

Achievers are made, not born !

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TODAY, in almost every walk of life achievers are being singled out and compensated for the profits they generate for their organisations. Anyone can become an achiever, because ACHIEVERS ARE MADE NOT BORN. Their success is mainly the result of what they've learnt in what used to be called "the school of hard knocks".

The key to becoming an achiever is a combination of all that you do, good and bad. In fact, there's not much difference in ability between achievers and non-achievers. Closing the small gap between achievers and non-achievers. Closing the small gap between winner and also-ran can be a worthwhile achievement in itself. The point is, you don't have to be twice as good as the next person to be a winner. You just have to be a little bit better. All achievers have one characteristic in common : They are workers. People who enjoy their work and look forward to their jobs each day are the happiest and most successful.

If you want to be an achiever, clearly define what you mean by work. To an average person achieving means addition to his bank account. The achiever appreciates what it means to his life. Do you find your work boring, frustrating, unchallenging ? Then the sooner you change your style the better. If you're bogged down in uninspiring work, look for ways to put your experience and ability to better use. Pleasure and success often lie not too far from the job that is carrying you to a dead end.

It's hard to give up a secure, well-paying job to enter a new career, and the decision demands careful thought. But if you're not living up to your presumed potential, you may eventually have no choice. Once you've found a job that's challenging and enjoyable, you're ready to define where you want to go. You need a specific realistic goal.

Many achievers have secret, almost impossible goals : getting into the World Series, making a break-through scientific discovery. Such goals may not be realistic, but they're worth keeping in the back of your mind while you apply yourself to come as close as you can.

It's better to aim too high, than too low. Too many people defeat themselves with self-imposed limits on

what they think they can achieve. If necessary, divide your goals into two categories : immediate and ultimate, But set them.

CREATE A FAVOURABLE IMPRESSION : To become an achiever you have to get your foot in the right doors and make a favourable impression on those who can help you achieve success. To many it may not seem important. Can you get ahead if you don't feel confident and secure in your appearance and ability to express yourself ?

Every impression you make requires an effort on your part to make sure that your qualities like intelligence and charm are heard and seen by as many as possible. The ability to speak effectively enables you to communicate your worth and advance your ideals, Writing effectively is important too. You don't have to be a professional writer to need those skills. All you need is to produce good reports and memos.

The best way to improve both these skills is to practice. Learn to organize your thoughts and ideas and get them on paper. Before a meeting, organize and write your thoughts clearly. Then when you enter the discussion, you'll be fluent and concise in putting your ideas across.

You have to be like an actor who always projects a constant image of ability and confidence. If you want to be recognised as an outstanding manager, be prepared to play the role at all times and back it up with extensive homework. remember, those you work with and for, are your audience.

PROMOTE YOURSELF : Creating a favourable impression is the first step towards building a reputation as a leader and achiever. While you can't get that reputation without sound accomplishment, accomplishments cannot build your reputation. Hence you will have to develop a personal PR program by having other people - friends, neighbours, colleagues - sing your praises. Everybody loves to talk about important friends; your success builds their own

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importance. It takes subtlety and tact to promote yourself. Look for the right occasion to brag a bit. then give a copy of a newspaper clipping about you or a biographical sketch to others. They'll pass the word.

One of the most effective and satisfying ways to become favourably known is to regularly help others attain their goals. You will find that even years later an opportunity will come your way as a result of what you did for a friend in the past. Study successful people. You'll always find that top leaders have a habit of being gracious, helpful and putting others at ease, and the habit has been cultivated. By conscious repetition of an action over a period of time you can purposely form good habits and reverse the process to eliminate bad ones.

Most great achievers have strict self-discipline. They harness their strengths and minimize weaknesses to give their work maximum effort. But habits can ruin lives and careers even without conscious knowledge.

Consciously build good habits that will help you to achieve your goals. Achievers form the habit of doing the things that failures don't like to do. The key word is habit. The success habitually take over the difficult jobs that others sidestep or avoid. Failing salesmen may dread calling on strangers; successful salesmen train themselves to look on it as a challenge.

BE ENTHUSIASTIC : No quality attracts people more than enthusiasm. Enthusiastic people radiate joy in what they do and make other want to participate also. Achievers must give the impression of being enthusiastic about everything they undertake.

Enthusiasm is a habit you must cultivate to succeed. Most successful leaders developed the habit of being enthusiastic long before they become successful. They often point to enthusiasm as a key to their ability to lead and inspire their teams.

