000. With 10 percent interest its \$2,750,000 and at 20 percent interest do you know how much it turns into? One billion dollars.

WRIGHT

Wow.

HANSEN

Now, can you get your kids to start saving like I've got mine saving? The answer is yes. We're saying that it is a fundamental principle that everybody has got to make themselves wealthy. You've got to become self-reliant to action.

WRIGHT

You know, when you appear on such shows as *Oprah*, *CNN*, and *The Today Show*, you assure people that, and I'm quoting you now, "You can easily create the life you deserve." Can you tell us what you mean by that?

HANSEN

Well, first of all I don't think anyone should live in poverty housing anymore. Next year, October of 2004, I am one of the spokespeople for Habitat for Humanity and we're going to end poverty housing in America. Our vision is to create 30,000 new homes. We ask everybody in the audience to go to our website and ask everybody to contribute. What's amazing is that we've got the little soccer leagues that are contributing, the little football leagues and the carpenters and the plumbers are contributing, no one ever asked them. Yet you and I grew up in a country that believes in barn raisings. Remember when 100 years ago? If a barn was going up and you were my neighbor, I'd ask you to come up and we'd whip this barn up. It was my barn, but I didn't pay you, we had a big party and everybody was happy? Well that's the same

thing that Habitat is doing, except it's saying, "Hey look, the lowest element of society hasn't got a chance unless we give them a house. We're only short 30,000 houses. I'm saying I'm going to get 1,000,000 people to come out in October and play. No one has ever done that. It's not going to be fun, it's going to be exquisitely fun and we're going to solve the housing problem in America. Once you've got a prototype then we can go solve the housing problem in the rest of the world. Can we bring capitalism to the world? Yes. Can we bring enlightenment to the world and not eradicate illiterates, but eradicate illiteracy which we have a big problem with in America. I already told you that Dave Barry and the boys and girl are trying to do that, and I'm supportive of that. I'm saying that the big question that you are asking and that everybody reading this has to get is can you get your future days paid off? Meaning that once you're financially self-sufficient so you can go do something that's really important. Once you do something that's really important—what we're teaching in the book is that you've got to have multiple streams of incomes so that you never have to worry because everything changes and pulsates. My teacher when I was in grad school said, "There are no straight lines there is only wave propagation." So you've got to have multiple sources of residual income, meaning I worked once but I've been paid almost 100 million times on *Chicken Soup*. That's the right way to get paid.

WRIGHT

Mark, you've been called one of the Top 10 Motivational Speakers. In the year 2000, the Horatio Alger Association of Distinguished Americans honored you with the prestigious Horatio Alger Award. Do you think success is more attainable for those who are entrepreneurs?

HANSEN

That's a great question. Entrepreneur means a lot of different things. It means somebody that takes self-initiative to action, so the answer is yes. It means somebody that doesn't believe in entitlement, so the answer is yes. It means somebody that knows there is always a way to do it, so the answer is yes.

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WRIGHT

You're known as a passionate philanthropist and humanitarian working tirelessly for organizations that you've mentioned such as Habitat for Humanity, American Red Cross, March of Dimes and ChildHelp USA. How does helping others who cannot help themselves figure into the success equation?

HANSEN

Well, the spiritual line is that to him or her much is given much is required. I wrote a whole book called *The Miracle of Tithing*. Anyone who goes to my website and wants it I'll sign it to them. But what we teach in it is different than anyone else. I think that God gave me the commission to teach people to give. How do you get people to give? I think there are four things to get people to give. Everyone knows about Treasures, but I think there are three that precede it. The first is that you've got to Tithe your thinking. If you have 10 great ideas are you willing to give one of them to a church or charity?

WRIGHT

I've never thought about that.

HANSEN

No one thinks about it. I'm going to tell you if you go to my website you can download it free. It's *Idea Tithing*. The other three are thinking, which is more important than the other three, I think, your Time, your Talent, and then your Treasures. I'm asking you to help with Habitat come next October, and you'll do it and bring your kids and it'll be a great time, but the thinking is where the deal is because the thinking is the ultimate leverage.

So the point is that when I was with the Red Cross they ran out of blood four years ago. Ms. Dole, Elizabeth Dole, says, "Look Mark, there's no blood. We need 300,000 pints." I said, "We'll have it in a week." She had to get the AMA to write it off and okay it because I went to the chiropractors, who I do a lot of work with and they've given me three honorary doctorates, and I did a fax blast to 60,000 doctors and

said, “I want you to bring in 100 patients, adjust them for free, call 800-Give-Life (that’s the Red Cross) and bring out a little blood mobile, and ask them for a pint of blood.” I said, “If you ask they’ll give it and have them bring in a friend, you’ll have a new patient.” Everybody’s practice went up because people love people who give. I think that you and I and everyone were coded in our DNA and RNA to give. Now if you don’t give—I’m writing a book with Art Linkletter now called *How to Make the Rest of Your Life the Best of Your Life*—and the biggest of the four big keys are that you’ve got to have a cause bigger than you are. In other words, if you retire to nothing you die inside. But if you start giving to a cause bigger than yourself, and I’m saying that idea tithing is a cause everyone is willing to give to because ideas don’t cost anything, but that’s all that anything is. This interview that we’re doing was your idea before you called me.

WRIGHT

It has been written that Mark Victor Hansen is an enthusiastic crusader of what’s possible and is driven to make the world a better place. Of course, we’ve found that out in what you’ve said here today, but could you give our readers and me some practical advice how to join you in making the world a better place?

HANSEN

I’m desperately trying to do that. What I want them to do is come to my live seminar, shake my hand, let me sign a book to them and give them a directional cue, whether it’s Habitat or that I give blood every quarter. Now I’ve got my 16-year-old in high school signed up to give blood. She said, “Do you really do this every 56 days dad?” I said, “Yes. If I’m in the country I do.” You know, if you go into China or some other countries you can’t give blood until six months later. She said, “Do you want me to do that?” I said, “You’re not doing it for me. The highest form of giving is anonymous and you’re going to save the lives of people who will never know you.” The bottom line is one of my idea tithes is that I hope you give your body parts away after you are done because someone needs your eyes, your heart and your skin. That’s my belief.

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There is another one that I'm fighting for. In America we don't do cadaver blood. You can write it on your license to take your cadaver blood; otherwise they throw it down the sewer. I don't know anything about you, but knowing the philosophy that you have, when you're dead you don't need it, right?

WRIGHT

That's right. Well, what a great conversation. I want you to know how much I appreciate you taking this much time with me. I know how many activities you go through in a day and I want to personally thank you for being a part of this book, *Mastering the Art of Success*.

HANSEN

I look forward to it. Thank you, David.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



For over 26 years, Mark Victor Hansen has focused solely on helping people in all walks of life reshape their personal vision of what's possible for themselves. From Bangladesh to Birmingham, Mark's keynote messages of possibility, opportunity, and action have helped create startling and powerful change in more than 2 million people in 38 countries.

Mark Victor Hansen

www.MarkVictorHansen.com



Chapter Fourteen

Success at Work

BY YVONNE BRYANT JOHNSON

DAVID WRIGHT (WRIGHT)

Today I'm talking with Yvonne Bryant Johnson. Ms. Johnson is President and CEO of Bryant and Associates, an executive coaching, consulting, and training company focused on helping organizations and individuals achieve their business and personal development goals. She is well-known for being results-driven, a great networker, and a person who inspires and cares for others. Since her company's inception in 1998, Ms. Johnson has helped executives, individuals, and organizations improve performance in the areas of sales, leadership, and customer service. Named one of Atlanta's Top 100 Black Women of Influence, Ms. Johnson served as board chair of the Georgia Center for Child Advocacy and board member of the Atlanta Business League and the Youth Ensemble of Atlanta. She is a graduate of Leadership America and Leadership Atlanta. She holds a Bachelor of Arts from Spelman College and an MBA from Emory University. She has also studied at The Johns Hopkins University, the University of London, and the University of Ghana.

Ms. Johnson, welcome to *Mastering the Art of Success*.

YVONNE BRYANT JOHNSON (JOHNSON)

Thank you so much for having me here today.

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WRIGHT

So how do you define success as a business owner?

JOHNSON

As a business owner, I define success as being in a state of joy and happiness. It means feeling good. Success is related to how I think, and it is having a heart of gratitude, being available for myself and others, and being able to love and trust.

Life has taught me that success is intimately tied to being grateful, being able to forgive, and being able to learn lessons from very tough moments. It may or may not mean the achievement of a goal. I have come to enjoy working on a goal and growing in the process. Being able to make a difference in the lives of my customers (helping them achieve their goals), my community (helping non-profits achieve their mission), and my family (being available, loving, and trusting) are important ingredients to being successful. As a business owner, there is usually greater flexibility, which means I can take time to take care of myself—that is success.

As I think about success, I am reminded of lessons learned from my family and from AT&T where I spent more than twenty years as a leader in sales and customer service. I cherish the discipline, hard work, and love of learning that came from my family. I now also cherish some of the tough customers who were very demanding. From them I learned to listen attentively to my current customers and to always stay in communication with them. From them I learned communication is a key to success. From work and family I learned what it takes to be successful.

WRIGHT

So what does success look like for your customers?

JOHNSON

Many of my customers have told me that success is achieving their goals, building world-class organizations, developing high-performance employees who love their jobs, and creating an experience for their

customers that is exceptional. In addition, success is having a great salary with benefits and providing leadership in an organization that appreciates and values them.

A couple of additional definitions of success come from my customers: success is being in a culture that supports people, innovation, and big thinking. It is meeting revenue and performance goals. Success is a world-class customer organization providing world-class customer service.

WRIGHT

So, what does world-class customer service mean to you?

JOHNSON

World-class customer service is service provided to customers that is consistently outstanding. It is a level of service that makes you feel absolutely thrilled to do business with the organization. World-class organizations provide an experience for their customers that is simply the best of the best—it is better than the best, it is beyond excellent, it is outstanding!

You know world-class service: it is going to Walt Disney World Resort and being purely delighted in being there. It's walking into a Ritz-Carlton Hotel and enjoying each and every step of your experience from getting out of your car to checking into your room to enjoying a meal. It is the beauty of a Four Seasons Hotel. It's the service offered at Lexus and the employees who help you at Publix. It's the culture at Chick-fil-A and their continuous drive to improve the customer experience. World-class organizations know what their customers want. They exceed those expectations and they also treat their employees with the same kind of respect with which they treat their customers.

WRIGHT

So what areas should leaders focus on as they move their companies to become world-class organizations?

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JOHNSON

Focus on transforming the culture to one that supports exceptional customer service, empowerment, and training of employees. Focus on quality and exceptional leadership throughout the organization. Companies desiring world-class status must have employees at all levels in agreement through word and action that they are willing to do what it takes to become the best of the best. What is required of all is a mind- set change. The status quo is out and innovation, quality, process, speed, continuous improvement, measurement, benchmarking, customer excellence, and empowered employees become the rule and not the exception.

WRIGHT

What are some of the biggest obstacles to companies becoming world-class?

JOHNSON

Some of the biggest obstacles to companies becoming world-class are:

- A company culture that resists change and innovation,
- Failure to listen to customers and learn what their expectations are, and
- Lack of focus on quality and greatness.

