

The Success Blueprint

By
Ken McCarthy

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The Success Blueprint

Success secrets they never tell you about at the rah-rah seminars

Everyone is seeking success, yet success is rare enough in our world that when it happens it's a big deal, the stuff of headlines and legends.

That's too bad because enjoying success doesn't need to be a mythic quest. Success and the feeling that comes from it can be a daily part of your life.

But there's one thing that's true about success: It never happens by accident.

It's true that in extremely rare instances some people do win the lottery or have some other great good fortune land on them through no effort of their own, but one episode of even great good fortune does not guarantee happiness. It doesn't even guarantee success.

Success comes from a completely difference source...and that's what this Blueprint is all about.

Reality Check #1

My favorite quote about success comes from someone who was arguably the most successful person in his particular field of all time.

The field: late night TV, one of the most lucrative broadcasting niches on earth and one of the most competitive. Back in the "old days" before cable, there were only a handful of TV channels: the Big Three networks and a handful of local stations with a PBS station thrown in for good measure.

To win as the late night TV king in that era was really something, exponentially more significant than it is today and the winner was...Johnny Carson.

No one before or since has so thoroughly dominated the market of late night TV. Carson made it look effortless. It seemed like he just casually showed up at work each night and just talked about whatever was on the top of his mind.

Here was Carson's philosophy of success:

"The road to success is always under construction."

This may come as a dose of cold water to a lot of people, but there's a ton of wisdom in this

phrase - and a lot of encouragement if you understand the fullness of what he meant.

"The road to success is always under construction"

First, success is a road, not a destination. It's a process, not a result.

You can never control results or outcomes. You may think you can, but you're just kidding yourself.

In fact, successful living is largely about dealing with "other factors" that you didn't plan for that intervene on your way to where you're going.

Sometimes "other factors" help, sometimes they hinder, but all the positive thinking in the world won't make them go away.

The one thing you do have control over is the work you do, "the construction."

The good news is YOU build the road. You don't have to wait for someone else to build it for you and, here's the exciting part, no one can stop you. As long as you show up every day and move things one more step forward, you have a very good chance of outdistancing limiting circumstances and setbacks - even major ones.

Second, success is an ongoing daily process. The idea that someday you'll "have it made" is the biggest obstacle to success - and happiness - there is. Success is today. It's right now. You're successful when you're living successfully and that's a day by day, moment by moment thing.

There are plenty of multi-millionaires who thought that "success" was going to be a specific bank balance and who are absolutely miserable human beings. There's nothing wrong with having a big pile of money, but the idea that that alone is going to make for a successful life is an entirely bankrupt concept.

If "success" is out there on some distant horizon, you're on the wrong road.

On the other hand, if you know that success is showing up and doing the "right" things every day, you're not only on the right road, you're already in the Success Zone.

Reality Check # 2

You're not one of the "chosen ones" - and neither is anyone else!

There's a strange "aura" around the idea of success.

It seems to be basic human nature to attribute mythical, almost otherworldly, qualities to people who are successful in a particular field - especially if it's a field we wish that we ourselves were successful in.

Sometimes this misapprehension comes in the form of hero worship. Sometimes it comes in the form of envy: "What does that guy have that I don't?"

Anytime you find yourself thinking either way, recognize that you're on the wrong track.

There are no heroes and there are no "lucky" people. There are just people who show up every day and do what is necessary to move the ball down the field.

Success is a combination of preparation and circumstances. You have 100% control over the former and a lot less than 100% control over the latter.

The person who is not destined to be successful focuses on circumstances, his own and other people's.

In contrast, the person who is in the Success Zone focuses on what he or she can do today, as in right now, to prepare for the opportunities life offers.

This is more great news because it takes "success" out of the realm of luck and puts it where it belongs, completely under your control.

Three wise men

To drive this point home, I'm going to call on three wise people: Abraham Lincoln, Jim Rohn, and Louis Pasteur.

"I will study and get ready, and perhaps my chance will come." - Abraham Lincoln

It would be hard to imagine a more modest quote about success, but when you look at the accomplishments of the man behind it, you have to take it seriously.

From an impoverished back country kid to a successful, self-taught lawyer to the President of the United States, Lincoln knew something about hardship, "bad luck," and the power of steady, intelligent work.

