

# Principles for Success

What does Success Really Mean?

**Volker Ballueder**

**dscoop**





VOLKER BALLUEDER

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# **PRINCIPLES FOR SUCCESS**

WHAT DOES SUCCESS  
REALLY MEAN?

Principles for Success: What does Success Really Mean?

2<sup>nd</sup> edition

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# ABOUT THE AUTHOR: VOLKER BALLUEDER



Volker Ballueder is an executive coach, hypno-psychotherapist, and former Chief Revenue Officer with over 20 years of experience leading growth in tech scale-ups, SaaS, and multinational organisations. Originally from Germany, he moved to the UK in 2001 and now lives near Brighton, working with leaders across the UK and internationally.

Throughout his corporate career, Volker built and led high-performing go-to-market teams of 60+ people, partnering closely with founders and CEOs to scale revenue in fast-changing, uncertain environments. This experience shaped his belief that exceptional leadership is defined not by stability, but by the ability to navigate volatility with clarity, resilience, and composure.

Today, he works as a board advisor, non-executive director, GTM consultant, and executive coach, combining commercial expertise with deep psychological insight. His approach integrates emotional intelligence, neuroscience, NLP, and mindfulness, supported by over 1,500 hours of coaching experience and advanced qualifications including an MBA, EQ-i 2.0 certification, and EMCC accreditation.

Volker first wrote *Principles for Success* in 2019 and this is the 2nd edition. The podcast 'Stories of Success' is now under new management, while his current podcast project, *Man Up/Man Down*, focuses on men's mental health. He is also writing his next book. His work centres on helping leaders show up with authenticity, courage, and calm decisiveness—especially in times of uncertainty.

At the heart of his work is a simple intention: to create space for leaders to think clearly, lead inclusively, and build resilient teams that thrive in complexity. This is grounded in his own daily practices of reflection, early mornings, and a deep curiosity for human behaviour and growth.

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# INTRODUCTION

I launched a podcast in January 2018 because I wanted to interview people from the digital industry and ask how they define success. My criteria for guests was and is that they have to be from Europe or be European. This narrowed my target guest list as otherwise the focus might have been broader than the audience I wanted to reach. I ended up with guests from most continents anyway.

I've recorded over 40 podcasts with not only digital industry figures but people from all walks of life, industries and backgrounds. As I personally put a stronger focus on my own coaching and consulting business, I've been interviewing coaches and mindfulness teachers alongside high profile business leaders. The idea is to share those interviews with a wider audience, as some of you would never get a chance to experience those types of conversations.

After 18 months of recording I figured it was time to share a summary of what I've learned with a wider audience in this book, with easily digestible chapters and all-around success principles that will allow anyone to see what successful people think success means. Throughout the conversations, I noticed patterns which are summarised in the chapters below, backed up by some research.

I hope you find those chapters and principles useful, both for personal and business use. Some principles can easily be added to your daily life, such as journaling, and will give you a more productive way of reflecting on your work and life.

Please feel free to reach out with any feedback or questions. I hope you enjoy this book about 'Stories of Success'.

# 1 UNDERSTAND YOU OR YOUR BUSINESS' WHY

Starting the first chapter with a question is intentional. I'm a firm believer that people should constantly ask themselves questions to improve. The underlying question which I mentioned in my book **#BeBetter** is **WHY**.

Why are you doing what you're doing? What's the purpose of your life or your business? Why is there a reason for you or your business to exist?

Asking **Why** should give you a good indication of whether you're on the path to success or if you're just plodding along; making decisions, driving things forward, working your day job, or creating a life style business. There's nothing wrong with whatever you decide for your **Why**. However, this book is about success, and as such we're looking at the success patterns of people who have achieved success. Let's try to examine the **Why** as it ties in with how we define success.

## **Why are you here?**

On the back of answering that question, or the question "why does your business exist", you should gain a vision and a 'version' of yourself or your business which sets you up to be successful. No one ever set up a successful business without having a vision and reason to change something.

To identify this vision, you need a **Why**. The fundamental question of why determines your **What** and **How**; what are you set out to do and how do you accomplish it? [Richard Hytner](#) gives 5 tips to find your personal purpose, which ties in with some of the principles we'll explore later on.

The answer also defines our drive to succeed. The answer might be a reason as simple as money, but more often than not it's about changing the world and making it a better place which will determine what you do with your life. Successful people usually know their **Why**; why they're on this planet and what they want to achieve. It's one of the characteristics which, based on my research, is one of the keys to being successful.

As a German I would call the '**Why**' question the 'ur-question', or original question, which I consider as the fundamental question to being. You could go as far back as evolution or creation of the world to determine why we're all here, but maybe that's going back too far

or deep. It's also a personality question as it defines who you're and what your personality is. [Quartz](#) at work has a 5 minute exercise to help you define your purpose, essentially asking the 'why' questions towards finding your passion and 'what you enjoy'.

By asking this question you're also questioning the status quo. What I'm trying to lead towards is that if you're questioning the status quo, you're asking the right questions. Most successful people have done exactly that, questioned the status quo, questioned why certain things are the way they are, why people behave the way they behave, and why you or I exist. They also ask why people buy a certain product, or why they're motivated to do one thing over another. On the back of this, they start solving a problem.

Besides my recent research and podcasting around success, I spent many years studying personal development. Personal Development has a lot to do with asking questions. It helps coaches like me to identify motivations. It also helps me in interviewing my guests and getting under their skin in my podcasts.

By asking the right questions and identifying the right motivation, you'll soon find out what's important in your life. This is in line with values, which we'll address in a later chapter. As you identify what's important to you, you'll identify whether you're born to work 24/7, or whether you prefer a more balanced life. You might be motivated by hard work and long hours, you might be motivated by money, or maybe by building something that changes the world. Or you're one of those people I personally admire, who can easily combine work and life and be the best family person in the world, yet also work very hard and concentrated and get more done in a shorter period of time than anyone else. Your preferences change the course of your career and life. Maybe you need longer to accomplish things yet aren't bothering to move up the career ladder. You could be anything in between. No one size fits everybody; if someone tells you that in order to be successful you have to work 24/7, that's quite frankly bollocks.

You must understand your identity and purpose. The question is 'what are you made of', and 'why are you on this planet?' The identity and purpose drives your motivation which essentially fuels your drive to action. In order for you to gain this motivation and decide on the actions moving forward, you must identify your identity and purpose and answer the question **Why**.

Are you doing what it takes to be successful? Do you want to be successful? What's your definition of success?

We often associate money with success. However, earning a lot of money doesn't mean success to someone whose purpose and **Why** is about generating clean drinking water in

the Saharan desert. That person isn't driven by the numbers in a bank account, but by the gratefulness and legacy left behind. The **Why** isn't the same, even if a lot of money is made.

To answer the **Why** question, there will be a few **What** and **How** questions along the way. Typical ones are:

- What gets you up in the morning?
- Why are you going to work?
- What's the best thing in the world?
- What and Where do you want to be 5, 10 or 20 years from now?
- How do you envisage your life to look like?
- What's the most annoying thing in the world? What would you like to change?
- Where would you like to live?
- What problem could you solve?

One of my favourite questions is 'what makes you forget to pee'? Yes, you read correctly, what is it that makes you forget to go to the toilet? What do you enjoy so much that you cannot get enough of? Playing with your kids or doing emails, working for others or writing a book? I asked that question in my first book and it's still a question that gets the most attention. It really makes you think about what's important in life, doesn't it? It does to me anyway.

The philosophical outlook in life is about the 'only chance' you get to live on this planet. Whether that's living to 60 or 120 years of age doesn't matter. You can't turn back time and try again. Even with a reincarnation belief, you still wouldn't remember this life, would you? Make the best out of it today and you can change your life to achieve more happiness. The world is your oyster, and the old rules don't apply. Just do what you think is right. Live in the here and now.