WRIGHT

So what is the role of culture in building a world-class organization?

JOHNSON

The most difficult challenge is changing the culture, something that evolves over a period of time. Culture can be difficult to change and can prove to be very frustrating to leaders and managers who want to move swiftly to building a world-class organization. You can feel the culture of an organization the moment you walk in the door. The culture is the way people act, think, feel. It is the way people are valued or not valued,

it is the beliefs, the way people treat customers, and the way they treat each other. It is a way of being that has developed over time. The type of culture needed to feed the soul of world-class organizations is one where management listens to its people and its customers. It must be a culture that supports quality, innovation, technology, high performance, and empowered employees.

WRIGHT

How important are the people to building and keeping a world-class organization?

JOHNSON

To build and maintain a world-class organization, companies must train, develop, coach, and retain excellent workers. An organization that strives to achieve a world-class status must understand that people matter and that they are a key component to the success or failure of an organization. What is a Nordstrom without well-trained salespeople? What is a Medtronic, the global leader in medical technology, without employees who are well-trained and passionate about the company's mission, products, and services? Plain and simple, people matter. In fact, I agree with the saying that people are a company's greatest asset. They will play a critical role in building and sustaining world-class standards.

WRIGHT

How does your role as coach assist in building a world-class organization?

JOHNSON

Sir John Whitmore, in his book, *Coaching for Performance*, defines coaching as “unlocking a person's potential to maximize their own performance. It is helping them to learn rather than teaching them.” In addition, coaching can make a difference in the lives of the executive, personally and professionally. As an executive coach, I work with

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executives and employees to clarify their goals, stay focused and on task.

In coaching, I ask the questions and then I ask the next best question. These questions center on the manager's or leader's desired goals for the organization or for an employee. We work together to develop SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, and Timed) plans that will help them lead change. At each coaching session, my customers know we are looking for results and a breakthrough. I help them stay focused on results and achievement. Coaching can help those wanting to build a world-class organization and to help clarify goals and to focus on what's most important.

In building a world-class organization, coaching must take place throughout the workforce by managers. Managerial coaching can help release everyone's potential and I encourage leaders and managers to coach their teams. The coach in the workplace can help create a world-class team. The manager and supervisor as coach can help bring out the best in people and can help create world-class teams. The coach is able to unleash the greatness in people's performance.

For example, in call centers, supervisors must spend more time coaching front-line managers. Move their administrative duties to another position and allow supervisors to use their talents, innovation, and experience in coaching front-line employees. The front-line employees are the ones touching the customer daily. They represent the face of the company and they need to have the skills, coaching, feedback, and nurturing needed to empower them to represent the company.

Coaching is an art that must be mastered by those building high performance teams.

WRIGHT

How can you help leaders in organizations succeed?

JOHNSON

I help leaders in organizations succeed by helping them clarify, focus on, and achieve their goals. There is a great feeling of accomplishment

and achievement by just gaining a good understanding of what you want to accomplish. I provide coaching that focuses on leadership and goals for organizations and leaders. Through coaching sessions, my customers and I have identified training possibilities for their teams. In addition, I have helped my customers succeed by supporting the expansion and building of their networks.

I recommend *The Power of Focus* by Jack Canfield, Mark Victor Hansen, and Les Hewitt. This book is exceptional in its discussion of gaining clarity around goals, building powerful relationships, taking on successful habits, and priority focus. My customers and I love the teachings in this book. There are powerful lessons in *The Power of Focus* that can help you achieve personal and professional success.

WRIGHT

So how important is training and learning to these organizations and the individuals?

JOHNSON

Training and learning can make a significant difference in the lives of individuals and organizations. To have a successful organization, training has to take place; it provides employees with the competencies needed to do their jobs. A learning organization keeps the culture changing and growing in a positive direction. It fosters growth and innovation; it inspires the workforce, and creates a customer-focused culture. In fact, to have continuous improvement take place in an organization, training and learning have to be integral parts of the plan. And a learning organization is a critical component of sustaining a competitive edge. As Stephen Covey, author of *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*, says, we must “sharpen the saw.” One aspect of sharpening the saw is taking time for renewal and learning. Successful people and organizations have training and learning as integral parts of their strategic plan.

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WRIGHT

So how did you begin your journey of helping organizations work to build world-class organizations and teams that can compete in the world today?

JOHNSON

During my twenty-one years at AT&T, I had the privilege of serving and selling to some remarkable companies in every imaginable industry. Whether in my role as sales manager, branch manager of sales, or customer care, I was an active observer and supporter of some of corporate America's most competitive and market-driven companies.

One such company was The Ritz-Carlton Hotels. As a vendor, I attended their quality training led by the CEO. Everyone left the training with an understanding of why these “ladies and gentlemen serving ladies and gentlemen” were the best of the best. It came as no surprise when they received the Baldrige Award. To work with the company during that period helped me understand what a world-class distinction could mean for an organization and its people. There were measurements, and empowerment of employees, and benchmarking, and training, and a beautiful environment.

As I witnessed The Ritz-Carlton and my other customers that pushed for the highest of standards, I noticed that beauty matters. Think of the companies you consider world-class and you will have to agree the facilities must look beautiful. These organizations are also customer-focused—the customer is everything. They listen to the voice of the customer as well as the voice of the employee. They seem driven to provide the best in products and services imaginable. And you will find that world-class businesspeople are continuously improving every aspect of their business.

When I left AT&T and started my own company, I wanted to continue working with and supporting customers who were in pursuit of world-class status. I loved this world of continuous improvement and being customer-focused. I knew that working with the best would force me to work on my own game. My drive was to continue working with customers and individuals who wanted to succeed, who wanted to

meet their goals. And that is what I am doing, helping organizations and individuals achieve success.

WRIGHT

So what are some of the tools you use to help your clients?

JOHNSON

My favorite tool is *Everything DiSC Workplace*, a self-assessment instrument by Inscape Publishing that helps people to understand themselves and others better. It is a great resource to use in the workplace to strengthen relationships. People are able to understand and appreciate the styles of the people with whom they work. It is to be used by employees regardless of their roles or titles.

I am going to make some general statements about the DiSC styles with the understanding that no one style is better than the other in the workplace. And effective leaders use all styles as they manage and work with people.

The D (Dominance) style tends to be direct, results-oriented, and firm; the I (Influence) is outgoing, optimistic, and lively; S (Steadiness) is accommodating, patient, tactful; and, C (Conscientiousness) is analytical, reserved, systematic.

We use understanding of behavioral styles to help us in relating to others. It may mean taking detailed information to a “C” manager or allowing more time to talk with the “I” manager. These are generalizations and it is extremely useful to understand the differences in people as we work to improve communication and lessen conflict in the workplace.

WRIGHT

I’ve been taking the DiSC every year since 1963.

JOHNSON

And what are you?

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WRIGHT

Well I'm off the charts on D and I.

JOHNSON

Well, join the club.

WRIGHT

So what has been the response of your clients to your coaching, training, and consulting with them?

JOHNSON

I receive very positive feedback from my clients and I am grateful they continue to renew my contracts, refer me to others, and treat me as a trusted advisor. These are the examples of compliments I enjoy. They call and ask me, "Yvonne, what do you think about this?" and "Who could I use for this?" They know I am going to listen to them and answer them truthfully. They have told me they like my integrity and open, thoughtful, honest, and yet critical perspectives.

Another common theme that has emerged from my customers is that my experience pays off. Whether it's consulting, coaching, or training, my years in corporate America matter. I have coached successful teams and individuals in sales and customer service. During my work with customers, I call on lessons learned from the past and from my present interactions with the workforce.

My customers also like my innovative approach to solving problems. Many are excited and curious about the LEGO Serious Play Methodology used in team building. As a certified LEGO Serious Play Facilitator, I have had the opportunity to work with companies seeking innovative solutions to bringing more women into technology, improving team morale, communicating mission, vision, and values, and building new solutions to enhance brand loyalty. It is a play-based, problem-solving, and communication technique for helping groups be more effective. It invites participants to look at reality in a new and objective way.

In a project called WomenBuild, a brainchild of Microsoft developer evangelist Asli Bilgin, we used the LEGO Serious Play methodology with results that allowed a team of one hundred Microsoft women and men to begin crafting solutions to address industry-wide barriers to attracting and retaining a diverse talent pool. We also facilitated a Microsoft and Yahoo sponsored WomenBuild event with a group of eighty participants at a Grace Hopper Conference (the largest technical conference for women in computing) to gain additional insight into bringing more women into computing. (*WomenBuild was designed to help foster creativity, team-building, and community among a global network of software developers, especially developers who are women or from under-represented groups.*)

WRIGHT

So how do you give back in the community?

JOHNSON

Giving back or volunteerism is a way of life for me. It is a habit I developed growing up in my family, attending Spelman College, and working for AT&T. I am involved with a number of organizations, primarily those that focus on advocacy for children and business owners. I give back to these organizations through leadership, development, advocacy, and support. The Georgia Center for Child Advocacy is one of those organizations where I served as Chair of the Board of Directors. We serve children who have been sexually and severely physically abused (www.georgiacenterforchildadvocacy.org). Another organization is the Youth Ensemble of Atlanta, a professional theatrical company whose primary programming goal is to develop youth with the skills and desire to succeed at whatever they do in life. On the business side, I served on the board of the Atlanta Business League, an information clearinghouse and referral source for minority-owned businesses.

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WRIGHT

Why do you think charitable giving is important to being successful in business?

JOHNSON

Doing for others helps us stop worrying about our own business problems. We must give back, whether it's with our finances, our time, and/or our expertise. If you look at successful people in this country, you know they give back to those in need. The examples are out there: Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Bill Gates, Warren Buffet, Oprah Winfrey, and the millions of others whose names we know and whose names go unknown. They are the heroes/heroines that provide brilliant examples of what successful business people do. It is important to give back to our communities. This is a way of showing gratitude for all the gifts that have been given to us. Small acts can make a gigantic difference to charitable organizations, to a child, to someone in need, to finding a cure for a disease. Giving in some way is something we can all do! I have learned that from charitable giving grows gratitude, humility, integrity, sincerity, wisdom, and generosity. These are all traits that are benefits to any business owner.

WRIGHT

Well, what a great conversation.

JOHNSON

I've enjoyed talking with you and I'm glad to find that you are in the land of D and I with me, with the DiSC. We've gotten along quite nicely.

WRIGHT

That's right. It's been a pleasure talking with you, too. I've learned a lot here today and I'm certain our readers will also. I appreciate the time you've given me and for answering all these questions.

JOHNSON

I appreciate you so much. Thank you for this opportunity.

WRIGHT

Today I have been talking with Yvonne Bryant Johnson, President and Chief Executive Officer of Bryant and Associates, an executive coaching and consulting and training company. She has helped individuals, executives, and organizations improve performance in the area of sales, leadership, and customer service. I don't know about you, but I think she knows what she's talking about.

Yvonne, thank you so much for being with us today on *Mastering the Art of Success*.