Note the formula: study, get ready, and look for your chance.

It's not just about learning from others (study) or just about getting ready (work) or appreciating the power of chance (getting out in the world with your eyes open.)

It's about all three - study, do, and network. System grads will recognize this formula. Your exact outcome is impossible to predict, but this is how things are accomplished in the world.

"I will study and get ready, and perhaps my chance will come."

Lincoln was a freakishly tall, awkward, not-terribly-attractive man with a strange speaking voice who was raised dirt poor in the middle of nowhere with zero education and advantages. The only special "aura" he had was his modest formula which he applied with devotion and diligence.

"Don't wish it were easier, wish you were better" - Jim Rohn

Rohn was an average guy living the average life of a semi-conscious American on auto-pilot. In other words, a life of frustration, low accomplishment, and low grade misery.

He didn't work on himself, so he didn't get anywhere.

Then he woke up and in the process built a successful business and became what he calls a "business philosopher."

I've always loved this quote because it gets to the heart of the matter.

"Don't wish it were easier, wish you were better."

People who spend energy wishing their lives were easier or better are doomed. People who repeatedly roll up their sleeves and do whatever it takes to make themselves better to meet life as it is are in the Success Zone.

"Chance only favors the prepared mind" - Louis Pasteur

You may have heard a variation of this one: "Success is what happens when luck meets the prepared mind."

This one is profound. I think Pasteur's quote is better because he inserts the word "only." In the real world and in the long run ONLY the prepared "get lucky."

Luck has three parts: 1) recognizing the opportunity, 2) having the skills to exploit the opportunity, and 3) having the discipline to apply your skills to the opportunity.

Notice that nowhere in my definition is the idea of something falling magically into your lap. It's all about the preparation of the "lucky" person.

Every day, people step over and around massive opportunities. Every day, people are confronted with opportunities they can't profit from because they never took the time to develop useful skills. Every day, perceptive, skilled people see opportunities and then do nothing about them.

Opportunity is truly everywhere, but only from the "prepared mind."

"Chance only favors the prepared mind"

There's a fourth quote and I don't know who it came from or even if I'm getting it right, but it goes something like this: **"Luck has a funny way of showing up dressed as hard work."**

There are no exceptions

We always want to find exceptions to every rule. I know I do.

There are some areas of life that are so charged with emotion that it can be hard to think clearly.

Money and love are two of the big ones.

For example, when you're struggling financially and you don't have a clue, it's easy to believe that people who are successful in business are some kind of mythical super geniuses.

Nothing could be further from the truth.

Business success comes from knowing a viable market inside and out and bringing the relevant know-how, skills and effort to the market to mine the gold.

That's it.

Money is completely impersonal. It flows to value. If you put relevant value in front of a viable marketplace and you're organized both in your marketing and in your operations, you'll make money. No one is stopping you. In fact, lots of people - happy customers, vendors, joint venture partners - will help you.

Dwelling on the "luck" of successful business owners is the surest way never to have any.

"All you need is love"

The other big area of confusion is love.

In fact, this area is far more charged even than money. You can be happy with love in your life and a modest amount of money ("enough"), but there is no amount of money than can compensate for a loveless life.

It can be easy to feel unlucky in this area and think that others have luck that you don't.

Easy, but wrong.

First, there are all kinds of love in this world: romantic love, love for a mate, love for family members, love for your children, love for friends, love for your neighbors, love for pets, love for people you work with and on behalf of, love for random people you interact with during your day.

The reality is there are all kinds of opportunities to give and receive love all day long. People who are awake to this fact have a lot of love in their lives. People who aren't, don't.

Of course, the Big Deal in the love department is romantic love: the most unstable, most fraught with peril, most erratic form of love there is. In fact, a credible case can be made that it's not love at all. It's chasing evolutionary-programmed brain chemicals.

But however you cut it, even the pursuit of romantic love follows the "study + work + network" formula.

First, you have to know what you're doing in dealing with the opposite sex - and that takes learning. Then you have to apply your learning in real world settings with real people and improve your understanding. Finally, you need to get in front of as many likely prospects as you can. The more, the better.

Romantic love is strictly a matter of chemistry. It's either there or it's not there. When it's there, there's nothing you need to do (except not screw it up) and when it's not there, there's nothing you can do to change it.

