

## Achieving Success

Did you ever notice that people who are the most successful in life seem the least busy? Somehow, these people are able to put their attention on things that really matter and, as a result, get extraordinary results. They know what is important and are able to organise their life so their best effort is focused on what matters most.

For the past 20 years I have been working with and coaching people from all levels in organisations. My interest in helping people gain great success in their lives began when I systematically studied 10 senior executives from a variety of backgrounds with the objective of better understanding how they worked.

Since then, I have coached many people wanting to experience a greater level of success in their lives. The pattern I see is that people who achieve success do so because they take great care in how they have organised their lives and how they make certain choices. In short, they live by choice, not by chance.

To help explain the various patterns and behaviours of success, I suggest that successful people live DELIBERATE lives. A deliberate life is one where the person actively sets out to choose certain ways of thinking and working. This is in contrast to a passive life, where the person feels like a victim of circumstance without any real choice or any control over what happens to them.

### Deliberate Living

To further explain Deliberate Living, I have taken each letter of the word DELIBERATE and expanded on what this could mean for someone seeking to be more successful.

#### **D – Decide.**

There is no question, but successful people have taken the time to sit down and articulate exactly what they want their lives to be about. For them, success is no accident or a matter of being “lucky” – no, they have focussed their mind on exactly what is it they want to achieve. Success then, is the achievement of worthwhile dreams.

While successful people are realistic enough to know that things never exactly work out as planned, they understand that it is better to be moving in some direction rather than simply living day-to-day opportunistic lives. They know that having decided on a direction, they are more likely to seize opportunities which move them closer to their goal.

### **E – Eliminate.**

For many of us, our lives are far too complex. Successful people know that less is indeed more. By removing all kinds of clutter and excess from their lives, successful people are able to concentrate on what is truly important. Clutter can take many forms such as unnecessary 'stuff' in our lives, too many material possessions, untidy work environments, and not knowing what to eliminate or to keep.

Successful people are masters of managing their network of friends, colleagues and associates ensuring their relationships are high value and closely aligned to their goals and aspirations. This may involve actively eliminating some relationships and fostering others.

### **L – Language.**

We can tell a lot about a person by the words and language they use. If you listen to successful people, you will notice that they use positive language and 'can do' words. In fact, they realise that by seeing the glass as half-full, they will attract other positive people into their lives. Positive people can help successful people achieve their goals quicker than negative people.

Successful people have also developed the habit of using positive language in their self-talk. By deliberately choosing the messaging they give themselves, they can program themselves to continuously move forward towards their goal despite apparent setbacks or problems. In contrast, less successful people, because of their negative internal language, are easily discouraged and give up far too quickly.

## **I – Information Management.**

Every person has a unique way of working with information. For example, some of us prefer to read and reflect, while other like to discuss, debate and decide quickly. While our unique style is not important, what matters is that we know our own preferences and can organise our lives to reflect what will work best for us.

By being deliberate about how we work with information, we can organise our lives and use technology appropriately. This impacts on how well our filing systems serve us, how well we organise our computer data, and ultimately how effective we are at identifying key issues and acting on what is most important.

## **B – Beliefs.**

When we take the time and care to deliberately articulate what we believe in and what we want our lives to be about, we greatly simplify our daily living. You will notice that successful people have an inner stability and calmness that comes from knowing what they are truly about. As a result, successful people are less influenced by temporary setbacks. They know – and indeed expect – setbacks. They see setbacks as starting blocks, rather than stumbling blocks.

In contrast, less successful people, tend to be driven by what other people think of them and, as a result, run their lives continually seeking external approval. Such uncertainty leads to fickle behaviour, unreliability, and ultimately, a life which is without direction.

## **E – Energy Management.**

Being able to effectively manage our energy level is critical. Without energy, we simply do not have the strength to perform what needs to be done. Successful people know they can be deliberate about how they manage their energy in four key areas: body, mind, emotions and spirit.

Taking good care of your body is the first step in effective management of your energy levels. With a plan of care covering nutrition, regular and appropriate exercise,

cardiovascular activity, and proper rest you have laid the foundation for having sufficient energy.

Developing the skills of using your mind well allows you to use the power of attention to maximum effect. Through various mental exercises and techniques it is possible to expand your mental capacity enormously.

With practice, you can also develop the skill of managing your emotions so that you control your feelings, rather than they controlling you. The successful people I have worked with have mastered this skill and, as a result, they handle pressure better and are much more adept at dealing with stress.

At the end of the day, it is having a strong spirit which gives meaning to our lives. When someone has spirit, they can feel a connection between what they are doing and what they consider to be the purpose of their life. Without this connection, life is just a series of disconnected events that do not contribute or have any real meaning.

### **R – Responsibility.**

Successful people accept 100 percent responsibility for their lives. They clearly see that the situation they find themselves is not an accident, but the result of choices that they have made in the past. For many people, this is hard medicine to take. Many of us live our lives blaming others (or the government) and we therefore see ourselves as victims of circumstance.

When you deliberately choose to accept total responsibility, your life begins to change in a most fundamental way. By realising that your current life is the result of past decisions, it follows that the shape of your future will be determined by the decisions of today. It therefore is a logical conclusion that choice is always available to you and the consequences of your choices – not the action of others – determines your future.

## **A – Action.**

Without action, nothing happens. The successful people I have worked with are experts at using their energy to execute what needs their attention. They know that all the planning and goal setting in the world is wasted without action.

The first step in executing work effectively is being able to make a direct connection between what needs to be done with your unique purpose and goals. If that connection is crystal clear, procrastination is easily overcome, motivation is high, and energy flows to get the task done.

Successful people can maintain 100 percent focus on the task in front of them without the distraction of other priorities. In my experience, this is a skill that can be learned.

## **T – Time Management.**

We do not manage time – we manage the use of our time. Because each of us has exactly the same amount of time available – 168 hours a week – the choices we make about the use of these hours is what determines the outcomes we receive in our life.

Successful people have worked out ways of planning the usage of their time so that their energies are directed to what matters most to them. They work in a focussed way to make the time available really count and then they stop when it's time to stop.

## **E – Evaluate.**

By deliberately putting in place ways of evaluating your performance you can receive ongoing feedback about what you are trying to achieve and your progress towards your goals. This feedback is critical in maintaining your energy and in making sure that what you are targeting continues to be what you truly want.

Successful people actively seek out feedback because they are constantly looking for ways of improving their performance.

## The Organisational Impact

By being DELIBERATE, a person can effectively architect the life they want. From an organisational point of view, it is critically important that employees are encouraged to take this journey. An organisation comprising individuals who are clear about their purpose is far healthier than one where people are confused.

In essence, gaining alignment between individual and organisational goals and aspirations only makes sense when there is clarity from both sides. Where this clarity exists, there is direct connection between the individual and their organisation. In my experience, getting clarity leads to alignment, and alignment leads to magic happening.

People who achieve success do so because they take great care in how they have organised their lives and how they make certain choices.

This article was written for a HRINZ publication by Dr David Keane

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