Define your **Why**, your overarching purpose, define what success means for you, and do not stop working until you achieved it. Once you achieved it, think about whether you want to re-define the purpose and turn it up a notch, or turn it down a bit. You'll realise that your '**Why**' has changed as your life has changed.

Something a lot of people underestimate is that over time the only constant is change. Political systems change, governments change, and attitudes and industries change. The same is true when you start getting older. You start to realise how your priorities change. Watch yourself carefully as you define and re-define your success and your **Why**.

## 2 MONEY AND SUCCESS

Money doesn't equal SUCCESS; the focus isn't on earning money but on building something that matters

When I thought about publishing a new column on my blog, or a podcast at the tail end of 2017, my thoughts were to share stories of people who had money and were in a position I wasn't at the time. I wanted to learn how to be successful and earn a lot of money. However, things were put into perspective when I thought more about it and started interviewing people.

It was at that point that I was questioning whether I was successful and how I would define success. I developed a bit of self-doubt whether what I was thinking was success, was the actual opinion of people who, in my eyes, have been successful. Those interviews gave me confidence that actually earning money doesn't mean you're successful, and that success needs to be defined by each individual.

My second question was if I see my guests as successful, would others see them as successful too, and would they see themselves as successful. Mike Pegg calls it the 'soul work' vs. 'salary work'; one work you do for the soul, and another for feeding the family and paying the mortgage.

What I learned quickly was that the ones that planned a career didn't join a start-up to begin with, but they sussed out a way to go to a bigger corporation. That gave them stability in terms of a few years of training, access to mentors, career progression and potential internal development programmes. In other words, a great foundation to start with.

On the other hand you'll find successful entrepreneurs, the ones that never wanted to fit into the corporate world. They built their own companies, then sold to a bigger corporation. In the process, they made a lot of money.

[Steve Tobak](#) states "whatever your definition of success, if you're true to yourself and achieve your goals, not only will you feel fulfilled, but you'll also find plenty of money when you arrive at your destination. That's just the way it works. No kidding. But if wealth is your definition of success, you'll likely never achieve it. As goals go, wealth is a pretty lousy target. It's superficial. It's not fulfilling. And there never seems to be enough of it. The more you have, the more you want. The more you spend, the more you need." He nicely summarises the challenges that money and success aren't equal but it is more about the definition of how satisfied you are.

For some of my guests money was earned through earn outs, e.g. selling their company; others through reaching high positions in big companies. Some probably didn't have much more or less than me to calculate with. Yet, it seems, they had been more successful than me. Maybe they hadn't been?

Before we come back to money, there is one important thing to notice: perception. Perception works in two ways.

On the one hand, you want to portray something, which means you spend all your money on the latest accessories, clothes and fashion items, as well as expensive cars and houses –whether you can afford it or not.

On the other hand, perception is about how you're perceived. Most of my guests turned out to not perceive themselves as being successful and instead not necessarily as rich or well off. For most, if not all of my guests, it turned out that money wasn't important at all. Money gave them freedom to make decisions, taking their time between jobs, investing in other companies, securing a pension, and one or two of my guests have rather expensive hobbies. Yet, none of them bragged about money.

When I set out to interview my guests and asked them 'how do you define success', to my positive surprise no one set success equal to having money; I was pleased. I worried that people would come forward saying that money was the only reason they set out to do what they did, and that is why they started a company or moved up the ranks. No, the motivations to become successful were varied, and whilst we might see them as successful, they might just see themselves as doing their job very well. To my earlier point, their perception of themselves might not be the one the listener had. We would be the one perceiving them as successful. [Carlos Samba](#) sums it up as "my guess is that it's because they are easy to measure [...] It's a lot easier to compare the size of our bank accounts than to compare who's leading a more fulfilling life".

How does that differ around the globe? In some countries, and the USA was used by many of my guests as an example, money and material values are still seen as someone being 'successful'. I'm not sure that my research here is conclusive, since I'm focusing on successful people from Europe or who lived in Europe. Whilst I interviewed a few people from Asia, most of the Europeans in the UK have, on the whole, a bigger exposure to the US market.

When we look at culture and people in their late 30's, early 40's, they grew up in the post-world war two generation. This is the generation just before the Millennials, some call it generation X, grew up with an abundance of food compared to generations before them. With the abundance of food also came a new wealth, some had inherited from their parents

and grandparents. It also comes with the insecurity of not having a final salary pension scheme, and a life living with the advancement in technology which goes beyond anything we've yet to see. With those advancements comes the use of social media, 'insta-envy' and comparison to others. This generation, which I'm also a part of, was often money motivated.

I remember vividly deciding against becoming a teacher in Germany, because there was a final highest earning potential which equates to a starting salary in some consulting jobs. As an 18-year-old, I didn't see beyond the money factor then. Since I am very good with people, I found myself in consultative sales roles which resulted in me earning more money than my dad ever earned being a head teacher. However, our generation also spends more money, house prices have gone up and what we call 'middle class' or 'comfortable' might have been seen as 'rich' in the past.

Money plays a major role for our generation, having been one of the first since the second world war that has been better off financially. 'Retiring in your 40's' was a goal I heard from many classmates, and I can tell you I'm far from retirement. I'm just the opposite; with a deflation of money and a life expectancy of up to 120 years, I most likely have to work until I'm 75 to secure a pension pot big enough to survive. Life is constantly changing, and there is no security as it seemed it was for our parent's generation.

My personal attitude towards money has since changed, and I'm not alone. As a society, money's become less of a motivator, as more people believe the sole possession of money doesn't make you 'rich' in the context of having a fulfilled life. Steve Jobs was famously quoted saying "being the richest man in the cemetery doesn't matter to me. Going to bed at night saying we've done something wonderful, that's what matters to me."

Many of our generation changed their mindset to look for a stable and secure income, progression with our career, and providing for the family if we're married and/or have children. This is a very different life to what our parents lived and, for all we know, what our children will live in years to come.

Personally, and heavily reflected in my guests answers, I feel success is about making a difference and creating something that lasts. Success is about legacy and changing something, making a positive difference. Those motivators are by far overpowering the motivations of 'money'. Life is more and more about the long-term game, staying in a job, making a positive difference, and passing on experience. It's about helping others to achieve and riding the wave.

What I find very interesting is that the younger start-up entrepreneurs, the millennials, also didn't set out to become rich but their sole motivation was to create something that matters and makes a positive difference to their industry or the world. Of course they make money

on the way, and of course they're enjoying parts of it, but the idea of selling a business is not about not having to work anymore, it is about launching the next thing. Money becomes a by-product of success; it becomes the facilitator to make decisions. Seeing beyond personal financial security, most of those decisions lead, to launching more start-ups, developing more ideas, and helping others to accelerate success – however this is defined.

This explains why successful people carry on and have more success and don't stop until they become even more successful. It can't be a money thing, otherwise most people would stop after making enough to sustain their lifestyle until they die. Most of my guests never stopped. They might have taken a break, but their drive to succeed spurs them on to do more. Personally, I think it is about recognition and drive that's coming from deep inside. Some people have it, some people don't.

Let's have a look at Bill Gates or Jeff Bezos, by argument the two richest people in the world. For them, it's all about creating more meaningful things, making this world a better place. That vision pulls them; that's their Why. That's what keeps them going, not whether they have another million or billion in their bank account.

That's probably where some people might have gotten it wrong, focusing too much on earning the money rather than creating something meaningful. They might have failed by being blinded by monetary success.

I have this dream that one day, maybe in a different life, I'm setting out with an idea like a proper entrepreneur. I would create something meaningful that ultimately leads to something bigger and something that creates value people want. When I say different life, I don't mean when I'm reborn. With us living longer, the chances are we have the possibility of two or even three careers in our life, moving sideways and adopting new ways of working, living and ultimately thinking.