JOHNSON

Thank you for having me.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Yvonne Bryant Johnson is an executive coach, consultant, and trainer with an accomplished record of helping organizations and individuals meet their business and personal goals. Yvonne is known for her inspirational and results-driven training and coaching, for bringing innovative and engaging ideas to the table for the benefit of her clients, and for her many achievements as a leading advocate for women and children.

As President and CEO of Bryant & Associates, LLC, an Atlanta based executive coaching, consulting, and training company, she founded in 1998, Yvonne focuses on helping executives, individuals, and organizations achieve their goals in sales, managerial coaching, leadership development, and customer service by skillfully utilizing business expertise gained from more than twenty-five years of corporate experience. (Learn more by visiting her Web site: www.bryantandassociates.com.)

Throughout her career, Yvonne has worked with leading corporate, nonprofits, foundations, and universities, including the Southern Company, Home Depot, Georgia Pacific, Chick-fil-A, Medtronic, Federal Home Loan Bank of Atlanta, The Ritz-Carlton Hotels, AGL Resources,

American InterContinental University, Partnership Against Domestic Violence, Meharry Medical College, Georgia Microenterprise Network (GMEN), Susan G. Komen for the Cure, Conference of National Black Churches (CNBC), Meals on Wheels, Global Diversity Summit in Commercial Real Estate, The Ryan Cameron Foundation, United Way of Metropolitan Atlanta, Interra International, Atlanta Technical College, City of Atlanta, Fulton County Government, Spelman College, and the Arthritis Foundation.

Yvonne currently serves on the faculty of the Georgia Center for Nonprofits' learning solution organization, Nonprofit University, teaching courses in leadership and team building, and as an Executive Coach in the Executive MBA Program at Coles College of Business, Kennesaw State University. In addition, she has served as a Mentor with the Goizueta Business School at Emory University and as Director of the Educational Opportunity Program at George Washington University.

She has provided facilitation services for the historic National Conclave on HIV/AIDS Policy for Black Clergy, the First Annual Consultation for the Conference of National Black Churches (CNBC), and the inaugural Atlanta Business League's Congress on the State of Black Business in Metro Atlanta with more than four hundred speakers, facilitators, and delegates.

Yvonne is a dedicated leader in the nonprofit community, with a long history of advocating for children and women. She served as the co-board chair of the Georgia Center for Child Advocacy, an organization honored as Nonprofit of the Year by the Georgia Minority Business Awards. She has also served as board chair of the Youth Ensemble of Atlanta (YEA), Partnership Against Domestic Violence (PADV), and SCELL (a Sickle Cell organization in Grady Health System), and she is a past board member of the Atlanta Business League.

Her innovative spirit and commitment to excellence was recognized with a Microsoft Diversity Champion Team Award for her work with Women Build, an initiative to attract and prepare women for leadership roles in software and technology using the LEGO Serious Play Method. As Branch Manager for AT&T's Atlanta Customer Care Organization and Global Sales team, Yvonne ranked in the company's top 2 percent of customer care and sales employees, earning her an elite membership in AT&T's Leading Legends and Leaders Council.

Yvonne earned her MBA from Emory University, and attended Johns Hopkins University and the Universities of London and Ghana. She graduated with honors from Spelman College and was among the first recipients of the Alumnae Achievement Award in Business. Committed to continuing education, Yvonne has completed Kennesaw

State University's Managerial Coaching Certificate Program, and both Leadership Atlanta and Leadership America programs.

Yvonne is a member of the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM), High Tech Ministries, National Black MBA, Georgia Coaches Federation, and Women in Insurance and Finance.

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Chapter Fifteen

Defining Life's Moments

BY IRENE MARTINA

DAVID WRIGHT (WRIGHT)

Today I'm speaking with Irene Martina. At the age of nine, Irene was taught to use her intuitive gifts to read cards. Although she enjoyed reading for family and friends, she never thought it had the potential to become a career. As Irene pursued her business career(s) she knew that her intuition was becoming more powerful because she was applying it to her daily life. Finally, in 1995, exhausted and burnt out from the corporate world, she knew she had to return to her God-given talents where her passion and destiny really were meant to be.

Since that time she has written six books, created products, published poetry, and has acquired clients from all over the world, many of whom have been with her for many years. One of her books, *Dream Talk*, has gained her the reputation of being a "Dream Expert." One of Irene's most fervent passions is to help people understand the power of dreams and their meanings.

Having a Bachelor of Commerce degree and three years of Industrial Accounting has made Irene very comfortable doing readings for professional people. Her clients include the medical profession, engineers, lawyers, bankers, and corporate executives. Before opening her new career in spiritual and intuitive consulting, Irene spent years in hotel and business management, hotel and sales consulting, and adult training. After being very active in Toastmasters for many years, she

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earned the position of being President of her club. Irene has won several sales awards and is a past member of CAPS, The Canadian Association of Professional Speakers.

Irene, welcome to *Mastering the Art of Success*.

Irene, you have a rather unique career. How did it come about for you?

IRENE MARTINA (MARTINA)

When I was four years old, my grandfather was babysitting my younger sister and me. He was fixing shingles on his roof when his very mean rooster decided I was his target that day while I was playing in the sandbox. I screamed when the rooster jumped on my head and started to peck at my eyes. My screaming must have triggered my grandfather to react and help me but suddenly, I heard a crash and my sister crying. I got the rooster off me and saw my grandfather lying on the ground, apparently his neck was broken. I then saw an apparition of an aboriginal native who told me to go get help. I am sure no one believed my story about the spirit. He returned when I was nine years old. I learned that his name was Red Cloud and he became my spiritual guide and friend into my adult years.

It was when I was nine that my destiny as a psychic reader really began. At that time, I started having strange and intuitive dreams and this was when Red Cloud came back into my life. At some point shortly after the dreams, two Spanish ladies showed up; they were called “the aunts.” They had heard about the dreams and decided to test my intuitive skills. They were looking for someone to whom they could pass on the tradition of reading their cards. At that time I did not realize what an honor was being bestowed upon me. I passed their tests and then they adamantly told me that my gift was meant to be used only with a regular playing deck of cards and to never use the Tarot decks. They, along with my mother, who was also very “gifted,” taught me many intuition-developing exercises that have served me well in my readings over the years.

At that same time they also told me that I was the last reader of the cards and five hundred years of readers would end with me. They told me that I would not raise any children, which has turned out to be true,

and that I could possibly see the end of the world in my lifetime. It was all quite overwhelming, but being just a child, I did not think much about it until several years later. Never in my wildest dreams did I think that I would become a medium and clairvoyant. Wanting to fit in with the rest of the world, I tried my hand at working in the corporate sector.

WRIGHT

What made you take the leap from a corporate background into a world of spiritual teaching?

MARTINA

One night, at a small house party, the hostess asked us all a very serious question, “If you knew you were going to die soon, would you have any regrets?” Everyone in the room (twenty-one of us) said yes! One lady asked me why I did not follow my true calling and that it was a shame that I was letting my natural talents die.

She was right but how, where, when was I to do it? How could I make a decent living at it? I was afraid and I knew I did not have enough confidence. My mom use to say, “Honey, you have a destiny and no matter how you ‘run’ your life. God knows why you are here. He does not give you a talent and a calling in life for nothing; do not waste your unique purpose.”

In 1995, after only three days into a new “great job” with Canada Trust, I was exhausted. Why was I feeling so disheartened? A few days later I became sick. I suddenly knew it was because I was not following what I longed to do—what I was meant to do. My husband totally supported my going into a home-based business and I started Irene Martina Consulting and have never looked back.

WRIGHT

How did you begin? Was there ever a doubt that it would work?

MARTINA

I was filled with doubt but I started where I was most comfortable, and that was creating a deck of reading cards that I had used as a child. The deck is based on the normal playing deck of cards and I tried to remember what the meanings of all of them were. It seemed daunting at first but one day in frustration, I yelled. “God, if this is where I am supposed to go then, by golly, you had better help me with this!” I walked out of the room to make a cup of tea and I suddenly felt a presence behind me. I did not want it to go so I sat at the table bowed my head and said, “I surrender.” As my tears fell, I had the most powerful “knowing” come over me. Suddenly I knew what the meaning of each of the cards were and how I was to use them.

Then I called up friends and co-workers and I started doing free readings in order to get feedback and experience. I knew I would be an inspirational and motivational reader and I knew that I had the opportunity to change lives with my readings.

My readings are varied in options and all original to me. I always focus on the present and future and just enough of the past to let them see my accuracy on what I intuit about their younger years. My accuracy rate is in the high nineties. I have clients all over the world and I can do a reading on any issue from health, business, relationships, partnerships, to past lives.

While this was taking place, memories of my past and my teachings flooded back into my life. I knew it would not be easy. I knew that I would face people who would shun me and try to discredit me. I have to say, I was not prepared for the hatred, anger, and pain that has been inflicted upon me over the years. No matter what, in my heart of hearts, I believed that I was following my destiny.

We are all on a path and we are the only ones who can help and heal ourselves of whatever life brings our way. We cannot deny who or what we are. For years I have asked hundreds of people in their chosen professions if they had any doubts about what they had chosen to do with their lives. One man said to me, “If I were to have denied my abilities to teach medicine I would not be standing here alive today.” He then told me why. Since then, many others have shared their personal life stories with me; some have had regrets and some have not. I believe

that our discussions have helped many people at least look at their lives with new eyes. Many have come back and thanked me for giving them the courage to actually follow their dreams.

If there is one thing that I could tell the readers, it is that illness comes from the soul not being on purpose. I believe that every physical ailment in our body is triggered by our fears, heartaches, and often low self-esteem. When our bodies start hurting we should start listening. When we listen, we will discover where our passions really are and that following our passion can change our lives and bring about healing on all levels.

Ask yourself what you love to do and how can you make it work for you as a career. I know you will have many reasons why you might not be able to walk away from your job in this instant but can you not start what you love on a part-time basis and then walk away when you reach a level that is comfortable for you to quit your job? Finding your passion in life is simply bringing your heart to work.

As the years have gone by, my intuitive gifts have changed. I started out reading cards and then slowly I found myself just naturally doing medium and clairvoyant readings. I must admit that at first I was frightened by what I was seeing, but now I realize that it is my gift. Everyone has a talent, even if they have never used it, and this is mine. Through these readings I have helped people to deal with losses of loved ones and to better understand the spiritual realm that is around all of us. Besides this, I am proud to say that by using my abilities I have solved some crimes and other interesting scenarios. As a motivational speaker and live stage performer, I have helped many people find solution's, insights, direction and peace to their life.

As a dream expert and a clairvoyant I have been on many television and radio shows. I have created workshops, my own products, and I have taught others to follow their passions, to believe in themselves, and to understand, as pointed out by one of my favorite authors, Wayne Dyer, that we are spirits having human experiences and not vice versa. I am proud to say that I have helped countless clients to bring back their life-long dreams, sleeping or awake, and to follow the career path they have always wanted. I teach people to believe in the voice of their dreams, no matter what.

Looking back on your life, have there been major challenges that have helped you master success, both personally and in your business life?