The process is random so it appears to be influenced by luck, but it's not a matter of luck. It's a matter of knowledge and exposure.

Men: If you know yourself, know what you want, are living a life you can be proud of, are decently groomed and dressed, have basic social graces - and talk to enough likely prospects - lightning will strike. There's nothing more you can do to make it happen - or prevent it.

Women: Probably the same applies to you, but I can only talk from my own experience.

The only additional thing I'd throw in is when you make your choice, choose a person with character traits you admire because their character traits are what you're going to be dealing with long after the glow of romance has faded. Change is possible, but not worth betting your life on.

Speaking of character

Because there is such huge overlap between buyers of Internet marketing "how to" and dating "how to" (similar demographic), I'm going to riff a bit about the "dating guru" market for men.

Just as there are legions of scam artists in the "how to make money" arena, there are similar legions in the "how to find love" arena. In fact, these days sometimes they're the same people and the "leaders" in these markets socialize together extensively.

Here's the real deal:

Just as there are skills involved in building a business and you need to learn them, there are also skills involved in meeting new people and creating relationships. "Chance only favors the prepared mind."

What doesn't exist are "secret methods" that will let you transcend basic reality.

I've spelled out the reality of money making: good market, good product, good marketing and good organization. No "hocus pocus" is going to allow you to avoid the real work of putting all these elements together.

Romance is the same: Develop your life; develop your social skills, especially, but not limited to potential romantic partners; and then get out there and meet as many good prospects as you possibly can. Lightening will strike. When it does, you'll have something new to deal with: couple hood. In the meantime, enjoy your single life. It has its advantages!

That's it.

There are no other "secrets," NLP patterns, or other frat boy BS manipulation fantasies that will let you short cut this reality.

If you doubt this, read "The Game" by Neil Strauss.

Oddly, many deeply deluded guys read this as a "how to pick up girls" manual, but it's actually an accurate portrayal of the sociopaths who set themselves up as experts on "picking up girls" and made a big business out of it.

They have a very simple formula - which not so coincidentally is used by their fraudster friends in the Internet marketing business:

1. They build themselves up as big studs (a total and complete fantasy)
2. They tell you their fabulous (and fraudulent) success comes from their "secret" methods
3. They sell you on the idea that the reason you don't live the fantasy life that they live is that you are a loser and will continue to be a loser until you give them money - big money - for their secrets
4. Once you bite, they feed you an overly complicated, dysfunctional line of BS that has a few crumbs of reality mixed in for credibility.
5. When you try their absurd methods and they don't work, you're told it's a deficiency in you that coincidentally can be corrected by their new course.

To get the scam going, one bogus "expert" sings the praises of another bogus "expert" who in turn sings the praises of yet another bogus "expert."

And they call this "marketing."

It's marketing in the same way that pharmaceutical companies that sell dangerous drugs they know don't work is marketing.

A good REAL facts of life book about the SKILL of dating that both gives real information and calls the " BS artists out is "How to Succeed with Women" by Ronald Louis and David Copeland. The first 16 pages will set you straight on what it's all about.

They make some very pointed comments about the dating gurus on pages 13 to 16.

Ladies: I have no idea what book to suggest to you. Never been in your shoes. Sorry.

Men: There are four things that can happen when you go on a date (i.e. explore romantic potentials with someone): 1) she won't be attracted to you, you won't be attracted to her, 2) she'll be attracted to you, you won't be attracted to her, 3) she won't be attracted to you, you'll be attracted to her or 4) she'll be attracted to you, you'll be attracted to her.

If it's option #4, then you have something to work with, but even then there's still a lot to work on.

If someone likes you, they like you. See where it goes.

If someone isn't attracted to you, move on. Asking "why" is a waste of time and buying another DVD set full of BS isn't going to help.

Oddly, for something that is so intensely personal, the seeking part is a completely impersonal process. This doesn't mean be impersonal about it. It means that the outcome of any interaction is completely random. It's not personal in any way.

The more numbers you run, the more likely you're going to end up with a good outcome. It really is that simple. And of course, be nice along the way. You're not the only person with feelings.