Maybe my podcast is the beginning of a media company, a content creation company for which one big media house might pay me one day. Or, on the back of this book, on the back of 10 years of blogging, and many podcasts, I will make millions. For me the satisfaction wouldn't come from the money itself, but from being able to share my wisdom with others, helping them to become more successful in what they want to do.

I didn't set out to start a podcast to make money but to create value and help people to learn from entrepreneurs, highly successful people, and to make a difference. I wanted to record conversations some of you might not be able to have and share them with people like yourself. This book let me speak for myself, summarising what I've learned from my guests.

So for you out there who want to be successful, find a passion, find your Why, and go for it. Create something meaningful and make a difference in your industry, your line of work, in something you're interested in. Focus on having fun and enjoying the process of creation. Money will follow if success is there. And, as many podcast guests and I philosophised about, you might be a lot happier too.

### 3 SUCCESS IS A JOURNEY

SUCCESS is a journey that never finishes; giving, creating and improving situations as well as making others successful, creates SUCCESS

Let's think for a moment. If you have a goal that you want to achieve, it should be tangible and manifest itself in some shape or form. Maybe you want to become class captain, CEO of a company, drive a Porsche or climb Mount Everest. Whatever it is for you, those are tangible, achievable goals. This could lead you to have a nice income or a tangible amount of money in your bank account. And, of course, by your own means, you could argue that this is how you define being successful, a visible symbol of your achievement. You define who you are, and what certain achievements mean to you; no one else does that for you.

Now let's think of success. Success isn't something you can touch or something that is tangible. It can't be achieved, banked and put on the driveway; you can't just do it. But you can work for it. You can live it. Success, as a thing, is intangible, similar to happiness. Success is subjective, and whilst you might not find that you're successful, others might think you are.

The reason for this comparison is simple. Success isn't something you become and be, it's something that's a process or progress towards a worthy ideal. I define it here as a journey of something that's ongoing, that's never finished. This became apparent in my early podcasts and is a red tape throughout the conversations. One of my later guests said, "the journey of making others successful creates your success."

Whilst you might pursue any of the above goals and you might achieve them, the journey of success has already started. Per definition, you might have not noticed it for yourself; other people might have noticed that you're successful and watch you on your journey.

Once you're achieving set goals, success might manifest itself for you through title, money or showing off; however, you're still on your journey, you're still successful. It is like a never-ending blessing you achieved by being on the journey of success. It could be a curse as well, but let's not think about that for the time being and stay positive. Success is supposed to be a good thing.

An important point to note here is that the perceived journey of success by society, colleagues, or family and friends is due to materialised goals on the outside. It almost contradicts the previous chapter. If your neighbour has a new sports car, you might think he's successful. Or you might think he's a bit stupid putting all that money into a sports car he doesn't

have time to drive. This thinking goes in line with if you're successful, you're likely to make more money. This could lead you to believe you should be spending your money, but this is of your choosing. The other point we should consider is that your neighbour might have just got a big loan for the car; you never know.

When most of us finished school or university, we set out on a career path. What does career path mean? A path leading to a career. A career in what or for what though?

The reason I'm bringing this up is to understand that the old school career path is dead, the understanding of one job where you move up the career ladder over time. Quickly changing industries and the advancement of technology doesn't allow for a career that most of our parents' generations might have enjoyed. The job for life is dead. Hence, if you're on a career path in the old-fashioned sense of getting a good degree, a good job with a company, good income etc., it doesn't necessarily mean success. Career path doesn't equal success by default. If that career path leads to success per definition of yourself, then the career path is your journey to success.

What we're really looking at is that a lot of people suggest that to have a lot of money means success, and happiness is less important. Hence, they study and attain business degrees, join big companies, and earn big money. As most of them realise later in life, this results in non-fulfilment of life. Maybe they earn a lot of money, but for many this isn't how they would define their life as being successful, as it's missing the fulfilment of happiness.

I tend to compare career paths or success journeys to rocket flights. You need a lot of energy to get off the ground. You might have invested a few years in studying, learning, apprenticeships and you're finally ready to launch. When the rocket takes off it's almost in slow motion until it goes horizontal, taking off in a trajectory straight up. This trajectory will hopefully deliver the rocket to the end goal, which makes the journey of the rocket one of success. As it pertains to you or anyone surrounding you, success might be pinpointed sooner or later as well as failure, your career or any combination of the above.

The journey of success doesn't have to be linear. I've been thinking about my career path and success journey for a while. You would look at my career and wonder whether I would be classified as successful or not; that's up to you. By my own definition, I believe I've achieved a lot of my goals I set out to reach and I've been quite successful. However, my trajectory has been far from linear and my positioning has changed over the years. We must adapt success to career's and life's meandering path. Each to their own is how you define it. Whether or not it's recognised from the outside doesn't matter.

Let's assume we're the successful person for a moment. We might look out of those tiny little rocket windows, those round ones you imagine that are all along the rocket (which by the way aren't). We look out and look back to where we took off from. Have we gone far yet? Can we still see the launch pad? Are people waving at us? As we go into space, we might think that we haven't really travelled far yet; space is a vast place.

Just imagine the last time you were on a plane, and you looked down to the ground after take-off, then you look at the clouds and only moments have passed. Yet you're already high in the sky and moving at a ridiculously high speed. That's not different to being on a rocket except you're moving faster. As you drift through space, you discover that time doesn't matter much nor does how fast you're moving as you can't feel the difference. Once you've reached a certain height, you're weightless, not noticing any nuances in either height or speed. You might not think you're successful at all or progressing for that matter. You're still you, doing your thing and working towards your goals. However, on the ground people are cheering and waving, and they're proud of how far you've gone on your journey.

Before you know it, you've land on the Moon...or Mars. Vroom! You're awake, your heart is pumping and you think you've achieved your goal. Now you're a success. Yet you're wondering why people aren't cheering. It's like being in a vacuum. You've achieved your goal but you're no longer on the journey. Have you truly reached success?

I would argue you haven't. You'd be deflated, as the fun bit was the journey on how to get to where you wanted to be; the constant chase, looking out of the window, monitoring against stepping stone goals while flying further and further. There's no ending of success, and you want to move on. There's nothing on the Moon that could help you in any respect. You want to get back into the rocket, take off again and continue your journey. That was fun; daily achievements, something to do, things are happening. It's great.

Did you ever ask yourself why so many successful entrepreneurs build a company, sell it, build another one, sell it, an ongoing cycle? The first one was sold in order to build a second one; they're chasing the journey, not the money. It's the joy of being successful and being on that journey all over again.

We're living in those moments where success is found. However, we might not notice this happening, without a big portion of EQ (Emotional Intelligence).

Take some time and think. Disconnect from your devices and challenge yourself to think if you don't believe you are or aren't already successful and whether the journey, you're on is actually rather fun, flying you to your next goal.

## 4 SERENDIPITY AND SUCCESS

SUCCESS has to do with luck and serendipity; the right place and right time is almost as important as the right idea and right support

Firstly, There is a lot of luck involved to have a career path that is also a success path, one that likely has little bumps in the road. Most guests called it serendipity rather than luck.

Let's go back to the rocket journey from the earlier chapter. Imagine the take off and trajectory, and you actually living in the moment realising how successful you are. How do you realise it?

This is down to how you define it, and your EQ. Being in that successful moment, and accelerating on the career trajectory or on the trajectory to your goal you want to achieve, is a key for this realisation. There's also an element of mindfulness here, being in the moment, understanding every part of your journey. The combination of mindfulness and EQ will help you to be more successful based on things you achieve like balancing your mind, controlling your thoughts, being with people in the moment, and knowing how to deal with people effectively, whilst also increasing your productivity and mental health.

To have this smooth journey of success, it takes serendipity. The right education, the right mentor in your life, and someone who might just have to push you out of your comfort zone. Someone you might have met at an event, through some friends in the pub, or just sitting on the plane next to you. It might be an article you read and you connected the dots to the opportunity that all of a sudden opened up in front of you. You were at the right place, at the right time, and you got this job. Or you gave this big job a miss and decided to go freelance to discover the biggest opportunity of all: freedom. Whatever your success is, if we're looking to climb to the top, to land on the moon and then on Mars and go on to every planet, without any glitches, it's down to serendipity.

