



## STRIVING FOR SUCCESS

by Leigh Wallinger

Once you have decided what “success” means for you and have written down all the things that you need to achieve in order for you to deem yourself “successful” (remember you define what success means), you need to take action. Action, in any form, requires 3 forms of energy – physical, emotional and mental energy.

One of the main benefits of writing down your definition of success and list the associated goals that you need to achieve is to clearly define your target. It is amazing how many people spend their working lives without knowing why they are doing what they are doing. They don’t know what the target is. The act of writing clearly defines the target, executing the following steps will help you hit the target.

- Build mental determination
- Take action
- Focus on the important
- Review achievements
- Learn from failures

### **Build mental determination**

Success will remain elusive if you have the wrong mental approach. Everyone has an attitude, but not everyone has the same type of attitude. Some people find their attitude propels them along, helping them achieve their goals. Others have an attitude that acts as a brake, slowing them down. The good news is, you get to decide your attitude. You can change your attitude by reframing your mindset and controlling the inner “self-talk”.

Our attitude is determined much more by what we say to ourselves (our “self-talk”) than by the actions and words of others. Reduce the negative self-talk, replace it with positive self-talk and your attitude changes. Some examples of negative self-talk are: “If only.....”, “What now.....” and “What if....”

“If only I’d prepared for that presentation”  
“I’ve lost my best client, what now?”  
“What if we become a takeover target?”

When we become fixated on these sorts of questions, rather than their solutions, our forward momentum slows and our goals look ever more distant. If you find you have to listen to negative “self-talk” all the time and can’t change, look into some of the techniques for re-programming your subconscious mind.

Avoid other people with negative attitudes, as these people drain your energy and lessen your determination. Surround yourself with positive, can-do people who will help you to consolidate your own positive attitude. Energy drains are people who say things like

“I told you it wouldn’t work”  
“We’ve always done it this way”  
“I knew it was a waste of time trying”

Keep away from these people because they will resent you for striving to succeed and act as a dead battery draining away all your energy.

### **Take action**

This is a fairly obvious step however it is important to understand the need to work fast. Working fast and efficiently will create a momentum that will carry you forward. Get into the habit of starting early and working late on your most important tasks. Don’t be distracted and have a plan for what you would do if your “worst case” scenario occurred.

When you have the confidence of knowing that you can handle the worst that could happen, then handling other, less catastrophic setbacks can be taken in your stride.



### **Focus on the important activities**

When you are working towards your goals, make sure you work effectively (by addressing the biggest pay-off tasks first) and efficiently (by avoiding distractions). Work on the highest priority tasks as identified on your goal achievement plan.

Self interrupts are a form of self-sabotage that comes into play when you are subconsciously uneasy with what is happening. Sometimes, we set challenging goals and as we move closer to achieving them we find something happening to restore the status quo. This is a "fear of success" reaction that is surprisingly common. Be alert to self-sabotaging actions.

One further "golden rule" to be alert to is the Pareto Principle. This shows that 20% of your time will produce 80% of your achievements. Try to identify what that 20% contains and what activities it represents. Then work hard to expand the time you spend doing these activities.

Also, the 80:20 Principle states that 20% of your clients produce 80% of your profits. Learn who are the profitable clients and work out which clients, if any, are actually loss making. Put up your prices for these clients so that they become profitable or they leave you.

### **Review achievements**

Create a continuous flow of achievements, however small. Write them down in a Success Log which you review on a regular basis. The feeling of continuous success which arises from a Success Log will help maintain your momentum and determination to succeed.

Use your review of achievements to understand exactly where you are in relation to your goals, allowing you to re-prioritise as necessary. Keep asking the question "What is the best use of my time in terms of achieving my goals?"

Look to become highly efficient and focused at doing what you can do now. This will create time for you to invest in your skills development so that you become increasingly productive. Look at your achievements and, if necessary, consider breaking larger goals into sub-goals so that you can increase the flow of achievements. When you successfully achieve a goal (or even a sub-goal) give yourself a reward.

### **Learn from failures**

As you take action to attain your goals, things will go wrong. Accept these failures but don't let them turn into negative self-talk, draining your energy and preventing you from taking further positive action. Don't dwell on them as negative experiences but redefine them as "points of learning".

When things don't work out as we expected, there are usually lessons to be learned. Make sure you review all failures to draw lessons from them. This is how you learn to succeed as the lessons learned add to your knowledge base and you (hopefully) don't make the same mistakes a second time.

Action is the vital ingredient. Activity leads to mistakes; mistakes provide you with learning experiences. This increased knowledge means that you can plan with even greater confidence. Keep taking action and you will enjoy the success you deserve.

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