Developing enthusiasm will take time, perseverance and a plan. Before you can be enthusiastic about something, you must first sell yourself on its merits and desirability. Accept the fact that nothing is ever absolutely perfect or imperfect.

BE EMPATHETIC : Empathy is one of those overlooked human qualities that is immense value to any person who aspires to great success. Empathy means "the capacity for participation in another's feelings or ideas". Attempting to understand feelings when they have little to do with our own experience can make us more tolerant and loving human beings.

There are also very practical benefits of being empathetic. It is an excellent tool for influencing people and bringing them around to your point of view. With empathy, you can tunnel into your opponent's thinking.

Empathy means becoming a kind of mind reader. Here are a few pointers.

- Select someone with whom you totally disagree and try to find some understandable reasoning behind his actions, feelings or ideas.
- Pay close attention to what others say : try to gain insight into the depth of their feelings or strength of their ideas.

MAKE INFLUENTIAL FRIENDS : No success story is complete without mention of the help the achiever received from others.

We all have to work with and through others. Hence, the more friends you have, the more likely you are to achieve your goals. Make it your business to make friends. Unless people in a position to help you know you and can see your inaction, they will have neither opportunity nor any reason to extend friendship.

Learn from the champions. If you want to be an achiever, associate with achievers and learn from them. Don't think they won't be interested in you. Most people bright enough to reach the top always on the outlook for juniors with real promise. They like to be known for picking winners. Many people hate to ask for help. They feel it reveals some lack in intelligence or resourcefulness. yet those who have attained position of power and responsibility have no problems saying "I need all the help I can get".

All the positive traits that will help you become an achiever will also enable you to widen your circle of influential friends. If you are enthusiastic, empathetic, and can speak and write well, you'll automatically attract other people.

THINK CREATIVELY : We all have the wonderful ability to think. Yet we spend so much time reacting to events, that we have little time left to initiate action. Many are geared to thinking that they should be "me of action". But that's not the only component in achievement — and success.

Neither brilliance nor fanatical dedication is enough to carry you to the top. Action merely for its own sake can even do more harm than good. The person who also spends time on serious thinking will come up with an easier, better way to accomplish his goals.

Very few managers take the time to step back from the daily routine for serious productive thinking. You must

set aside a definite time and place for it . A place where you can enjoy the solitude and privacy to pursue your innermost thoughts. The workers of the world can be divided into two categories : work processors and creative thinkers.

Work processors put in their time, do a dependable job, but can't hope for major advancement and responsibility. They don't question what they are doing, why they are doing it, or how the system might be improved. This is often true of managers, too. They're so busy putting out fires, they don't have time to think about how to prevent them.

On the other hand, creative thinkers are the exceptions. They make the time to question the old way of doing things. They feel there has to be a better way to increase sales, cut costs, develop new products, finance growth.

There are creative thinkers on every level and in every type of job. It's their creative thinking that helps them move up. Real innovators are mainly concerned with making valid bottom line contributions to their organizations. They derive personal satisfaction from making a difference. Which usually leads to more material rewards as well.

Don't delude yourself that time spent thinking is time lost because you are not producing something tangible. All truly momentous achievements begin as thoughts.

Learn to think creatively by focusing on needs, Necessity is the mother of invention, so keep asking yourself what will make your product/service more acceptable to your superiors and the public and better than the competition.

The process of learning to think creatively is not very scientific, but it usually includes the following :

- Define the problem specifically and in writing.
- Assemble pertinent data and assess their ramifications
- List all possible solutions the logical and the crazy
- Forget all you've done; let your efforts incubate for a few days.
- Follow the flash in illumination

BE A GOOD DECISION MAKER : The logical follow-up to creative thinking is decision-making. You'll never get anything accomplished unless you're prepared to make decisions. When you reach the top, the work processors below you will only be as effective as your decisions.

The result of any decision can, of course, be good or bad, but indecision is always negative.

A decision "to play it safe" means no exploration of new ideas, products of services, especially since technology and information are changing rapidly. So a decision to do nothing or rely totally on the wisdom of the past is a bad decision.

The job of a leader, a true achiever, is to find better answers to problems. When leaders rail in this basic responsibility, the effects can be disastrous and far reaching.

The fastest way to determine your own decision-making potential is to evaluate your life and career to date, you have been making decisions all your life, Assess them. How are your skills. The more decisions you make, the better your judgement and decisions become. Keep honing your ability so that when you reach the point in your career where decisions are major and expensive, you've had practice and have gained confidence in your abilities.