Again, realising this and being aware of it, and not becoming full of arrogance about it, means you're actually high in EQ. You're self-aware and know what you feel, acknowledge your feelings and you're true to yourself.

There is another thought around serendipity. Interesting enough, only a handful of my podcast guests would suggest that they set out to become successful. Most suggested that things just happened to them; whether meeting someone, the infamous shower moment, an article they read that triggered a reaction, or a choice to build a business or live a life. As they stumbled into that, they got really into it and went onto their success journey.

Whenever you make a decision in life, you're ready to take actions towards those decisions, and you're likely to be driving relentlessly towards the goal you set. I once spoke to a mentor of mine who suggested that whenever we started thinking of buying an item, we've already decided to buy it. With decisions in life, this is very similar. You decide to go for something, and the moment you move forward, you've already decided to achieve this goal. It will happen if you put the required work in and pull the right triggers.

For the entrepreneurs amongst you, if you're thinking of scaling and potentially selling a business and defining this as success, then realise that the majority of start-ups fail. The point I'm making is, if you're in an environment, where success is less likely or the odds are against you, then making it, achieving that goal, might just depend on a little bit of luck. Maybe an additional booster on your rocket or someone steering it very well to avoid those asteroids out there.

I guess what most successful people find is, that they don't realise those precious moments when luck strikes. Only years after, when you reflect on your achievements and your journey, you realise when serendipity played a role. You might think back on meeting this one person on the train. You were about to finish high school, and he said to you, that if you already think that the job you're about to sign a contract for won't give you enough intellectual fulfilment, then you shouldn't sign it in the first place.

This was me; I threw that contract away and embarked on a journey which, again with serendipity, trajected me into another country. But that's me, and it wasn't a straight forward journey and my life never has been. Yet that doesn't mean that I'm not successful and haven't achieved what I wanted. No one ever said that you couldn't pass Jupiter twice.

The belief system of an entrepreneur is often that the future is better than the past. It's a vision that pulls you and you must almost be certain that when you put the hard work in, things will work out; usually they always will. The slight edge on whether or not you end up successful or not, the little turn of the dial, might be down to luck.

I'm a firm believer that things happen for a reason. Things happen to you consistently until you solve them once and for all. Things happen to you over and over until you find the trigger. Finding those triggers isn't always easy. It needs some deep change and discovery work to find what life is all about.

The beauty of serendipity is that you can't plan it. It's a roll of the dice. Trusting in the greater universe and making sure you believe that you'll end up where you meant to be, being able to make a difference and meet the right person. That's part of the success journey. Good luck!

## 5 SUCCESS AND MAKING A DIFFERENCE

SUCCESS is about improving the world around you and making a difference

A lot of success is based on setting out to make a difference. This is particularly true for entrepreneurs who invent new things. Let's take a look the big names and examples first.

Elon Musk wanted to change the world how we know it, transferring money from one person to another. He and his co-founders invented PayPal; they worked relentlessly, often to exhaustion, in order to make it work and eventually sold that business to eBay. What did he change next? The way we travel by inventing the first electric car that was mass produced, Tesla. He's in the progress of creating underground tunnels for travel as well.

Steve Jobs is another example. He wanted to make it easier to use computers, and not only use them but enjoy using them (e.g. having nice fonts, nice looking computers). He developed a personal computer that could do all that, and later created the first smartphone, followed up by creating an MP3 player where one could put upwards of 1,000 songs in their pocket. He changed the phone and music industry and made all our lives better, or maybe not; that judgement is still out there.

If you go back in history, you'll find many more examples. Edison invented a lot of things, including the lightbulb. Many people created better medicine and vaccines. Bill Gates from Microsoft set out to make software better and now uses his money to eliminate polio around the world.

The list is endless but the motivation is simple. The motivation of most of those people is to make a difference. If you give something, you're happier. The results from studies suggest that happiness leads to greater successes in life. This may be because happy people frequently experience positive moods and this prompts them to be more likely to work actively towards new goals and build new resources. When people feel happy they tend to feel confident, optimistic and energetic, and others find them likeable and sociable ([Christy Matta](#)). It's all interrelated, as the pure gift of giving will lead to happiness, which will lead to success.

This principle ties back to the chapter about success and money. Most people who come up with ideas to make money end up failing. This is because of the wrong mindset. It's a passion for money rather than the passion or vision of change that drives them. They're not always unsuccessful, but their motivation is less about caring about the purpose and usefulness of the invention or idea.

Coming up with something useful that makes money at the same time is a rather slim proposition. Anyone who has ever watched Dragon's Den, or similar shows across the world, will have noticed that there are a lot of ideas from people trying to change the world. Some people re-invent the wheel because for them the invention they made will have a huge impact on humanity. However, if you look closely some don't have a holistic view of their creation, and that's where the investors or dragons come in and evaluate the product. Sometimes they invest to get the product as part of their portfolio, adding or complementing a different product. In most cases the inventor is in for a reality check. Even if a product is very useful, it doesn't mean it will be accepted by markets, let alone make money.

You'll no doubt ask whether a product has to make money to be successful. I'd say the answer is no. Per definition, success doesn't have to be and shouldn't be about money. It depends on how you define it. If an inventor came up with a very clever idea that changes everything for a group of people, and yet doesn't make any money, then that's okay too. This can still be classified as being successful.

If you look at the business context of success, then you want to create a product that not only makes a difference but also pays for itself, and sometimes earns the entrepreneur some as well. If you've listened to my podcasts, most entrepreneurs noticed a fault in the system they were working with. They realised that the current product suite available wasn't as good as it could be. So they came up with a better way of working or a better technology, which then lead to an improvement for their industry. When that happened, it usually became a financially viable product. Those products would be classified as successful, as they can pay for their solution, whether or not it leads to wealth for the owner.

Those are prime examples of success. Identifying an existing problem and improving the existing solution, and/or finding a new solution to a problem that's beneficial is the ideal. Cleaning the oceans, helping agencies and brands to communicate, helping others post retirement and redundancy, helping homeless people and so on. You can listen to my podcast of successful entrepreneurs and leaders that have shown you how it is done.

Making the world or the little bit of the world you're looking after a better place should be the goal. Helping others and making the difference to society and entrepreneurship is preferable. That's another part of the puzzle on how you create success. Happiness is enjoying the journey to success whilst success is an achievement of the end result. It feels like happiness is almost the prerequisite for success. Without happiness, we can't move our work or life in the right direction.

## 6 EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE AND SUCCESS

Emotional Intelligence, self-consciousness, and awareness of others are key traits of SUCCESSFUL leaders

Back in 2004 I wrote my MBA thesis on Emotional Intelligence (EQ). Whilst back then I wasn't convinced this wasn't a management fad, I'm now more than convinced that having a high EQ is super important for success. As a matter of fact, Emotional Intelligence plays the biggest role in performance when compared to 33 other workplace skills. Research ([TalentSmart study referenced by Forbes](#)) found that emotional intelligence influences 58% of success across every type of job.

Before we show examples, let us define what we mean with EQ, self-consciousness and awareness. EQ is defined as the capacity of being aware of one's emotion. Through being aware of one's emotions and the emotions of others, one can control and express emotions that are right in a particular situation.

People with a high EQ are better in handling interpersonal relationships. In line with that awareness, the emotionally intelligent person is less judgemental about people and more empathetic while coming across as being more caring. In order to have a high EQ, one has to be self-conscious. Essentially, the main skills come down to being self-aware, self-regulating, having a high motivation, empathetic and very good in social skills.