Men who are "successful" with women specifically seek out women who like them and then enjoy their company. Men who are unsuccessful with women obsess over their "failures" and then send the pickup guru of the month money for his latest set of manipulative schemes.

It all boils down to skill

No matter what the activity - making a million dollars, finding the love of your life, and thousands of other aspirations - it all boils down to skill and doing.

Notice that knowing "secrets" is not on the list of what's required.

Knowing "secrets" is the booby prize.

Figuring out what SKILLS are needed to achieve a particular goal and then working to master those skills is the real solution.

Sometimes people do get lucky. Their daddy is rich and gives them a six figure job in spite of personal incompetence. But let's focus on probabilities. Not lottery wins. After all, if you were George Bush Jr. you'd know it by now.

Here's what NOT to do:

1. See a financially successful person

2. Attribute their success to "luck" or to semi-divinity
3. Assume you don't have what it takes
4. Pay big money to get a few "secrets" thrown your way or get to occupy the same meeting room as the "geniuses" for a few days
5. Do little or nothing with what you learn and repeat the cycle

A surprising number of people who make excellent money are not only not geniuses, they're not even overly bright.

What they are is FOCUSED and tenacious.

They see an opportunity and then they show up at work every day and grind down any obstacles that crop up with relentless effort.

How do you stick with it?

If you're getting my message, you realize that there's a good news/bad news component to success.

The good news is that success is entirely up for grabs. You don't need to be born into it. You don't need to have the "right" background. You don't have to have the "right stuff." You don't have to beg "gurus" to share their secrets.

The bad news is this is work and it's not just work for a few hours or a few days. It's work that goes on for months and years and, depending how committed you are, it can go on for decades.

How do you stick with it long enough to get the prize?

First, it helps to realize that there really are no short cuts. I hope I've made that clear. It's either the real way or no way. Trying 100 "sure-fire" schemes won't increase your odds one bit.

Second, realize that by taking this reality based attitude and living it you're putting yourself in very good company.

All the worthwhile accomplishments in this world have been created by people who were realistic and tough. I don't mean tough in the sense of being pointlessly mean. I mean tough in the sense of resilient, relentless, continuously moving forward - even if it means you have to crawl for a while.

I don't know who your personal heroes are. (I hope you have some and I hope they're not "guru" types!) If you look at anyone who has accomplished anything worthy of admiration, you'll find that they faced big obstacles, worked a lot harder than anyone realizes, and stuck with it even when things looked impossible.

By taking on these characteristics, you're instantly in the Club. Truly successful people (not poseurs and scam artists) will recognize you, even if you haven't "made it" yet. Hard working,

resourceful people who don't give up are a rarity in this world. Another member of the Club is always welcome.

Third, with this attitude you can enter the Success Zone right now. You don't have to wait.

Even if no one recognizes your diligence (yet), YOU will know. You'll know that you're applying yourself. You'll know that instead of whining or wishing it was easier or giving up, you're working steadily to get where you want to be.

This process will give you one of the greatest treasures of all, one that you can't beg, borrow, buy, steal, or manufacture: self respect.

You don't hear this phrase used much today. Instead you hear about "self esteem." Now it's part of school curriculums everywhere. Teaching people to feel good about themselves just for existing! This may feel good - temporarily - but I think earned self respect is a better goal.

The reality is self respect is earned. A lot of people, prominent and otherwise, learn how to live without it, but if you're smart, you'll organize your life around earning it daily. It's the source of phenomenal resilience.

How to keep your morale high

The military understands a thing or two about getting difficult, complicated tasks that take a long time done under difficult circumstances.

That's why smart commanders take troop morale so seriously.

Without high morale, nothing gets done. The best equipment, the best training, the best strategy and tactics, the best supply chain means nothing without morale.

If there's one indispensable art in leadership, whether it's leading a group or leading yourself, it's morale building.

The challenge boils down to this:

How do you keep going when everything is going wrong, when you're stuck, where there's no obvious progress, when you face disappointing setbacks, and when it seems like you're never going to get where you want to go?

The answer is going to seem too simple to be true and it's going to sound like a cliché:

"Take it one day at a time. Plan your work and you work your plan."

There is so much real life wisdom packed into these two sentences, it's going to take a bit to draw it all out.