MARTINA

I know that every one of us deals with challenges from all aspects of our life. Souls come in with major lessons in every lifetime and, believe me, I have had more than my share! Here are a few of the things I have faced:

- I came from a broken home and my father was an abusive alcoholic who beat my mother senseless a few times. As a result of one of his attacks on me, I lost my eyesight for a period of time.
- I was forced to live on the streets for a short time when I came to Edmonton, Alberta (Canada).
- I have buried my entire family and I am the only one in my family to have lived past sixty.
- I have beaten cancer twice.

However, the most powerful and influential experience I have had that has led me to become the person, teacher, and spiritual leader I am today is this: In 1963, at the age of seventeen, I was walking through a park one night beside the river in Windsor, Ontario, with two friends, who were the same age as I was.

Suddenly we were attacked, raped, and stabbed. To my horror, they killed my two friends. I remember that as the EMS drivers were putting me into the ambulance, I heard them say something to the effect that I would not likely make it either. I heard myself scream inside my head that I was *not* going to die! Come hell or high water, I was going to live!

I went into a coma and while I was there a small angel child came to me and told me to fight because my life was not over yet. She said I had a special destiny to fulfill. “Go back,” she said, and I did. As a result of

When I came out of the coma and was able to give the police a good description of the attackers.

When I was fit enough to go back home to Winnipeg on the train, I knew my entire life had changed. I was numb, confused, and full of fear; every night my nightmares were terrifying. And then, something happened that saved me and gave me back the will to make it through.

I went up to the dome car of the train expecting to see other passengers enjoying the scenery. But there wasn't anyone there and I knew that I was up there alone for a reason. I chose a seat that had a *Times* magazine sitting on it. I opened it to an article that apparently was the most powerful speech Winston Churchill had ever given. The words Mr. Churchill spoke to me in that moment were. "*Never, never give up!*" Suddenly I knew that I was not a victim and that all that happened to me was pre-planned by me before I was born. But why? Later in life I knew it was to give others inspiration and to take back their lives and not become victims.

Once back in Winnipeg I soon discovered that I was pregnant as a result of the rape. I gave up the child. That was the only child I gave birth to and the aunts' prophecy that I would never raise a child was fulfilled.

I remember my mother telling me that no one can make me feel any emotion that I do not want to feel. She said, "I cannot make you cry and I cannot make you laugh. When you do feel an emotion, it is a gift from your soul." Emotions are our teachers and the closest thing to our souls. Emotions teach us about ourselves and they bring healing, insight, and trust that can lead us to transformation. Only we are responsible for our decisions and our mistakes. If you ever have to make a major decision simply ask: "Is this the right decision?" If you feel peace, you can know that you have chosen well. If a hundred questions pop up, then it is not the right decision.

As an adult, I have been blessed by my spiritual teachings and readings because I have learned so much from my struggles. No matter what life throws at us, we must remain true to our values and authentic self.

You have had some pretty heavy life lessons. What do you think you have learned from these struggles?

MARTINA

I have been blessed to have had some great teachers in my life. My best friend and teacher was my mother. She taught me not to be a quitter through her strong determination to just survive at times. Her love for my sister and me was unconditional and she told me to love others the same way. Her indomitable spirit, inner wisdom, and compassion have lived on in my heart and mind since she passed in 1972.

My life experiences have taught me the most. I have learned to trust the process of my life and that no matter what comes up it is for my benefit and personal growth. I know I can handle it because I have chosen the challenge on a soul level. I have learned that you will get far more out of life by not volunteering to be a victim. I have learned that love will give you far more riches than anything else life has to offer. But most importantly, I have learned that whatever I want from anybody in my life, I have to give it first. For instance, if I want compassion, love, loyalty, trust, truth, and so on, from you, I have to be willing to give it to you when you need it.

WRIGHT

What other teachers have been inspirations to you in your work?

MARTINA

I have always been moved by the work of speakers such as Napoleon Hill, Wayne Dyer, Bob Proctor, and Robin Sharma, to name a few. I have learned so much from reading great works. Perhaps because of them I let myself feel strong enough to see myself as a spiritual teacher/adviser who can also inspire, motivate, and help people to change their lives and to understand the journey of their souls.

WRIGHT

What do you mean when you talk about “understanding the journey of their souls”?

MARTINA

The knowledge in my cards covers all aspects of the human experience; they have a physical, mental, emotional and spiritual meaning. Thus, when I do a reading, I can focus on any or all of the gifts the cards offer. For example, I recently had a client who was going through cancer treatments. Her greatest concern was whether she was going to be all right, and if she needed to change anything in her personal life at the present time. My cards offered insights into how she could do that.

On a deeper level, the cards offer a special message for clients if they want a more in-depth understanding of their personal journey. For example, all four of the Aces, two's, etc. have a message called a Soul Gift and a Soul Lesson. These gifts and lessons bring deeper insights and understanding that can enhance their life's contracts. This helps a person to understand why his or her life may be the way it is or how the person can make a change.

It is very powerful to understand what each soul is here to learn. What I mean by this is that each soul/person has come into this world with a blueprint and contracts to fill with other souls and with themselves. We have truly volunteered to come here to learn and grow as spiritual being. I believe that we cannot complain about our lot in life because we, as souls, planned our lives in such a way that we will learn and grow to be the best that we can be. I remind you that we are “spiritual beings having a human experience,” so I guess you could say that in all our lives, our spirit is running the show. Unfortunately, few people realize that and this is what I have tried to teach them through readings to understand the power in their choices.

The biggest soul message is the Law of Karma, which has been around for centuries. This is a big part of the journey of our souls. What we do to others will be done unto us. It makes you realize that it is best to stop and think before we act—at least it *should!*

What advice would you give someone starting out or even struggling in a business today?

MARTINA

There have been times when I wondered why I didn't stay in a "real" job. You just can't quit and walk away from your own business because you are having a bad day. It is times like those when I realize that a change has to come from within me in order to improve the situation. Sometimes you just have to remind yourself of your passion and then you have to have faith that it will all work out. I have a list in front of me in my office that I have created through my own mistakes and thus they are in the form of affirmations that anyone can make for themselves. Here are my affirmations:

- I set goals and commitments that I know I can achieve and manage. People want solutions, not just information and that is one thing my readings give. Remember my mission and my vision.
- I do not multi- task as I do my best when focusing on one goal at a time. Only I can control my time, schedules and priorities.
- When I am stressed I go someplace peaceful and calm and read or meditate. I know when I need to get re-focused and re-energized.
- I have great friends, family, clients and associates and I choose to be with others of like mind that are positive, supportive, and optimistic.
- I know my strengths and weaknesses. I hire the best people to do what I am not good at and what I don't have time to do. I am a good entrepreneur/manager and I am able to inspire others.
- When I have a new product I test my market by surveying my family, friends and other people, such as clients, whom I know I can trust.

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- WRIGHT ● I do not hide from being who I am. I will not let my “music” die within me. I have a unique gift. I have greatness within me.
- I am careful not to give away my time or energy because that is not serving my potential but rather it is robbing me off what I am here to do. My knowledge is power.
 - I live in integrity and I give back to others. I share without expectations and the rewards come back to me in many ways.
 - I believe in the magic of “me”—my thoughts, my creativity, my wisdom and my strength.
 - Whenever I feel stuck, I ask myself what brought me to this place and why did I decide to go there.

In closing, there are a few other key points I would like to make:

Beware of the Law of Attraction! Why? Because it is a neutral law and it responds to the energy of our thoughts, positive or negative. In other words, whatever you focus on expands. If you focus on what is lacking in your life, it remains that way. If you focus on creating a happy day or positive outcomes, those will just naturally come about.

Gratitude. Every night as I drift off to sleep I try to find at least five things I am grateful for. They can be positive or negative as long as you acknowledge the lesson given to you in all of them. For instance, I may have had a miserable day. I can acknowledge that I am grateful for it because it made me look at my life more closely. It made me wonder why I had created that kind of a day. It made me realize that I had wasted one whole day. I decide to be gentle with myself while promising that I will do better tomorrow. If you have more negatives than positives, it may be time to do some serious soul-searching. I urge you to get to the point where you can say, “Thank you God for this day that is over!” instead of, “Thank God this day is over.”

Change. I cannot believe how much people resist change. I am not talking about powerful life changes such as major health issues or deaths, but basic simple changes. For example, I have a friend who does not like to change a thing on her desk, her hairstyle, her decorating

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styles—nothing! Clients come to me for two reasons: 1) their life is undergoing some major changes and they don't know how to stop them, 2) they *want* to change their life but don't know how. Either way, the changes are scary. I try to show that life is all about change and to fight it is to challenge the path you have chosen to take on a soul level. But, hey, I love change, that's when I know that my soul is in motion and I am making progress. It is your choice as to how you see change from now on. Perhaps the next time you read or hear that word, you might enjoy my acronym for change: Choose Happiness And New Growth Every day!

DIG. Many years ago I was a sales manager for a home builder. In one particular meeting I was given some recognition by the owners for a special deal I had closed. One of the other salespersons laughed and attributed my success to the fact that I had a commerce degree and initials behind my name.

The team seemed a bit down so I later ordered them all new business cards and had DIG put after their names and handed out the new cards at the next sales meeting. Silence. I could “hear” their minds going a mile a minute trying to figure out what these initials meant. I waited. Finally one woman spoke up and asked if the DIG meant a doctorate in sales or something.

I said, “Imagine your next prospective clients looking at these cards and wondering the same thing. This is a great way to break the ice with your clients and put yourself and them at ease. When they ask you what it means, say with pride, *“Damn I'm Good!”*”

They had terrific stories at the weekly sales meetings from that point on about what fun they'd had with their cards and clients. Their confidence and sales grew. At the next annual sales award meeting, they were all recognized for a major jump in sales. Some won provincial awards and went on to bigger things. How powerful our minds can become when we believe in ourselves!

WRIGHT

Do you ever encounter people who are totally sceptical about your gifts?

MARTINA

Yes, but not near as many as what you might think. First of all, my business is made up of 95 percent referrals. I love that because I know they come with an interest and I hope an open mind. It also makes me feel safe and secure that I am not about to deal with people who are there for all the wrong reasons. However, in actuality, I expect a healthy bit of scepticism in new clients. Nine times out of ten, people who arrive with doubts, leave without them. It is such a joy for me to see the transition in them.

When I do live performances, I may find some sceptics at the beginning of a session or in some of my talks but that quickly passes once they get to know me and to see and hear me.

WRIGHT

Do you have any unique advice that would be totally different from what some other professional people would offer?

MARTINA

I know this may be hard for some readers to wrap their minds around, but you really did choose the good and the bad of your life and that includes your parents, the day of your birth, and the day of your death. You have come into this life with unique gifts, talents, lessons, wisdom, and abilities. Each life is an evolution of your personal spiritual journey and its growth. In almost 65 percent of my readings, clients are asking me how they can find their purpose. You are on purpose and have been since birth; just become it!

Your soul strives to fulfill its dreams and ambitions. You did not come here without a plan, a passion, and the ability and tools to fulfill it. When you trust the process of life, magical things happen. Doors can open for you that you never dreamed of—if you would just believe. Do not forget the infinite possibilities that come from faith and use the gifts you were given. Most importantly, learn to be content with who you are and love the journey you have chosen. You have not chosen challenges you can't handle. Every soul that comes into our life is a

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predestined soul contract made by us before we were born. Nothing happens that is not planned and there is no such thing as coincidence.