One could of course argue that a 'geek' or 'introvert', a person that most likely doesn't enjoy speaking to others or communicate with others, might not have a high EQ. However, those people are key to coming up with highly successful products or services as they're deep thinkers. The argument goes that if you're a person, a leader, someone who leads a company or takes a product to market, for profit or not, you need to have empathy and present yourself well, be understanding of people and be able to deal with them. You often find an 'introvert' and 'extrovert' building businesses together; please note, that those terms are used in a stereotyped manner, as not every introvert or extrovert shares the same qualities. EQ is vital for a person's growth. Extensive studies show that it plays a huge role in building one's personal and financial success ([CNBC](#)).

One of the reasons that back in my study days I wasn't convinced of EQ was that I thought everyone had those skills. As one guest said to me, this meant I wasn't very aware of my surroundings then, as a lot of people don't have a high EQ. I figured that having a high EQ was a normal thing amongst leaders and amongst MBA students. However, the longer

I spend working in organisations, the more I realise that organisations with leaders high in EQ are run better and are ultimately more successful.

As we go along in this book, you'll notice that the principles of success can't be applied to only individuals. The use of success principles in organisations leads to successful organisations too. EQ is a classic example as well as the money example.

Someone once said that they set out to build a business, to have happy workers and make a difference. That person succeeded in the goal and is able to pay for the employees holidays once a year. What a great place to be, creating something special, meaningful, and making a difference. That for me is a leader with high EQ, and a successful person and business.

A lot of people have asked me if EQ is something you can learn. Whilst I argue that most people either have a predisposition for it or not, there are tools that can help you to gain a higher EQ. Like with anything else, it's all about practise.

For me, the enlightenment came in 2003 when I did my Master Practitioner in Neuro-Linguistic-Programming (NLP). A simple exercise is that you watch yourself from a 3rd perspective. An example of this is to imagine you're talking to someone across a table, and

whilst you're talking you start looking at yourself from the corner of the ceiling. Maybe this exercise sounds creepy at first, but it became second nature to me. Whenever I have conversations with people, even today, I'm watching myself. Which language do I use? Which body language is prominent? Do I use hand gestures? How does crossing your arms come across? How is the opposite person reacting towards me? Am I copying the other person too much trying to build rapport? Am I smiling?

When you start training yourself to come across better, you automatically get more successful. That's because you realise what works and what doesn't work, and what works in which situation? How can you bring in emotions?

Until recently, one wasn't really allowed to use emotions in a business context, but this is more common now. Think about whether your associate has family, what makes them tick, or what they enjoy? Remember those things and bring them up or remember someone's birthday and send them a small gift or make sure you wish them a happy one. It's about caring for the person rather than the deal.

Most of us have heard of companies like Facebook or Google which grant employees free food, or they allow games during the day like table tennis. I use those companies as an example as they are well known.

The reason this was initially done was to attract talent. It helped getting people to work there, and then the second reason kicked in, to keep them in the office longer. That meant the company got more time out of them. So whilst initially this was a company perk, a culture that allowed for a more balanced, less stressful work situation, it later became a tool to get people to spend more time in the office. Hence, caring for people is good, but there's a fine line between really caring for employees and meaning it, or using it to exploit them (I am not saying Facebook and Google do btw., but with some companies, a positive tendency can be turned into exploiting employees).

If we're looking at success from a different angle, let's not forget that you might just be a bit more successful in everyday life if you apply EQ anywhere. Be nice and helpful with your neighbours and friendly with the staff in the shop. Don't get annoyed at the person driving slowly in front of you and give more than you receive. It all comes back, and helping others, being aware of the difficulties of others on the tube or train, and stepping up to help them, is just one little step to be successful. I'm a strong believer that whatever you give, you gain back. I'm not giving to receive but giving out of joy and happiness.

Likewise, if you're a boss or manager in a company, be compassionate with your staff. Carry a high EQ and make sure your managers do too. The people working for you will be happier, more reassured and will deliver better work. Spend some of your time listening to their needs and concerns, both at work and home, and see if there's something you can do for them. A bit of advice, a helping hand or just listening to others goes a long way.

# 7 GROWTH MINDSET, FAILURE AND SUCCESS

Failure breeds SUCCESS; keep trying, learn constantly, don't take yourself too seriously, and improve daily; be fearless

There are a few principles to consider:

- Learn constantly
- Improve daily
- Be fearless and courageous
- Don't take yourself too seriously
- Learn from your mistakes

A growth mindset, as opposed a fixed mindset, describes the underlying belief that people have about learning and intelligence. If people realise that the effort of learning makes them smarter and that this ultimately leads to higher achievements, then they put the effort in. They'll understand that they can develop themselves.

Similar to EQ, growth mindset is about attitude and belief. [Carol Dweck](#), a leading researcher in the field of growth mindset, shows the power of our most basic beliefs. Whether conscious or subconscious, they strongly affect what we want and whether we succeed in getting something. Much of what we think we understand of our personality comes from our "mindset." This both propels us and prevents us from [fulfilling our potential](#).

As one guest said, 'leaders are readers', and most successful people have been known to study their whole life. Many years ago, when participating in an internship, one of my managers took time to read the newspaper. From a classic productivity point of view, it looks like they aren't doing anything, but from a management point of view this means to be informed. It's part of a job to think, and not many people, not like one of my guests, takes time out to think. My guest even scheduled downtime in the diary to think and actively solve problems. I love that and started doing the same. I've heard of people that go for a shower in the middle of the day to trigger those moments.

Successful people want to improve every day. They want to constantly better themselves, whether that's in a hobby or at work, or any area of interest. They're keen learners, those that move forward courageously and fearlessly. The one weakness most people have is not taking a step forward and being courageous. If you ever asked people about their biggest regret, I wouldn't be surprised at them saying that they never started something or didn't have the courage to step forward and change things. That's where the successful person comes in.

You might wonder why I put ‘don’t take yourself too seriously’ into this chapter. For me that’s part of growth and a growth mindset. A whole chapter looking at how you look at yourself may be incorporated into self-awareness and EQ, but when you have a growth mindset and you’re constantly trying to better yourself you must stop at some point. I used the phrase ‘stop and smell the roses’, encourage you to hold on, think about what you’re doing, and take in the moment before you march forward.

Do you know what the best thing is to relax your brain, your thoughts and body? Laughter! Don’t worry if you didn’t read a chapter in that personal development book, or you haven’t finished all the documents and industry news, the 1,000 emails, or haven’t taken a big step forward. Take some time to think, let it all sink in and laugh about it. Don’t take yourself too seriously; we all make mistakes and we’re all in the same playing field of life. Some of us are naturally more successful than others.

In more practical terms, a growth mindset to me is when you start monitoring your impact on your environment, see how people react towards you and then you adjust your behaviour. You’re starting to learn from mistakes and you see what works and what doesn’t work. The best thing is that you can practise anywhere; on the tube, while swimming in the pool, when driving your car, etc. Change your attitude and behaviour, laugh and relax, and see how dynamically things change.

Let’s touch on the topic of failure. I used to see that as a separate principle, one that says failure breeds success. However, given feedback from my guests, I had to recognise that failure doesn’t necessary lead to success.

You should learn from your mistakes to do things better. That’s part of the growth mindset. That means essentially that failure once recognised can be used to get more successful. You must learn from the mistakes you make. You shouldn’t be fearful or holding back. You must be stepping forward, taking courage and leaping towards things. If you don’t succeed at once, learn from the mistakes you made and try again. That’s what makes successful people successful.

The summary is learning and going for it; learning by doing. Learning to ‘see it, do it’, being courageous, and then refining it. If you aren’t successful at first, laugh about it; don’t worry what others think or how things might have turned out. The ‘what if’ question doesn’t work. Take time to reflect, learn more about the topic, engage with people in the field, and do it all over again.