One day at a time

When you think about all the things that can wear you down, two of the biggest are things that aren't even real! The past and the future.

Fear of the future and regret or resentment about the past are two of the biggest time, energy and emotion sink holes in the universe.

You can learn from the past, you can prepare for the future, but if you live mentally in either, it will wear you down surer than any real life difficulty.

Life is now. If there is an opportunity to enjoy it - now - take it. If there isn't, make one. If you're in a tough spot, hang on long enough to your next good moment.

Whatever you do, don't project all the work it's going to take to get you from Point A to Point Z. Figure out what the next step is and then make that step your total focus.

When you're done, acknowledge your accomplishment and then go on to the next step. One step at a time. Give yourself the benefit of the momentum that's created by simple, clear headed action. Don't derail your momentum by thinking of past difficulties or worrying about future ones.

Today - now - is the only thing you need to concern yourself with. Anything more is like strapping an 80 pound bag of rocks to your back and going for a long march. You can do it if you really want to, but it won't help.

Plan your work, work your plan

I have to confess when I first heard this phrase - plan your work, work your plan - it sounded too simple-minded to be useful at all. It sounded like the shallowest of platitudes.

Now I think it's the wisest advice any human being can ever give another.

Here's why: The reality is that we are happiest when we're working towards a worthy goal.

Anyone who has ever succeeded in anything knows the strange "let down" after accomplishing it. Why? "Success" is gratifying, but doing is a lot more fun.

This is one of the stranger aspects of success. People who don't get this can be very "successful" and very miserable at the same time. Why? They misunderstand "success."

They think success is getting the thing. In the case of money, they think it's having a certain amount. When they get it, they think they're "done" and they feel cheated because instead of elation, there's a letdown, which can grow into a huge emptiness.

"The road to success is always under construction." Remember?

Success is not an outcome, it's a WAY OF LIFE. That's why you can enter the Success Zone any time you want. Conversely, it's why certain "successful" people are miserable wretches.

We are happiest - and isn't being happy being successful? - when we have a worthy goal we're working towards.

So if you want to be happy - and successful - have a PLAN. Be working on something new no matter what you've accomplished or haven't accomplished.

Plan your work...

Some people like to talk about dreams and goals. I prefer plans.

A good plan includes the following parts: defining what it means to "win," laying out the steps required to get there, figuring out the resources you'll need, and setting a timetable.

If accomplishing a particular thing is worthwhile to you, it deserves a plan. If you can't muster the energy to develop a basic plan then you're probably not really serious about that particular goal.

What's YOUR plan for the next step in your life?

Not having one - or leaving it at the level of vague goals or worse "dreams" - is a ticket to misery now and lack of accomplishment later.

Sometimes people tell others "get a clue." I think it's more useful to tell people who are lost to "get a plan."

Work your plan...

Now that you've thought about what's meaningful to you (a serious project all by itself) and created a plan for your next step, now what?

That's easy. Work. I know that this sounds insanely obvious, but I so often encounter people with goals, even plans who aren't working them, I feel I have to bring this up.

What's the problem?

I don't know. It could be a bad childhood. It could be something in the air. It could be a lack of self esteem.

If you can remove these problems, great, but in the meantime just get to work.

The idea that everything has to be perfect in your life for you to be able to work on your plan is the craziest, most self-defeating notion there is.

Here's the reality of life: Things will NEVER be perfect. You will NEVER be 100% healthy and energetic. You will NEVER be without a handicap of one sort or another. So if you're waiting for conditions to be "right" they never will be.

As Earl Nightingale said: "Everyone has problems. Successful people are people who overcome theirs."

How to actually do it

Is being successful really as simple as "planning your work and working your plan?"

Well, what's the alternative? Not having a plan or not working the plan you do have? That's not going to work very well is it?

So unless we can come up with a better way, let's stick with this one.

There's a trick to this "planning your work and working your plan" business and it was first written about in "Think and Grow Rich."

Charles Schwab who was a leader in the steel industry asked a management expert named Ivy Lee to help him get more things done in a day.

Schwab was already an incredibly effective person. In fact he was legendary for helping make US Steel into one of the most efficient businesses of its time.

Lee said, I'll tell you and then pay me what you think it's worth.

List all the things you want to get done tomorrow.

List them in priority from 1 to 6.