Each soul comes in with a mission, lesson to be learned, the capability to love self, and to share that love with the world. We always have a choice to share the beauty of our soul with everyone we meet. Create a notebook of your daily/monthly/yearly sayings, miracles, or inspirations and if they are powerful and helpful to you why not share it with others and even publish it! Imagine what a nice gift of inspirations or insights you might want to give your family and clients. Let me give you some examples of things I have written in mine:

- My life is about me and as long as I am alive, I have a new and better place to start.
- I do not have patience today to wait for the best life has to offer; however, I must be aware that my first miracle is the day itself and being in the here and now. I must use it wisely.
- My husband often tells me I am his whole world. Emotionally it may feel that way to him, but spiritually he really is his own world, as I am mine. We have chosen, by loving each other, to share those worlds.
- Today, I have decided to be perfect—perfectly lazy, crazy, and happy!
- Today, I am taking a break so I can spend my quality time worrying about the issues that kept me up all night! This makes as much sense as all the useless tossing and turning I did last night. However, I have made a conscious decision that now, when I want to worry, I will have a “ritual worry break.” I will make a cup of tea and work it through; at least that will assure the possibility of having a great sleep tonight.

How can I find time to play
when I don't even have time to blink?
I lost my power and "found" it
when I took some time to think.
I seem to have no time to read,
even knowing how wise that would be.
Reading brings a fountain of wisdom
when I take this time for me.
I always take time to work real hard,
for I was taught this brought success.
Alas, this may be the case,
but, oh, the cost of such great stress!
If I could give the world a gift,
it would be laughter and time to play;
And I hope you will make it a habit,
every single privileged day:
Take time to give, take time to laugh
and lots of time to share; Release
the stress and never wait to tell
others how much you care. Your
soul needs magic every day, so
never let it have regrets. Think,
Love, Laugh, and Play;
and may this poem you never forget!

I hope you will create a notebook of your ideas and insights. Perhaps you may want to make some as poems as I did above. It is great to go back and read your thoughts and ideas, months or even years later. You never know what your brilliance, creativity, and insights might develop into.

WRIGHT

How do you define success for yourself; what does it mean to you?

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MARTINA

I would like to share three brief stories, all with one common theme that I hope the reader will understand, as this is how I measure success in my world.

My dearest friend, Marilyn Avient wrote a book, *Free at Last*, about her amazing journey in and out of depression. She then created and performed a one-woman play called *Dirty Laundry* based on her book and her powerful journey. Every time she went on stage she told her story of overcoming severe depression. Her struggle to survive had the audience in tears and on their feet. She is one of my heroes and she is one of the wisest people I know. She is not a victim of any part of her life. This is true success!

My husband, Ron, was born with a physical handicap and he lives in constant pain, day in and day out. I have never, ever, heard him complain. He is loving, caring, intelligent, and kind to everyone he meets and I do not know a single soul in almost thirty-five years of our marriage who does not admire, like, and loves him. This gentle loving man is a gift to all of us; this is success on a powerful level.

I do not have the space to write about the hundred other challenges I have faced in my life but I do know that whatever I went through, I planned it all. I am a far better human being because of it. Every morning when my feet hit the floor I say aloud, "God, whose life will I touch today?" *To me, the greatest success in my life is that I can't wait each night to tell God who they were!*

Follow your heart and intuitions. Enjoy your journey. Allow your life to be all that it was meant to be.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



In 1995 Irene walked away from twenty-nine years of corporate business to follow her passion and intuitive abilities. Irene has always been proud of her Commerce degree and years in management, consulting, and training, but her passion was in helping others. Irene's greatest passion in life was to help people the best way she knew how and she knew she could do that best by being her most authentic self—a clairvoyant, author, and speaker.

For the past seventeen years, Irene has built her reputation as an internationally renowned clairvoyant and medium, with clients all over the world. She is known for her accuracy, wisdom, and profound insights.

She has been considered one of Canada's most beloved psychics. Irene is a professional speaker, past member of CAPS (Canadian Association of Professional Speakers), and the author of five books: *Dream Talk: Your Hidden Biography*, *The Dream Journal*, *Journey Beyond*, *The Self Discovery Journal*, *The Internet Computer Directory*. She is currently working on her new book, *Messages from Spirit*.

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Chapter Sixteen

Sort Things Out: Your Road Map to Success

BY EVA ABREU

DAVID WRIGHT (WRIGHT)

Today I'm talking with Eva Abreu, founder of the STO, Sort Things Out method of organizing. She teaches how to get organized, five minutes at a time, with "Eva's Edict." She has appeared on several television programs as an organizing expert. As a former technology manager on Wall Street, she is also a social media trainer and communications consultant. She works with corporations, nonprofits, and business owners to help them get their message across using new media. Eva is a frequent speaker and panelist for many media technology conferences. She is a graduate of Rutgers University, is a wife and mom in New Jersey, and volunteers with intergenerational programs.

Eva, welcome to *Mastering the Art of Success*.

EVA ABREU (ABREU)

Thank you so much, David. It's a pleasure to be here.

WRIGHT

So what is your definition of success?

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ABREU

My definition of success is measured by how much we learn and how many people we help as we take our journey in life to reach our goals.

The first part of the journey is learning how to set personal and attainable goals on an ongoing basis and throughout our lifetime, so we have a road map.

The second part is to continually take steps forward to reach those goals but always keep an open mind, knowing that there will be times where we might hit a detour, need to take a few steps backward, or realize we need to change course toward a different destination.

The third part of our journey is to look at every experience that we go through as a learning opportunity and to build upon each life lesson as we continue along our journey.

Finally, I believe in the attitude of gratitude and paying it forward.

It's important to surround ourselves with a community of people we meet along our journey to cultivate a strong base of colleagues and acquaintances to appreciate. Also, nurture ongoing relationships with friends and neighbors, and take care of and depend upon family members and loved ones. We can feel truly blessed in our success in life knowing that we can turn to others in times of need and be present to help others in their times of need as well. I have seen the power of social media play a significant role in helping us to enhance our relationships and connect with people we would never have had the opportunity to meet otherwise.

WRIGHT

In your opinion, what are the ways to achieve personal success?

ABREU

The first thing we can do to achieve personal success is to call upon our power of visualization. It is so important to be able to “see” in our mind exactly what we want—what our goals are. For some people, this doesn't come easily or naturally.

To help us develop the ability to visualize, we need to do some deep down soul searching and spend some quiet time reflecting on what we feel is important. Try to put blinders on things that are coming at us

from all different directions; we're bombarded by an overflow of data from the computer and television, we're surrounded by a constant stream of opinions from people wanting to convert us to their way of thinking, we are constantly tethered to the latest communication device that fits in the palm of our hand, sending constant beeps and tones to remind us to check what other people are doing right at that precise moment.

Even though I teach people how to use social media, I think it's important to maintain a balance and to take a step back from the information overload. We need to spend some quiet time having a conversation with ourselves, first and foremost. By turning inward, we'll begin the journey to discover what is really and truly important to us, start to lay out the path toward our future, and imagine ourselves achieving what we really want to achieve in our lives.

Next, we'll need to exercise the ability to think positively, even if our surrounding conditions are negative. For some of us, we are so used to being immersed in negativity from others, resulting in a tape recording in our minds that keeps playing back the same message repeatedly that we are not good enough or we can't do this or we'll never be good at that.

The key is to erase and replace. We are going to erase the old message and replace it with a new message. We'll flip a switch in our mind and turn 180 degrees, away from thinking negatively to thinking positively, even if we don't believe it right at that moment. We may look around and nothing is happening right away. We'll have to suspend reality, call upon our imagination, and start internalizing in order to truly believe positive things about ourselves and to visualize what we want to eventually achieve.

The third part of achieving personal success is to do something, rather than do nothing. It's all about taking action. We hear from the experts, coaches, motivational speakers, and leaders who emphasize how important it is to take action. Start off by learning to become aware and alert of our surroundings and look for signs of opportunities that may spring up. The signs may be subtle or they may be obvious.

Sometimes, it may come as a complete surprise if an opportunity presents itself at around the same time you are focused and reflecting

on your personal success goal. If this happens, especially when you least expect it, do everything in your power to act on it as soon as possible to take advantage of what has been presented to you. Again, through social media channels, I've seen the speed at which the perfect resources come forward when we make our goals known. It's been quite remarkable.

I'm a firm believer in these ideas to help us achieve success and I apply the concepts every day in my life: visualization, thinking positively, and doing something rather than doing nothing.

WRIGHT

I totally agree with you.

So who were your role models?

ABREU

I would say that my parents and my neighbors were my first role models. My mother passed away when I was thirteen, so she wasn't with us for very long. When she was here, I remember how neighbor-focused and community-oriented she was; the other women on our block were the same way.

We had a community culture in our neighborhood that was help oriented. In those days, it wasn't unusual to have five or six kids in a family, which made for great games of hide-and-go-seek, dodge ball, and snowball fights. If a neighbor was in the hospital or a mother just had a baby or if someone was going through a difficult time, the neighbors would spread the word and help out. We'd also get together when times were good, just to be with each other and celebrate fun times and friendships.

I look back now and realize how big of an influence the kids on our block were for me and how their parents played a significant role in teaching us how to respect others and how to create a community of acceptance and service for others.

My father was a role model and continues to be. In the 1960s, he worked as a test engineer for a small engineering firm in central New Jersey. The company was a subcontractor for NASA and he tested a mechanical part that ended up going on the Apollo 11 mission. I'm in the process of writing a book about this, as well as other examples of

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regular everyday people who lived quiet, normal lives, across the country who were part of this huge mission. Sending a man to the moon was unimaginable; something you would read in a science fiction novel, but it actually became a reality through the efforts and dedication of regular, everyday people like my dad.

Through my dad's guidance and example, I learned about technology at an early age. I think he saw the vision of the future—what was possible with technology, what could be accomplished through a team effort, and what advances could be made in the years ahead. When he worked on the part for Apollo 11, he used slide rulers to do calculations. Back then, computers were nothing like they are today—they were big, bulky machines that filled an entire room, with as much computing power as a cell phone would have today. It was a different time period, but he saw the potential. Even though I was a girl, and especially during that time in history where many people assumed a woman would get married, stay at the home as a housewife, and not worry about working, I think he had the opposite idea and wanted us, his children, to get exposure and to get comfortable with technology early on.

He was, and always will be, a humble and modest man, quietly doing what needed to be done as part of his job. To me, it was much more than that. I think my dad played such a significant role, along with the other four hundred thousand Americans who contributed to the success of the Apollo 11 mission. He tested a remote temperature sensor device, making sure it could withstand the different environmental changes that it might be exposed to while in space and on the moon.

The main focus that was instilled in him and all the other people involved in this mission was Zero Tolerance. This meant that nothing, absolutely nothing, could go wrong within your area of responsibility because we were sending human beings to the moon, to unknown territory, and the entire country was relying on you to make sure nothing happened to them.