Many years ago I mentioned to a coach that I feel like I want to jump out of an airplane; I was metaphorical speaking. I said that I’m still missing my parachute. He then suggested

that I wasn't really courageous. If I was certain I wanted to 'jump out of the plane' and 'go for it', I should be fearless and trust that I'd pick up a parachute on the way if I ever needed it. If I didn't, I would still survive, learn from the mistake, and do it again. This was a metaphor, and in real life you might want to consider a slightly more certain outcome-based scenario, but I hope you understand what I am trying to convey (and please don't jump out of a plane without a parachute).

Any time you spend researching a topic of your expertise, attending a conference or learning from podcasts, you'll learn. From every mistake you might make, you'll learn. As long as you continue to learn and let failure support your endeavours rather than stopping you from doing things, then you're on track to be successful. Parachute or not, you'll make it. Trust in the greater good that things will always work out.

Was it a stupid mistake? Smile, change your approach, laugh about yourself and the silly mistake you made, and move on. You aren't the first to make mistakes and you won't be the last. Life's too short; most successful people don't worry about it.

Continuous improvement via podcasts, quick reads, apps that let you flick through books, or conversations with people you can learn from helps you grow; never stop learning. The people less successful are the ones that stop learning the moment they leave school.

'Just do it' is a famous slogan, and sums everything up. Don't hesitate, just go for it.

## 8 MENTORS AND SUCCESS

Mentors and Coaches support your SUCCESS

This chapter is close to my heart. At an early age I started learning from more experienced people. Whether it was at my first internship in sales, student groups, childhood mentors, friends of my parents, or teachers, I always aimed to gain more knowledge from people who had specialised knowledge. One of the reasons I am a coach.

To this day, if the plumber is around, I ask lots of questions, as I'd like to understand how things work. The plumber is a specialist and has loads more experience in handling plumbing than I'll ever have. A mentor in my mind doesn't have to be smarter or older but has to be wiser or more experienced in a way that benefits you. You can argue whether it benefits me understanding plumbing, but I apply the same principle to business people.

When I first started my podcast, I asked people about their mentors. Often the suggestion would be to seek some. The consistency across the board is clear, and Jim Rohn's quote was often quoted by myself and my guests: "You're the average of the five people you surround yourself the most with." I believe this is true. Whether you call them mentors, bosses, managers, coaches, trusted advisors or business angels they all do the same job: they make you a better person and more successful.

You should seek about 5 mentors who can help you navigate your life. This could be any of what I've named above. Find people that have an edge on a certain area you want to find out more about. I've had different mentors I can call on, depending on the topic of interest.

There's a close friend and coach that I chat with regularly. I was close to a Buddhist monk for a while who helped me with my spiritual development. I spent time with my boss discussing career development. Whatever problem or challenge you want to solve; you can seek mentors in that field. Some stay around for a life time, some for a period of time. Your mentors can change, which is good.

It's important that you define the area you need expertise in, find an expert, and ask that person to coach or mentor you. Make it a formal arrangement, a coffee or lunch once a month maybe. You also have to think of letting go of mentors. This is a fine line, as once a mentor has fulfilled a certain purpose of helping you in a certain area, it might be worth moving on to a new area with a new mentor. I've seen that happen a lot, as your jobs and careers change, the people around you are changing, and therefore your input should be changing.

Following the motto of ‘what got you here, won’t get you there’, only topic neutral mentors, e.g. my coaching friend, will continue to help me as I go along in life. I also have a long-term friend, who has coached and mentored me since university days. Every now and then a new person comes into your life, supports you in a task and then moves on. Letting go is sometimes difficult but it has to be done.

Many of my podcast guests have been mentors to me or have advised me in life situations. I’m still in touch with most of them; some I can call up and have a chat or a confidential word. That’s good to know, however I only make use of that if necessary. We’re all too busy to have someone asking you things all the time. Likewise, I’m mentoring people, some more officially than others, and help them to get off the ground, progress with their career or private life. Some of those relationships are ongoing, and some cease as you go along.

One of the reasons behind creating ‘Stories of Success’ was to allow you, the listener and now reader, to have access to my mentors. That’s why I ask the questions I’m asking and why I distil the information from my guests, having conversations you might not be able to have. I give you access to high profile people that have a lot of information and life experience to share. They’re happy to share, and with every podcast I learn something. With every conversation, I hope I was able to share some of what I learned with you. Similar to the mentee podcast, where the host shares actual mentoring sessions, I want to deliver value to you from the people I speak to.

What you might have found as well is that most of my guests had mentors that helped them on their way. Formal or informal, there’s a way of approaching someone and asking, ‘do you want to be my mentor?’ You’re formalising a relationship where both parties take on a responsibility to share information in a confidential matter, and the relationship amongst the two parties should be clear.

What we find more often are mentorships based on specific circumstances. This could be with your boss at work or someone at work in a different discipline, e.g. finance or sales. You might seek those relationships out in order to learn about a different area of the business. You might want to expand your network within the company, get some guidance on how the company works outside your area, or how to get along with someone from a different department. A chat over coffee can go a long way.

Whatever the reason, you should note that any of those conversations, deep or shallow, contribute to your success. The reason is very obvious in my mind, but every time you have input that isn’t your daily input, you’ll start thinking about things differently. What I’m saying is that if you’re in a non-commercial role at work but you start talking to a finance or sales person, your perception of the work you do might be put into a different context as you start expanding your horizon. It goes in line with a growth mindset too.

Similar effects are the case when you speak to people with more experience in life in general. In the case of people in the same company but higher on the food chain, they could help you navigate the company and give you ‘insider’ tips on how to move up the ranks. For people outside the organisation with more experience than you, they’ll give you a fresh perspective on the situation at your organisation and might have a different input by looking in from the outside.

With coaches the relationship can differ. On one hand, they might share stories and experience of people in similar situation. On the other, it might help you to ask the right questions and obtain tools to deal with different situations. It all depends on whatever your goal is.

There is a benefit of having a more senior person mentoring and coaching others within an organisation. It helps a more senior person to identify needs and challenges in other parts and ranks of the business; therefore, mentoring isn’t a one-way street.

Having worked in an industry as a consultant and advisor for many years, I realised that when you’re going into new projects, you’re the experienced person, someone who’s been there and done that. You’re the one they look at for advice. That experience helps to examine situations, understand the concepts quickly and then figure out how to move forward and make a difference.

## 9 TEAM AND TEAMWORK

Having a team, relying on a team, having open conversations and working as a team is a major key to success

This chapter is as much about communication and hiring the right people as it is about teams themselves. Whilst a lot of the principles of success play into 'motivation', teamwork is probably the main factor for motivation. There's nothing more frustrating than having people in a team that don't pull their weight. I'm talking about those people you always have to wait for, people not doing as they should, working on their own schedule rather than with the team. I want to focus on the impact of teams and teamwork on one's success.

It's widely known that for most organisations, teamwork is crucial to success. Not only does it improve motivation, but treating employees as equal partners has a [positive effect](#).

Let's look at a couple of 'success' definitions.

On the one hand there's personal success and what it has to do with team and teamwork. In my opinion this is a very feasible proposition, as no entrepreneur got to where they got to, achieved a job they got really emerged in, or found the fulfilment and happiness they aspired to without a helping hand. Previously we discussed the roles of mentors, coaches and management; being part of a close-knit team is something else.

Let's define the term **team**. A team of two is the smallest version of a team. If you set out on your own, you'll quickly find at least one person that supports you, whom you can bounce ideas off, and who sticks with you no matter your progress towards your defined success. This could be almost anyone. It doesn't matter as long as that person supports you unconditionally; this is the best team member to have. The best unconditional support is the one that also includes asking awkward questions, questioning everything you do, being your direct feedback loop and your biggest critic. In my opinion that works best. Hence a lot of people hire a coach when they first start out.

On the other hand one could look at teams in a work environment. It's been proven that there are huge benefits of having people working together from different disciplines, e.g. cross functional teams. Those teams, if managed correctly, would bounce ideas off each other and spark ideas for each other given their diverse backgrounds. This is true in terms of cultural backgrounds, educational background, pretty much any background. The more diverse the group is, the better the output from any brainstorming or problem-solving session.