Never make decisions based on emotion or to prove a point. The best way to approach a decision is quickly and calmly.

- Make sure you have a grasp of the subject. Write it down listing the positives and negatives.
- Get input from others whose opinions you trust, paying more attention to naysayers than "Yesmen".
- Examine all advantages and disadvantages closely but quickly.
- Make your decision and execute it vigorously.

Remember, failing to make a decision is a decision to fail.

DELEGATE : Intelligent delegation is one of a leader's basic duties. Never do anything yourself that someone else can do for you as well or better.

Delegation begins by determining all the tasks that must be performed to reach your organization's goals. Then select the individual or individuals best qualified to handle each duty and empower them to do it. Finally, check results regularly to make sure the productivity goals you've set are being reached or surpassed.

Many executives are reluctant to delegate because they believe in the old saying "If you want something done right, do it yourself." Unfortunately, that often leads to waste time, energy and money.

An even more common reason for failure to delegate is deep seated insecurity. This self-defeating attitude influences how you accept and recognise the performance of those who work under you.

Is this your problem ? Ask yourself :

- Is my assistant after my job ?
- Am I afraid he will do the work better than I can ?
- Am I afraid to give him either over praise or more authority because I fear he will replace me ?

A manager's primary duty, to himself and his company is to perform as leader. You can't give your best effort to that work if you're swamped with work others should be doing.

BE EVEN TEMPERED : There's a fine old word that should be part of every manager's vocabulary and character : Imperturbability.

It means grace under pressure, calm in the face of trouble and difficulty. It means being unexcitable, unflappable, steady and even-tempered no matter what happens. It enables you to stand tall and think straight despite pressure. You can't rise to the top until you learn to cope with the unexpected demands and pressures that go hand-in-hand with outstanding achievement. You can't achieve or retain real success until you learn to control the emotions that can harm you.

Concentrate on the opposite action in order to overcome negative feeling. If you deliberately attempt to act calm during moments of great stress, real calmness will take over and get you out of the crisis.

When something makes you angry, the best thing to do is nothing. After the heat of the moment has passed, the incident may turn out to be of no consequence. Remaining silent gives you time to study the situation coolly to see whether anything really needs to be said or done.

Fear is another negative emotion that cuts into performance. Instead of walking away from fear, embrace it : discover exactly what causes it or the fear will grow worse.

Subconscious fear and anger are the primary breeders of stress. fear of failure leads to supersensitivity, causing us to flare up at even the mildest constructive criticism. fear and anger build a destructive pressure that takes away the ability to think clearly. That's stress, an unnatural handicap to performance. Regular physical exercise makes the body far less sensitive to stress. Exercise releases endorphins, the body's calming chemicals that give a person a sense of well-being. So if you carry heavy responsibilities and find yourself in stressful situations, try exercise for relief. Exercise is also a tool in keeping the energy you need to overcome temporary setback and meet challenges.

A lifelong dedication to becoming an achiever is like one long, exhausting workday. You have to pace yourself so that you're in top form all day, every day.

AVOID ISOLATION : Success sets other traps. One of the toughest problems to conquer when you reach the top is the ivory tower syndrome, or executive isolation. The faster a manager moves from the roots of the business, the harder it is to keep up with what's happening in that business.

Leaders, whether in business, Government, or any large organization, are shielded by security guards, assistants and secretaries. These people not only provide the top executive with needed safety and privacy, but insulate him from the real world. He seldom gets an opportunity to interact with employees or customers.

Most managers have a person-to-person contact with people who live, work and think alike. This gradual isolation from reality is a trap you must fight from the very beginning of your rise of the success ladder. You must work to keep lines of real communication open and make certain that communication comes up to you from the bottom.

There are many tried methods to achieve this : advisory committees, customers, market and employee surveys, and suggestion boxes. The important thing is to get good information from a wide variety of sources.

A leader has the responsibility and authority of making the final decision. So it's critical to have a total grasp of the situation before making decisions.

Another common pitfall of success is getting carried away with the excellence of one's own work. Once you start believing your own press reports, you're in trouble.

A successful achiever can be overwhelmed with excessive praise to the point that he stops forward progress. And you can't win this year's game with last years scores.

The key is to learn to take it all in strides - the successes and the failures. Both are usually temporary, and both provide valuable lessons.

When you think you have the whole world in the palm of your hand and that there's no one quite like you, stop. Think not of the great things you've done. But of all the things that still need to be done. Then get started again.