Zero Tolerance meant that there would be no tolerance for any defects or oversight; these astronauts were counting on you to return

them back to Earth safely. What you did, or failed to do, could adversely affect another life.

From my father's example, I learned about dedication, teamwork, technology, and humility. I learned that it didn't matter how large or small a part was, whether it was a mechanical part or the part played by a member of the team. Every single component was important and every single person was important.

When I decided to write about my father's experience, I put out the word to my social media contacts and received an overwhelming number of replies from around the world with individual stories and personal memories about Apollo 11. And that's how the idea for my book, *Reaching for the Moon and the Stars: The Legacy and Influence of the Apollo Generation*, came to be.

There are many other role models throughout my career who have graciously shared their time, talent, and knowledge by offering to be a mentor. Also, I've spent countless hours reading, listening to, and learning from speakers such as Denis Waitley, Dr. Wayne Dyer, Jack Canfield, Mark Victor Hansen, Les Brown, and many others who have openly shared their wisdom and advice with the world.

Seek out role models. Take the initiative to become a self-taught learner by reading as many motivational books as you can, listen to audio recordings, watch videos, participate in webinars and teleconferences, and attend live presentations given by experts, inspirational speakers, and coaches. Look for alternative learning opportunities such as volunteering your time with an organization or offering to be an apprentice for a small business owner or entrepreneur.

It is also vitally important to listen and learn from a diverse cross-section of people from different backgrounds, cultures, age groups, and experiences. You may not always agree with their opinions, but if you can look beyond the emotional aspects of a particular topic, you can gain a truly rich and rewarding life experience and learning opportunity not found in any textbook or classroom.

You'll never know where you'll get your next spark of inspiration or who might become a role model for you. Keep an open mind and pass

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along what you know to the next generation. I think it's one of life's highest honors to touch someone's life and become a role model.

WRIGHT

In my experience, people really are impressed by entrepreneurs. You have been a successful entrepreneur, what do you think are the key skills in achieving success as an entrepreneur?

ABREU

To be successful as an entrepreneur, I think we need to recognize what skill sets and traits that we already possess, learn to acquire additional expertise, and call upon resources from our network of colleagues, acquaintances, family, and friends, while we look for ways to help them as well. There are many other factors, but let's take a look at three key skills that I think are important.

The first key skill as an entrepreneur is to get comfortable with public speaking. Whenever we can, take advantage of the opportunity to speak in front of audiences, get up in front of a group, or speak about something off the top of your head in a small gathering. The more we practice and learn how to speak in public, the more comfortable and confident we'll become.

I was given the opportunity at a young age, in elementary school, to develop public speaking skills. I was extremely shy as a child; I think a teacher or administrator within the school noticed this and invited me to do a public address announcement for the entire school. I was afraid and very nervous but I did it anyway because the teacher encouraged me. I went to the main office and they showed me how to operate the microphone. I led the entire school in the Pledge of Allegiance. I did that every day and grew to love it. I loved it because people didn't have to see me, but they could hear my voice and I could just read from the card.

Because of this experience, when I entered junior high school and high school, I asked if I could do the morning school announcements and continued to do so. That led to my interest in college to become a disk jockey for my college radio station, WRSU-FM in New Brunswick, New Jersey, and later as a mobile disk jockey playing music at parties and clubs.

The next skill to develop as an entrepreneur is good people skills. What this means is to become comfortable with networking to the point of being able to go into a room without knowing anybody and being able to strike up a conversation. Always remember the 80/20 rule: 80 percent of the conversation is about the other person and their interests and 20 percent about you. This applies to online social networking skills as well.

The third skill is what I call “pen to paper,” which means to learn to write well and to write often. Whether it’s using an actual pen in hand or typing on a computer keyboard, it’s going to take lots of practice, some guidance, and many corrections. I think it is worth the time and effort to become an effective communicator and gain respect in our role as an entrepreneur. How well we write is a reflection on us—people will judge us on how well we compose an e-mail, a thank you note, letter to the editor, or a social media posting. Writing can help open the door to many other opportunities as well.

So the three skills mentioned, public speaking, people skills and pen to paper, are invaluable skills to develop as an entrepreneur, as well as for anyone who seeks additional opportunities for success within their career.

WRIGHT

What are some of the roadblocks people face on their journey to reaching their goals?

ABREU

I think the first roadblock is our own perception of who we are. Many of us don’t have a positive perception of our abilities; we may think that success is not within our reach. I’ve experienced this many times myself. I look back now and realize I was my own worst enemy, as the saying goes. Without realizing it, we end up getting in our own way of success.

As a child, as I mentioned, I was extremely shy and didn’t want to call any attention to myself. I didn’t want to be noticed or singled out, I didn’t raise my hand in class because maybe I would say something that wouldn’t make any sense and everyone would laugh at me. I might stumble on my words or not be able to think of what to say and

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everyone would stare. I think this holds true for many adults, too. This is a roadblock to new opportunities.

If we perceive ourselves as being too shy, too introverted, or too old to learn, we will continue to be stuck in the same position for a long time. This is an area where I work together with clients to help them break through the old misconceptions about themselves and gain a renewed confidence in their ability to communicate, to learn new ways of networking, and to meet new business contacts through social media tools.

The next roadblock is being a perfectionist. We end up not moving forward, not trying something new, or not making a needed change in our lives because we convince ourselves that it must be perfect from start to finish, otherwise we're simply not going to do it at all. And so it goes. We don't even get started. Being a perfectionist can hinder our ability to take full advantage of opportunities that are presented to us.

The third roadblock is procrastination. In my STO Organizing workshops I usually ask the question, "How many here in the room are procrastinators?" and every hand in the room goes up. I explain that it's part of human nature to procrastinate; we don't feel like doing something because it's not easy or it's boring or it's too difficult or a myriad of many other reasons. Sometime we procrastinate out of fear; it could be a fear of failing or a fear of the unknown or even a fear of success and we wonder if we can even handle it. Procrastination prevents us from moving forward; the key is to recognize the signs of procrastination and to learn different strategies to help us move ahead.

WRIGHT

I have been in many seminars and trainings down through the years, and people are very good at defining roadblocks. In my opinion we can list them up on the flip chart. The problem is how do you get past them? How do you suggest we get past the roadblocks?

ABREU

The first step to overcoming roadblocks in our journey to success is to change our perception. Focus on one area of improvement and look at the situation objectively from a completely different 180-degree perspective. We can begin to ask ourselves questions from another

person's perspective. It's important to be non-judgmental and to remind ourselves to keep a positive outlook through the entire process. It's easy to become negative, so it will require some conscious effort and self-encouragement to continue along the success path.

I recommend finding an accountability partner—someone to work with such as a friend or family member. For some people, though, the interpersonal dynamics are too emotionally charged and no progress is made; that's where I come in as a coach, mentor, and cheerleader. I strive to be objective and realistic, yet compassionate and motivating.

In addressing perfectionism, I tell students in my STO Organizing workshops to give themselves permission to say, "It's okay not to be perfect." The attendees usually breathe a sigh of relief and I can see a physical shift in the room as everyone becomes more relaxed. Sometimes, there are one or two people who say that they cannot let go of the concept of perfectionism. I explain that if it delays the start of an organizing project or prevents them from finishing it, then it needs to be addressed. The main point is to get started and keep going regardless of whether or not you are in the "perfect" mood or if a "perfect" excuse comes up to stop you from moving forward. Of course, it doesn't mean that you are going to compromise the quality of your work or create a safety hazard just for the sake of finishing a project. We have to recognize to what degree perfectionism might be holding us back and how to address it if it becomes a roadblock.

As for procrastination, acknowledge that it's a natural reaction as a human being to want to procrastinate. Accept it, embrace it, then push it aside. It's not a matter of never procrastinating again; it's recognizing that yes, procrastination is there within us, however, we are going to push the feeling temporarily out of the way and take a step forward. In my STO Organizing workshops, my students begin to learn that they are in control and can decide to do something, rather than do nothing at that very moment. We can learn to take forward action, even though our mind is telling us to procrastinate. We realize that we don't have to surrender to the urge to take a nap, or have ice cream or go shopping—the three top things that people tell me they would rather do instead of organizing. In my forthcoming book, *STO Sort Things Out Method of*

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Organizing, we'll dig deeper into the reasons for procrastination and learn new strategies for staying motivated.

WRIGHT

So how did you develop the STO, Sort Things Out Method of Organizing?

ABREU

I created the STO Sort Things Out Method of Organizing out of necessity, to help myself and my family keep our sanity! I was working full-time in New York City and everything was just overwhelming. I was newly married, had a new baby, and was working crazy hours, commuting back and forth to New York. Piles were everywhere. At work, there were piles of notes, piles of folders, piles of projects and then at home, piles of dishes, piles of laundry, piles of mail, piles of gifts to write thank you notes for . . . I just felt so out of control.

At one point, I decided I was going to step off the corporate ladder and become a full-time mom at home, thinking I would get things under control. It ended up getting worse! Here I thought things would get better with all the time in the world at home, but I didn't have a system in place or the knowledge of how to run a household. I just didn't know where to start.

I started discovering Web sites about how to get organized. I read organizing books, watched television shows about organizing, and read magazines with organizing tips. I started learning from other people and other experts. What I discovered was a lot of great information; however, it was very difficult to put into practice what I was reading and learning. There were different systems developed by different experts, a different variety of organizing products to choose from, and different approaches to decluttering. I was suffering from OIO, Organization Information Overload.

Little by little, I made note of certain systems and advice that really popped out and seemed to resonate with me. I tried different methods and kept track of what seemed to work best for me and what did not. I began compiling the "best of the best" advice from many different sources and started putting together a new system of my own, custom-

tailored for me. I tweaked it to adjust and adapt to fit in with my own lifestyle and with the flow of my day.

This is how I developed my own proprietary system. I created my company, Sort Things Out, then named the system STO to reflect the name of the company and to describe the actual process of sorting things out, one step at a time.

WRIGHT

What are some of the tips you teach to others to help them get started?

ABREU

As part of the STO Method, I created a series of task assignments which I call “Eva’s Edict Five Minutes.” Each Eva’s Edict task focuses on one area to organize for five minutes at a time. The amount of time can be adjusted depending on how our day is going or how much time we have available that day to devote to a task. It’s completely flexible but the main objective is to get started and focus on one area at a time, so that we are making progress, taking action, and going forward on our organizing journey.

I also teach the Three P method of getting organized or P-P-P as I like to call it.

The first P is Plan. This is where we sit down, focus, and think through what areas we need help in getting organized. I teach my clients to look at their homes as zones and to look at each space as objectively as possible, as if they were an outsider. We take a few minutes to plan which area or zone we will focus on and break it down even further to sub-zones, if needed. An important part of the planning process is to take a moment to close our eyes and visualize what we want the space to look like once we are done clearing it out.

The next P is Purge. This step is where we begin to take action. When I say *purge*, I explain that it means to release, release, release. We tend to have a grip on our “stuff,” and our stuff seems to have a grip on us, too. We can’t bring ourselves to take action. We become immobilized and can’t seem to make any decisions about what to do with our stuff. I work with my clients to show them how to start the process of slowly releasing that grip while reassuring them that they

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are doing the right thing. We work together to begin sorting and I teach them how to continue the process on their own.