There's a lot of literature out there on the subject of teamwork. For instance, Forbes stated "The data clearly demonstrates how ethics, integrity and a positive corporate culture can impact business performance." ([How trust accelerate success](#)). According to an article by [Paul Towers](#), trust not only increases productivity amongst staff but also increases the ability to work more effectively as a team, rather than as individuals, implying that you'll achieve more. More details on trust in the next chapter.

One of my guests also said to not treat team members differently than the CEO. Whilst this can be difficult in a hierarchical organisation, in smaller organisations it's more obvious. If the CEO flies business class, then so should the assistant or executive. The exact words in the podcast were that 'my butt isn't worth more than anyone else's'. Hence most large corporations have some kind of policy in place which regulates the above example of travel based on hours of flight, no matter which rank.

In my experience there is also is the matter of trust. No matter the size of the team, everyone must be able to trust their team members regarding everything, not only that the actual work gets done, but also that the work output is at a quality that the manager doesn't have to worry about it. Although there are checks in place, and people need to track output, if you have a close-knit team which works together, plays together and trusts each other,

the output will always be better. Combine that with a variety of inputs and paired with great leadership that provides regular feedback, teamwork will lead to the success of teams, individuals and ultimately companies.

Within teamwork there's one more factor to consider, and that is communication. Whilst not every guest mentioned communication as part of success, the underlying functionality and output of a team, depends a lot on the way they communicate amongst themselves, as well as how they're communicated to. Any leadership and management book would suggest clear KPIs, goals and objectives, and regular one-to-one meetings with their employees. This is true all the way to the top, including the CEO of the organisation. If good communications aren't happening, your team will fail, and so will the company.

# 10 TRUST (IN) PEOPLE

Trusting the right people and letting go of day-to-day business is supporting your SUCCESS

Trusting people becomes a huge success factor, and therefore is a key principle of success. Why am I saying this?

Let's look at the importance of good teams; how they function, how they communicate, and how they work together. How much information do they share, how do they share the information and do they give each other feedback? How is it formed? Is the team put in place based on individual skills or does it grow organically? What's the composition and the diversity of the team? What's the culture of the company and how does it affect the team? There are many books on this subject, hence, I'm not going to dig deep into the psychology and practicality of team building.

We have to look at success from a business point of view. If you're looking at individual success, those principles can still be applied, but you might have to modify the angle of how to view trust in people from a team perspective because they're quite varied.

As companies grow, the owner/manager who has done everything from finance, HR, sales and customer service sometimes has difficulty letting go of doing it all alone. The moment that happens, most entrepreneurs struggle to find someone that can 'replace them'. Frankly, they never will; they'll never find someone with the exact same values, same way of working, same ethics or principles etc. There's no clone out there that does the same thing in exactly the same way they did it. Eventually for the success of the business the entrepreneur will come to let go and apply **trust**.

I've been fortunate to work with some really good entrepreneurs. I want to give you an example of what I've experienced.

There are the control freaks, the ones that want to know where you spend every minute of the day, every penny you spend on behalf of the company and who tell you exactly what you should or shouldn't do, micromanaging you. Those are the ones to avoid if you don't want to be stifled in your goal towards success.

Then there are those that let go, who'll give you marching orders, chat with you once a week to make sure you're on track and trust you with all the accounts and everything related to the business, no questions asked. Those are the good ones, yet my advice is to regularly inform them of what's going on as well as keeping tabs on the business so they'll feel like

they're still on top of everything and know all the details of their business. As one of my guests said, 'you need to know your numbers'.

The moment someone hands over a business to you to run it, know your numbers. Be the one they can call up in the middle of the night to ask you what's going on. If you're on top of things you can tell them by heart, or you can pull up your Excel sheet, knowing you have all the revenue figures, key clients and any other data being requested. Never let your guard down because this is how trust is built. Don't ever betray that person; know your numbers to the smallest detail. If they find out you'll lose their trust, and hopefully they've been paying you well enough for the job you're doing too.

From the entrepreneurs' perspective it works the same way. Set out clear rules, objectives, and KPIs while making sure your protégée is on top of whatever information you need such as certain figures, sales, HR, etc. Trust the employee and, based on experience, give guidance, become a mentor, and strive to be one of the five people in the inner circle. Build a relationship that lasts forever.

It also translates into smaller and bigger corporations. If you're hired to run a department, the C-suite executive of the department might not be as attached to it as an entrepreneur would be, but the principles of trust are still there and apply. You still need to know your numbers, your details, provide regular feedback, and treat this as if it's your own company within the confines of the bigger corporation.

Build trust with your superior and your team. This principle closely aligns with the previous chapter on the concept of team. To work successfully the members of a team needs to trust each other no matter what needs to be accomplished. When handing over a task you don't want to think that you need to chase up on it.

People have often asked me whether trust should extend across different teams. My answer is of course, this should be the case. However, similar to different families in an estate, all living by their own rules, companies have different teams which in return have different values, objectives and are run under different management. Do managers of different teams trust each other and what's the corporate culture? Is the ideal world scenario to have a culture where trust and the common goal is so engrained into everyone's vision, that we can rely on everyone in the organisation? If there is an organisation that works like that, it's usually run by very successful leaders who know how to run and motivate teams, establish a culture that is resulting in wonderful team work and cross functional connectivity. If this isn't engrained throughout the organisation, then it's best to concentrate on your own team doing its best work.

In a world of entrepreneurship, no matter the size, the people within an organisation are key. The right hires will determine whether or not the business will be successful moving forward. Don't forget that business success doesn't necessarily mean money, but the best place to work and generate a great salary whilst obtaining the best possible life life balance.

How do you define success? The way you define success across your company and culture will result in you defining how teams interact, how much an entrepreneur can let go and how much you're able to delegate. The higher the trust factor, the greater the success.

# 11 DIVERSITY

The higher the diversity in teams and companies, the more likely are you to create a successful culture

Without diversity and the recognition of us all being different, organisations and individuals can't succeed no matter what their goals are. Forbes shares reports from McKinsey & Company and the [Peterson Institute for International Economics](#) that gender and ethnic diversity increases profitability more than previously thought.

Diversity is a hot topic these days. Whilst we haven't touched on the topic in greatest detail on the podcast, we have spoken about women in leadership and women in organisations a lot. One podcast guest said that she stands up for anyone who she believes is incapable of fighting for themselves.

This reminded me of a picture I've had in my head since my navy days many years ago. My superior at the time, a stern and fearful ex-marine become navy operations, told us a story. He said he was in town over the weekend and went out with some friends. This is a man that, when you looked at him with his grim face and tired skin with wrinkles across his forehead, you'd be scared if you ran into him in the dark. He and his friends had a few beers, had some fun and were in a good mood. He said that when they were walking towards a bus stop, there was a lady with a push chair trying to get onto the bus when the bus driver started shutting the doors, squeezing the push chair between the doors. I don't remember if the bus driver did that deliberately or if it was accidental, but I do remember that our superior told us he jumped into action, bent open the doors and wedged himself and his body between the doors to make sure neither the lady nor the push chair would be damaged. I imagine that when the bus driver saw him, he opened the doors immediately.

I'm telling this story because if you'd met my superior on the street you most definitely have crossed to the other side of the road. Fear would have crept up on you, seeing his scars and tattoos, the classic example of who you don't want to meet without people around. Yet this is the type of man who would jump in to defend his country as he did when he helped the lady with the push chair. He wouldn't hesitate a second to do what's right in his opinion, helping others along the way. Prejudice often prevents us from allowing diversity based on superficial reasons. We can't judge books by their covers and expect to build teams or be successful.