Do the first job listed and stay with it until it's completed.

If, at the end of the day, there is still time to get to job #2 and job #3, do as time allows.

The next day continue to do the very same thing.

Then have all your subordinates do it.

Do this for a week and then send me a check for what you think the advice is worth."

Schwab reportedly sent him a check for \$25,000 which in today's money would buy \$266,490.00 worth of goods and services.

The new and improved version

Everyone likes new and improved versions of things and there is a new improved version of this method too, thanks to Marc Andreessen.

Marc is the guy who made the World Wide Web into what it is today by making the first widely used web browser.

He has his own variation on Lee's method which has some improvements so important I'm reprinting it from his blog:

Each night before you go to bed, prepare a 3x5 index card with a short list of 3 to 5 things that you will do the next day.

And then, the next day, do those things.

I sit down at my desk before I go to sleep, pull up my To Do List (which I keep in Microsoft Word's outline mode, due to long habit), and pick out the 3 to 5 things I am going to get done tomorrow. I write those things on a fresh 3x5 card, lay the card out with my car keys, and go to bed. Then, the next day, I try like hell to get just those things done. If I do, it was a successful day.

People who have tried lots of productivity techniques will tell you that this is one of the most successful techniques they have ever tried.

Once you get into the habit, you start to realize how many days you used to have when you wouldn't get 3 to 5 important/significant/meaningful things done during a day.

Then, throughout the rest of the day, **use the back of the 3x5 card as your Anti-To Do List.** This isn't a real list. And the name is tongue firmly in cheek.

What you do is this: every time you do something -- anything -- useful during the day, write it down in your Anti-To Do List on the card.

Each time you do something, you get to write it down and you get that little rush of endorphins that the mouse gets every time he presses the button in his cage and gets a food pellet.

And then at the end of the day, before you prepare tomorrow's 3x5 card, take a look at today's card and its Anti-To do list and marvel at all the things you actually got done that day.

Then tear it up and throw it away.

Another day well spent, and productive.

I love this technique -- being able to put more notches on my accomplishment belt, so to speak, by writing down things on my Anti-To do list as I accomplish them throughout the day makes me feel marvelously productive and efficient. Far more so than if I just did those things and didn't write them down.

Plus, you know those days when you're running around all day and doing stuff and talking to people and making calls and responding to emails and filling out paperwork and you get home and you're completely exhausted and you say to yourself, "What the hell did I actually get done today?"

Your Anti-To do list has the answer.

By the way, in order to do this, you have to carry a pen with you everywhere you go. I recommend the **Fisher Space Pen**. It's short and bullet-shaped so it won't poke you in the thigh when it's in your pocket, it's wonderfully retro, it helped save the Apollo 11 mission, and it writes upside down. What's not to like?

You gotta love a practical minded geek with a sense of humor!

Why Marc's method is ever better

The process of thinking through what needs to be done and prioritizing it is one of the most important things you can do (plan your work.)

It takes work - hard mental work - which is why 90% of the people in the world make their living by working on someone else's plan.

Planning and prioritizing are the entrepreneur's must-have skills. If you don't have them or if they're weak, get to work. You have the method you need now.

I like Marc's method because it gives you positive reinforcement.

Most people don't know what real work is. They hack around a bit, declare themselves "exhausted" and then go out and "reward" themselves with time-blasting leisure activities.

Serious entrepreneurs have the opposite problem. They know no limits when it comes to work.

Work ten hours? Sure. Twelve? Definitely, pour it on. Work until midnight? Sure. Squeeze in a few more hours? Why not?

Saturday? Of course. Sunday too? Sure, just a few hours (eight or so). Holidays? Ditto. Christmas anybody?

As you can tell from everything I've written so far, I am a huge fan of work. Nothing worthwhile happens without masses of work and a whole lot of life's problems can be solved by the motto: "Complain less, work more."

But there are limits and it's easy for the serious entrepreneur to overstep them.

Marc's method is brilliant because it has you define your work, do your work, and then when you're done your essential work walk away feeling good about what you've accomplished.

As simple as this sounds, it requires discipline.

Because perception is everything...

You may work hard and be incredibly effective, but unless you keep track, you may feel that you're not. This is pretty close to a definition of hell on earth, but it is COMMON for driven people.