The third P is Praise. After we have done our initial planning, after we have done our first purge—even if it’s just one item, which can be a big step for many—it’s time to give ourselves praise. I tell my clients to say to themselves, “Wow! I did it, I finally did it! Great job!” It’s a mental “pat on the back” to give us a dose of positive reinforcement to keep us going. For many of us who have been working through (or avoiding) our piles of clutter for many years, we have been surrounded by negativity, either in their own minds or through comments made by well-meaning people in our lives. We can begin to make changes from within ourselves, to start praising our efforts and give ourselves positive encouragement to help us move forward.

WRIGHT

Since you are a planner, what’s in the future for Eva Abreu? What do you see as the next step?

ABREU

I would like to expand the services I provide on a larger scale. My vision is to lead and manage several companies to provide new services for my clients and customers so they can be successful. I envision multiple locations, employing as many people as I can, especially those who have been unemployed, and provide new learning opportunities, personal growth, steady income, and benefits. In turn, I’d like to see a ripple effect to help generate new economic opportunities and help revive the local economy.

I’m currently doing a lot of local and regional speaking and workshops. I see myself doing more appearances on television and radio, conducting more webinars, and speaking on a national and international basis, traveling to different areas and reaching people I wouldn’t have a chance to meet otherwise. I find face-to-face, in-person meetings are a great complement to online connections and conversations on the social networks.

Also I have several books in me that I would like to bring out in the open and share with the public. *Mastering the Art of Success* has been my

springboard and I am so very grateful to have this opportunity to become a published author. I'm planning to release books about the topics that we've briefly mentioned here: the Apollo 11 generation, how to use social media, and the STO Sort Things Out Method of Organizing.

In closing, my goal is to inspire and help others through my consulting and training services, speaking engagements, and my books so that we can share experiences and stories. I am always interested in learning about other people and hearing about their journey through life, how they overcame roadblocks, and how they achieved success. I'm excited to continue helping others with their journey to success, one person at a time, one step at a time.

WRIGHT

This has been an enlightening conversation. I have learned a lot here today and I'm sure that our readers will. I also appreciate the time you've spent with me today answering all these questions.

ABREU

Well, thank you very much. I appreciate your time and this opportunity as well, David, thank you.

WRIGHT

Today I have been talking with Eva Abreu, speaker, organizing coach, social media trainer, and communications consultant. She works with corporate executives, nonprofit managers, and business owners to help them communicate their message using social media and new media tools. As founder of STO, Sort Things Out Method of organizing, she teaches how to get organized, five minutes at a time. Maybe I can even do that!

Eva, thank you so much for being with us today on *Mastering the Art of Success*.

ABREU

Thank you, David.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Eva Abreu is founder of the STO, Sort Things Out Method of Organizing. She teaches how to get organized, five minutes at a time with “Eva’s Edict.” She has appeared on several television programs as an organizing expert, including Discovery/TLC’s *Hoarding: Buried Alive*. As a former technology manager on Wall Street, she is a social media trainer and communications consultant. She works with corporations, nonprofits, and business owners to help them get their message across using new media. Eva is a frequent speaker and panelist for media technology conferences, group events, and association meetings. Ms. Abreu holds a Bachelor of Science degree from Rutgers University, is a lifelong resident of New Jersey where she lives with her husband and two children, and is an active community volunteer working with intergenerational programs to bring together seniors and students.

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Chapter Seventeen

Be, Do, Have

BY RACHEL FOSTER, MN, CMC, CEC

DAVID WRIGHT (WRIGHT)

Today I'm talking with Rachel Foster. Rachel has a passion for helping individuals achieve success and be the best they can be in everything they do. Always focused on the possibilities that life offers, her adventures began twenty-five years ago when she arrived in northern Canada from the U.K. with her young family to nurse. Now, as a successful Executive Coach and Certified Management Consultant, yoga teacher, and partner in two Real Estate companies, she brings a unique presence to her clients who span the realm of senior executives, leaders, and professionals in the health and human service sector, government, as well as diverse medium and small medium businesses.

Rachel, welcome to *Mastering the Art of Success*.

RACHEL FOSTER (FOSTER)

Thank you, David. I appreciate the opportunity to chat with you.

WRIGHT

So it sounds like you have been on an interesting journey since you left the U.K. Would you tell us a little bit about it?

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FOSTER

I'd be pleased to. I think it all started when I turned thirty. I remember very clearly when I was walking home on my birthday with my youngest of three children and suddenly realized, "Gosh! I have to be doing something else in my life." We were in a place where we needed to move and we were both working all kinds of hours and shift work. At that time I was on eternal night duty, and we were like ships that passed in the night. We saw some possibilities and took some action.

I said to my husband, "Would you like to emigrate?"

He laughed at me and said, "Okay, well you go ahead and get the stuff," so I did, and within seven weeks had sold our house and got our visas and were ready to go. We had nothing other than a letter offering me the possibility of a job as a casual nurse in a hospital in a very small northern town in B.C., very tiny, less than three thousand people. I have kept that letter to this day!

So we left everything and took off and traveled to northern Canada. We bought a house and a car, and then a small local business cleaning carpets and windows. My husband went off and did lots of fun things. He'd been a policeman before and he couldn't do that in Canada when we arrived because he wasn't a Canadian citizen. He got his pilot's license, and Class 1 driving license, and he taught in a school. He did personnel management for a forestry company and we had lot of fun. We'd never cut down our own Christmas tree before or had wiener roasts (I didn't even know what a wiener was), or eaten angel food cake, so let's say it was a lot of fun.

Anyway, when you are starting out on any project, you have to take a look at where you want to go and where you want to be. It was nine months before I actually got a permanent position up in the north. I knew I couldn't advance in my career with the level of education I had, so I knew I had to go back to school and earn my undergraduate degree. I was thirty-eight by the time I had finished that.

For my husband, it was different and very challenging trying to find a good fit. I remember it clearly. We were in the kitchen and I said, "If you had a second chance, what would you do?"

"I think I'd go back and do medicine," he replied.

“You’d better do it then,” I replied.

So we did!

So we had an interesting journey. We eventually moved further south, both of us went back to school, took care of three young children and all that involves—daycare, studying, all that sort of thing as families do. I finished my undergraduate degree when I was 38. I earned my graduate degree at the same time as my husband finished medical school. We were both forty-three. By that time, our oldest daughter was also just starting university, so we had an entire household that was a type of learning think tank at that point. So yes, it’s been an interesting journey.

WRIGHT

I’m curious to know how you kept on track while all this was going on.

FOSTER

I’ll be honest, it wasn’t easy. It’s an easy story to share now, but there were lots of challenges woven into that very brief account that I just gave you. I think what kept me moving forward was clear goals, commitment, and a vision. I think often of Norman Vincent Peale’s quote, “Be committed, to do what it takes, to have what you want.” That’s what’s kept me on track. I know I needed to always have a clear picture, or sense of where I was headed because when you’re raising three children and working two jobs, while you are going to school, it’s easy to fall off the path.

My current experience in working with people is that they have lost their sense of purpose, their vision, and their focus. It’s important to be clear about what you want for yourself, your family, and your career. Stephen Covey says it beautifully, “Start with the end in mind!” and that’s the thing—start with the end in mind.

WRIGHT

What would you say has been the most important to you in mastering success in your life?

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FOSTER

The word that always comes to me when I'm asked that question is commitment. That's a very strong word for me and it's very important in mastering success because, for me, it encompasses a range of characteristics including motivation, determination, and perseverance. Another important piece that I believe is often forgotten is around contracting. Contracting is a contract that you make with yourself, as well as those around you, about doing what you say you'll do. I think of my uncle often, who is a very wise, smart businessman. When we started out on our adventures, he said, "It's nothing to start and everything to finish," and he's absolutely right!

When we don't follow through on our promises we let those around us down, we let our businesses, our organizations, our communities, our families, and much more than that, we let ourselves down. I think that's what people forget and it's that piece that will haunt us as we move forward. It's about being true to ourselves and to our word.

WRIGHT

In your experience, what do you think holds people back from moving ahead in their lives?

FOSTER

I think there are three things: First is lack of vision. As I said before, many people don't know what they want or where they're going, and that's huge. If you were going on holiday and you were planning a trip you might have some sense of where you were going. If you didn't, you could end up anywhere, right? So I think that's a big piece—people don't have a vision or have never stopped to think about what that they want.

The other major element is fear. I think there are a lot of people who are afraid. They're afraid of two things: first of being successful and on the other side of the coin, of not being successful.

Third are the conversations we have with ourselves—a major issue for many people I work with. I know it certainly is true for me. It's something I have to work constantly with. I love what the author Susan Scott has written in her wonderful book called *Fierce Conversations*: "All

conversations are with ourselves and sometimes they're with other people." I think that's so true. It speaks to that experience of having conversations and coming to a conclusion in our own head without ever actually having the conversation! We just tell ourselves stories and, for many of us, they hold us back and get in the way of our taking action, but we absolutely have to take action in order to move forward.

WRIGHT

Now you're an executive coach, a consultant, and yoga teacher. How in the world did that happen? It is so different from nursing.

FOSTER

It is different, yet there are lots of similarities; I've often thought about this. I love what Steve Jobs said in his acclaimed 2005 Stanford commencement address that I watched online recently. He said something like, "You can only connect the dots looking back; you can't connect the dots looking forward." As I look at how I got here, from the roots of nursing, it's been wonderful! It's about being in service to others, so there is a common link there. As a nurse you help people through challenges and tough times; you work with lots of people in different settings. I believe that I do the same thing in my current work. It's a twist, in a way, on nursing. I'm grateful for the education and training I received during my nursing years because it's helped me understand people. I believe it has created a safe space for them to show up and share.

About twelve years ago, as a result of some personal challenges in my career, I became interested in personal mastery and leadership, which led me to the work I do today. At that time I was running the operations side of a provincial research center and I had to come to terms with what was driving me. In retrospect, that turned out to be my ego. As many people will attest, it's those kinds of moments in life when we are forced to face reality and when things begin to shift. In those moments we suddenly realize that we are where we are because of the choices we've made, and that's where it sounds obvious, yet it's profound. I know it's tough for some people to play with that concept but we are where we are because of the choices we have made.

I went through a period of deep personal reflection and some significant emotional turmoil that forced me to take a look at some of my own personal demons. Emerging from that put me on the road to becoming a coach, first as a Life Purpose and Career Coach, through the Life Purpose Institute, California, in 2004. This helped me work with clients in a particular way for a few years.

Then, after a while, I wanted to take the work into the corporate world and work with executives and business owners who may have experienced some of the issues I have faced in the corporate sector. I felt I could be of service in that sector, so I trained as a Certified Executive Coach at Royal Roads University, Victoria, British Columbia, in 2009.

My consulting work has gone through various iterations since I finished my graduate work in 1998, and now believe I have found my niche working with corporate and business leaders and their teams, in all walks of life in the private and the not-for-profit sector. While I have helped many individual clients in the arena of focus, direction, communication, and career challenges, the bulk of my work is with leaders and their teams helping them to be more successful in terms of productivity, effectiveness, and communication. I am committed to helping them co-create healthy, respectful, and successful workplaces.

WRIGHT

You mentioned personal mastery. Will you tell me a little bit more about what that means?

FOSTER

Personal mastery for me speaks to how we learn to master ourselves in terms of knowing who we are so that we can show up in the world authentically with no masks. I like to say it's about who we *be* versus who we are, so I like to talk about who we *be* and that's our essence. It's about looking at ourselves from the inside out, taking a long hard look, and it is a tough look, at how and who we *be*, being honest. It's about recognizing our patterns and facing our fears because we all have them! As we do the work, we get clear. That's been my experience as I have done this work—I've become clear about my values, my goals, and how

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I manage my emotions. As we do this work, we can align our behaviors and our goals. It's very important work to do, and I think everyone should do it, but not everybody does! It's challenging and it takes courage because when you start to open some of the boxes, it's a bit like Pandora's Box—it's not always pretty.

Yoga has helped me on my journey. I always try and integrate aspects of that ancient practice into the work I do, particularly the mindfulness practices because I believe that they are so important. I think that's what makes the work I do a little different from others in my field. I'm actually in the process of writing a book called *Yoga Leadership* and it integrates those concepts into personal mastery and leadership. If you look at successful people you know in the world, I'm sure that if you asked them, they would tell you they have done that courageous work, they know who they are, they know where they're going, and they inspire those around them. They also have an amazing capacity to support others to learn and grow. The other piece I have learned about people I admire, as successful business people and leaders, is that they often have a very deep-rooted spiritual practice.

WRIGHT

So how does personal mastery relate to the work you do with individuals and teams?

FOSTER

It's a good question. I always think of Peter Senge in that regard. He says that, "Personal mastery goes beyond competence and skills, it means approaching one's life as a creative work, living life from a creative as opposed to a reactive viewpoint." It is challenging work for people; it's very challenging work to do on your own. Just in the way we'd find a mentor or someone to help us learn something new, I help people reimagine the possibilities and create compelling results through very courageous conversations. And those conversations are not only the ones we have with each other. More importantly, they are those we have with ourselves. I liken it to the monkey that chatters. We have a "monkey" that constantly chatters in our head. For example, when clients hire me, it's usually because something in their life isn't

going well or they are in transition or members of a team aren't reaching their potential. In many cases there is conflict in one form or another. What I have come to learn about conflict is that that is internal or external and both are equally challenging. If the conflict is internal, then as a coach my job is to help them unravel the issues and act as a sounding board as they move through a process to achieve resolution through action. This work is done individually or as a group. The issues are often the same, it's the approach that differs.

In order to make shifts in our life we have to commit to action otherwise it's just a nice conversation, and that's not doing the work. It's a bit like filling a prescription—the pills only work if you take them! For me it's the same. If I'm working with a team or an organization facing a challenge, then as a coach I work with a group to peel back the layers to understand perspectives and get to the core of what's going on. Then I use an appreciative inquiry approach and a coach approach to move the group forward to reconstruct possibilities and create plans of action.

The other piece I have learned over the years is that every group is unique. What I call boxed programs only work to a certain extent, so it's much more important to honor who's in the room, then use a combination of experience and tools to work the “magic” to achieve results. I often say I'm in the construction business—the renovation and restoration work.

WRIGHT

Will you share with our readers and listeners some of the most important tools you have in your toolbox?

FOSTER

Absolutely. I think the most important tool is listening. We hear about this all the time, we're often not good at it, and it takes a lot of practice. I'm a lifelong learner and I'm always looking for new ways to help people and learn new ways to work with them. I've spent years taking courses in the fields of interpersonal communication—NeuroLinguistic programming or NLP, yoga, and meditation. I've learned these skills from a variety of teachers, which gives me a large

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virtual toolbox that I can draw on to support my clients. There are many other teaching tools including many wonderful books; I'm a voracious reader.

WRIGHT

Some of our readers won't know about NLP, so will you enlighten us?

FOSTER

That's a good point. NeuroLinguistic programming was originally developed by two researchers, Richard Bandler and John Grinder. It is based on the work of Milton Erickson who was a hypnotherapist, Virginia Satir who was a family therapist, and Fritz Perl who had a background in Gestalt therapy. NLP in its simplest form is a wonderful set of strategies to help us be more successful in our lives by helping us look at how we use and then process language. It helps us understand how we see the world, and offers ways that we can shift our communication strategies and our perspectives to create better understanding of others and more effectively propel ourselves, and others, forward.

So it's a wonderful tool to use when I'm working with people because it helps me understand very quickly where people are coming from. Sometimes we get stuck in our heads and we can become paralyzed in our problem, whatever that problem is. Possibility thinking and NLP can help get you unstuck, so it's very powerful and I use it a lot. It's a fabulous strategy to help us achieve what we want, if you use the right approach.

WRIGHT

So how can people start to develop personal mastery and move ahead to master success in their lives?

FOSTER

That's a great question. I think the first place to start is to become clear about what you want in your life from a holistic perspective. I like to talk about the wheel of life. The wheel has spokes—a spoke for

health, one for family, one for career, one for finances, one for spirituality, one for contribution, one for relationships, and any other number of spokes you want to add. You can build your own wheel; it doesn't have to be heavy and complicated, it's just about getting clear about what you want. Some people like to write this down in a journal, some people like to draw it, and some people like to make a collage, or a scrapbook. It's about creating your vision of where you want to be! There have been many books written and lots of talk about "vision boarding." It's been around for a very long time; it's just another version of it. It's about taking time to be clear about what you want and where you want to go.

The next thing, is about the legacy you are living, which might sound a bit strange to some people; however, it speaks to how we are modeling the direction we're taking in our life rather than what we are leaving behind. So it's not about what we say that's remembered, it's about what we do, and how we make people feel.

The questions to ask yourself are: How are you living? How do you behave? I like to split the word "behave" into two, so Be-Have. So, how do you Be-have? How do you Be and how do you Have? What needs to shift? When, and where, and with whom? Ask yourself those sorts of questions, and then start to be clear about who you *be*. That doesn't mean your title or your role, it speaks to the essence of who you are, your values, your beliefs, and what's important to you.

Then the next piece is to consider the gifts and talents you bring into the world, and who you serve as you bring those into the world. Try to expand your ideas around this in terms of the affect you have on the world by being who you *be*. Finally, it's to think about your vision and your purpose, I find that most people and teams fall off track when they lose sight of why they're here on the planet, and who they be. I know it's not what we usually think about, but it's important work to do and very grounding work. It's especially very grounding work for a team to do. I like to think of it like a compass that keeps us on track. Just be clear you can do any of this work with individuals or with teams and it's very, very powerful. That's the way to start.

WRIGHT

So what's important to you as an Executive Coach and Management Consultant as you work with people?

FOSTER

I believe that it's one of courage, integrity, professionalism, and service, and for me it's about being 100 percent in service to those I'm working with, which involves being 100 percent present. I believe it's an art that takes great practice. In that space of what I call presence, I create safety and a high level of trust. Of course, everything that is said in my world is confidential, and it's important for the people I work with to understand that. We work together in a very sacred space.

To help readers understand what I mean, I'd just like to share a personal experience I had while I was taking a personal development course a few years ago. I'm not a swimmer and we had to go on a white water rafting adventure as a team. Team members had not met before—none of us knew each other. We set off and after about fifteen minutes the raft expedition leader guided us to the shore. We disembarked and hiked up to the top of a small cliff, about fifteen feet above the water. It was the Kananaskis River, in Alberta, Canada, which readers may know is popular with rafters and kayakers. I thought that we were there for the view, but actually we were there to jump off! Yikes! How am I going to do this? There were some people who knew I didn't swim, but we had to do this for the team because we were collecting points, it was a competition. For those of you who are wondering, yes we all had lifejackets.

Anyway, one person came up to me and said, "I'm a lifeguard and a strong swimmer, if you are comfortable, I will hold your hand and we'll do this together. Just remember, as you hit the water, take a breath, you'll go under and just breathe as you come up." So I held his hand and we jumped, everything was fine, and I got to shore. I thought, "Great! I did it!" Then the leader said, "Now we go up here." I thought, "Good grief!" The cliff was even higher, maybe by another eight or ten feet. I stood back and let my team say I couldn't do it. Another person said, "I know you want to do it. Don't take yourself out of the game." Someone else said, "I'll hold your hand and jump with you." (This was a different

person.) Then something remarkable happened. I'll always remember that someone said, "I'll jump in before you and wait for you." And the person did, and I did, and it was amazing! And, by the way, we won the competition for teamwork!

So in my work, I'm the one who will hold your hand and help you breathe as you go under, and be your lifeline as you come up gasping for air. I'll help you find your footing and emerge strong with each forward movement as you surface with clarity and radiance.

It's about not trying to do everything always by yourself. We all have times on our life when we need to ask for help and let others support us. Often the biggest obstacle is us. Sometimes we have to get out of our own way.

WRIGHT

So what message would you like to leave with our readers and listeners as they move forward on their own journey?

FOSTER

I have been thinking a lot about this lately. I think there are five things that are key. First, be courageous—you can do anything you put your mind to. Second, take some time to reflect. Reflect on your vision and where you want to be. Reflect on how you have arrived where you are today, your successes, and celebrate those accomplishments. Third, know that there will be ups and downs—it's inevitable in the journey of life. Stay positive and know that where you are is where you should be on your journey.

The fourth thing is to take a look at those with whom you associate. Who is on your A team, your B team, your C team? Do you have people around you who are going to support you as you move forward, or do you have people around you who are going to try and hold you back? Negative thoughts are energy-drainers, right? You need to have the people around you who are going to support you and give you energy and you don't want to have the ones around you who are sucking the energy out of you. So do whatever you need to do to refashion your team.

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Then the fifth thing I would say is to find yourself a mentor or a coach because it's important to have somebody you can work with to help you as you move forward.

Those are the five things I feel that are important.

WRIGHT

What an interesting conversation, and an interesting life you have lived, and you're just beginning. I appreciate all the time you've taken to answer these questions for me. It's been exciting for me and very informative. I know that our readers and listeners are going to get a great amount out of this chapter.

FOSTER

Thanks very much for the opportunity to spend the time with you and share my journey, or pieces of my journey.

WRIGHT

Today I have been talking with Rachel Foster. Rachel is a successful Executive Coach and Certified Management Consultant. She brings a unique presence to her clients who span the realm of senior executives, leaders, and other professionals.

Rachel, thank you so much for being with us today on *Mastering the Art of Success*.

FOSTER

Thank you.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Rachel Foster has blazed the trail to new and exciting possibilities in her life, and is passionate about helping others succeed. As a successful businesswoman, executive coach, consultant, yoga teacher, and partner in two successful Real Estate companies, she helps executives, and leaders live a legacy of success.

Rachel has a reputation as an engaging speaker, trainer, and author on diverse topics related to workplace dynamics, leadership, and personal mastery.

Rachel loves yoga, hiking, and snowshoeing, and lives with her family in Alberta, Canada, sharing her time between the provincial capital of Edmonton, and the town of Canmore, just outside Banff National Park.

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