Marc is a good example of a driven person. He's under 40, has created two multi-billion dollar businesses from scratch, is working on a third and just started a venture capital firm.

But I guarantee - and he as much as says so - that if he didn't have a system for comfortably managing his work time: a) he would not be as effective as he is and b) he would not be as happy as he appears to be.

(Of course, appearances can be deceiving, but he's definitely doing exactly what he wants to be doing and racking up accomplishment after accomplishment while maintaining a great sense of humor. If that ain't success, I don't know what is.)

Summary: Do good and feel good about doing it. Sounds simple. Takes discipline.

If it's all work, you're in the wrong place

Work - work - work.

Discipline - discipline - discipline

Focus - focus - focus

It doesn't sound like much fun, does it?

That's why you want to make sure you're working in a field that you love.

When you're doing work you love, a huge portion of what seems like time and effort to the outside world is actually PLAY. That's the dirty little secret about people who are truly successful. They love what they're doing so much they'd even consider doing it for free - or even paying to do it - if they had to.

If you haven't yet discovered what that is for you yet, there are lots and lots of books that will help you identify your strengths and loves so that you can get clear about what they are and can put yourself in the right place in life.

I can't imagine a better investment of time and thought.

Taking care of yourself

Whether you're in your perfect situation yet or still working towards it or still trying to figure out what it would be, remember that - if you're lucky - life is a long game and you live in a body.

If you've been lucky enough never to be ill or disabled for an extended period of time, you may not get this. Hopefully you won't have to learn the hard way, but whether you get it now or not, you can count on this: nature always gets the last word.

Rest, recreation, relaxed social time, "doing nothing" time, nutritious food in reasonable amounts, eliminating bad habits, using your body (aka exercise) - all these things are essential for helping keep your body from breaking down.

Depending on your constitution, you may be able to go without these things for a long time. Actually, you're far luckier if you can't. It's better to find out in your 30s or even your 20s that you're a mortal human being with a body that can break down if abused too long.

Some accomplishments take a long time, years, even decades, to come to full fruition. Nothing could be sadder than to finally "get there" and discover you've broken your body in the process by neglect and abuse.

You can't guarantee good health, but you can raise your odds exponentially.

Unfortunately, society is not going to encourage you. Junk food, stress, no exercise, "partying" are the norm.

Part of the problem is many people confuse self indulgence with self care.

Today, what used to be called "The Deadly Sins" are now celebrated as part of an entitled lifestyle:

- * Sloth - not using your body, not walking, not exercising, laying on the couch - Great!
- * Gluttony - eating and drinking more than you should and doing other things you shouldn't do at all - That makes you a player!

I don't think anyone at this point can believe that overeating, consuming lots of junk food, drinking and drugging, smoking, and avoiding exercise will lead you to a good place. Yet, many take these things as their RIGHT. It's their "reward" to themselves for dealing with the "trials" of life.

This is such a common set of beliefs and has such a massive impact on attaining success, I think I'd be negligent if I didn't point out that indulging yourself is not only not taking care of yourself, it's the exact opposite. You're shooting yourself in the foot. It may happen in slow motion, but the end result will be the same or worse.

No magic bullets

I sincerely wish there were such a thing as a magic bullet.

One shot and the whole problem is taken care of, the entire accomplishment is attained.

Life just doesn't work that way.

Solutions are found and accomplishments are attained through doing many things right over time.

The odds of achievement are radically increased when you realize that success comes from skill: identifying the skills needed, getting the right instruction, and then practicing and using your skills over and over again.

Success doesn't come from knowing "secrets," from being a "genius" or from being "lucky."

To adapt a phrase from Forest Gump, "successful is as successful does" and there is nothing - NOTHING - that prevents you from entering the Success Circle right now because you can "do" successful right now.

If life seems hard, that's because it is.

That's why we marvel at anyone who has lifted themselves out of the muck and done something worthwhile. But we should marvel not because they're "blessed," but because they've blessed themselves by taking the great gift of their life seriously and doing something with it.

Bless your life. Work it. And enjoy it too.

- Ken McCarthy

P.S. If mastering Internet marketing is part of your plan, I've taught this subject successfully to thousands of people over the last 15+ years.

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