In life we often decide on someone's character by the way they look, speak or how they come across. We judge the clothes they wear and our impressions of the type of person they are is cemented in our minds. We'll make judgments as to whether a man is strong,

a woman is weak, a man should love a woman, and transgender people aren't normal. Those are stereotypes we've inherited in our lives from our parents and grandparents who haven't had to openly deal with these types of things. Luckily, over the last few years those stereotypes and prejudices are disappearing; everybody deserves an opportunity to work and be successful.

Gay people, transgender people, disabled people and women and men have been around for many years. Our society and the time period we're living in should allow them to live an open and normal life, not being boxed into stereotypical jobs and beliefs of 'men go to work and women look after the children'. Equality is more essential than ever, and I personally believe this is going a long way. I've never had any problems with people telling me that they might be different. I always like to think we are all different, that no one is normal. I'm different in my way, yet haven't had to fight racism because I'm white, 6ft 5in and look average, or do I? My friend who is married to a black person discovered that at an equal look and height to me, having a mixed raced child makes all the difference in the world when it comes to abuse, something I personally find unacceptable.

The reason for the rather lengthy introduction to this chapter is to encourage you to start looking into diversity at your work place. There are many new studies emerging daily which show the positive impact a diverse work place has. Ropse Johnson concludes that "Workforce diversity can bring about an increase in productivity and [competitive advantages](#)". One might find that women might be better managers and men might like being able to take extended new baby breaks. Things like this could lead to a better life life balance; if you have happier employees and they have a happier life it could lead to more productivity. Diversity in the board room results in a more varied approach to business and a more balanced view on topics.

I've worked on multiple teams which have been made up of 20 or more cultures, female and male, and sometimes there was a lot of shouting and growling. Without prejudice, you might find some stereotypes confirmed. Being German born, I often say on my podcast you would expect me to be organised, granular and hard working. Of course this is the case, but there's more to me than meets the eye or that my nationality gives away. This is something I wouldn't want anyone to forget. This is true for every single person you meet in life; you can't reduce a person to their heritage, culture, sexual orientation or looks.

The key to any diversity practise is to hire the best person for the job, and the most interesting person you find to do the job well. This means that you hire the best talent out there, but if you had to decide between two people, hire someone who fits well into the team and brings a new angle to it.

Most companies offer diversity training these days. In one of those trainings I attended, the training facilitator said, “My mum went to the doctor and said that the doctor, he told her, that...” , then she paused and pointed out that most of us automatically associate the doctors being ‘he’ and she mentioned she corrected her mum in saying ‘she’, as the doctor was female. The point is there are female doctors, police officers, pilots, firefighters, astronauts and philosophers. There are gay gardeners, CEOs, female gay CEOs and some people whose gender might be neutral. The more diversity there is in any organisation, the more different input is being added to the mix and the more successful a company can become.

If you’re looking at your personal success, try to find influences that widen your horizon; look at your organisation or your life with the widest possible lens and observation. You’ll find that the majority of people will have an opinion and that their opinion is influenced by the way they were brought up, live their lives and who they hang out with. Make it fun to work in an environment where you celebrate diversity.

# 12 SUCCESS AND HARD WORK AND DISCIPLINE

Bringing SUCCESS to fruition requires hard work and discipline

However you define success, there's that can't be achieved as long as you work towards it. You need to put the work in to earn the reward of success.

Let's use a marathon for instance. The average time it takes anyone with a bit of running experience to train for a marathon is 3 months. You find lots of different advice and schedules online, and there is a certain plan you can follow. It has been done many times. Anyone who is able to run can push her/himself to achieve that, follow the plan, and subject to their health finish a marathon. It's a lot of hard work, running when it is cold and rainy, getting up early or staying up late, managing your nutrition, watching your recovery time and then running again. I've done it, so I'd say if I can do it most people can.

Running a marathon isn't easy; it's hard work. It is bliming hard to do the training. But hard work and discipline gets you there.

Let's look at this from a business point of view. You'll go through ups and downs. You don't want the downs to affect you, however most people like the ups. It is always easier to coach people who are on the up; the big sales, the achievements, the moments of breakthrough. For every business that succeeds, there's a higher number of businesses that fail. The ones that fail are often the stepping stones for the next successful ones if the person's willing to learn from what didn't work and try again.

Whether you work for a start-up, a bigger corporation, a non for profit or the local council, the ups and downs are always there. As one guest said, "change is good". The only constant is the most important thing in your life: a happy partner/husband/wife, kids, family as a whole. A job is a job. That doesn't mean you shouldn't like your job; it's about determining what you feel is the most important thing in life for you.

Discipline comes with hard work. We look at habits and routines in the next chapter, a concept I wrote a whole book about. Habits and routines are the execution plan of your hard work. To keep up with habits and routines you need discipline. Hence, I work as a coach to help keeping people with goals honest, to keep them disciplined, and help them achieve their goals.

It's important to work through changes and to make sure you're happy to change if it's needed for your company. As an example, if things aren't going too well, it doesn't mean you should throw in the towel and start looking for a new job elsewhere. Just because a start-up is going through a crisis, you wouldn't just turn it all in. Going back to the marathon example, just because you have a bit of a cold, you don't stop running and give up on the marathon.

We're all trying to cope with everyday challenges; procrastination, time limits, school runs, kids, paying the rent, and other day to day thoughts. Controlling your thoughts is key to not staying in bed at 5 am when the alarm goes off, or not sitting in front of the TV instead of going to the gym.

Habits and routines will support the work you need to do, and scheduling things into your diary or journal, making it part of your routine and daily life helps a lot too. Imagine putting gym visits in your schedule every lunch time (don't forget to eat), and religiously block that time from accepting any meetings. Stick to your schedule and make it a priority.

Work really hard when you're in the gym. Don't take short cuts and just spend the hour exercising doing light weights. Try to improve a session at a time; work your butt off. Hard work always pays off.

Don't confuse long hours with hard work. Long hours are something we used to measure in business. The amount of time you spent at work was seen as being productive. I would argue that I get more done than others in the same amount of time as a result of quick thinking, quick typing, and a great system using tools to help my productivity such as Evernote or 2Do. I can be super productive by following rules, habits, routines and working damn hard and being disciplined.

I believe I'm passionate about the work I do. I use available tools to make things happen quicker and use reminders and calendar schedules to block time. If I wasn't working hard and staying committed, and wasn't being ultra-disciplined, I wouldn't have gotten where I've gotten to and couldn't have achieved my own success.

Always look forward to your achievements and goals. Pick yourself up after a set-back or a difficult time. You'll get out in front by doing hard work every single day.

# 13 SUCCESS AND ROUTINES AND HABITS

Routines and habits are key to help with focus and support  
SUCCESS

This is one of my most favourite principles, and I've been banging on about it since the launch of my first productivity book in 2013. Forming a habit and following a successful daily routine will help you mastering your work flow and make your life easier. That doesn't mean every habit or routine will automatically work for you. It's like using a tool like an app to track your steps or sports activity or anything else; the app is only half the battle. The real battle is to continue doing things, and the only way to help you plan your time is to schedule them make them become a habit.

To clarify the terminology, a routine is something that you do on a regular basis or doing things in a particular order. Habits are actions we do often in a regular or repetitive way. Habits aren't conscious thoughts after a while, whereas a routine requires a certain effort.

Darren Hardy in the Compound Effect (The Compound Effect, Carroll & Graf, 2012) says that you'll never change your life until you change something you do daily.

It's been shown that daily habits have a compound effect and lead to a more successful outcome, whether it's something personal like losing weight (eating less or differently as a habit for instance) or doing exercise. The same is true if you have business goals and work on them routinely.

When many people decide to get into a routine, they'll start their day earlier in the morning such as 5AM. I started doing that many years ago when the kids were little as it was the only way I could fit in my exercise. Now every morning I get up, exercise, meditate and that's my routine.

However, my habits are 'rolling out of bed', quickly checking my messages that came in overnight (for better or worse), meditating, emptying the dishwasher, exercising, showering, and getting dressed. Most of the latter habits don't require too much thinking as this is a part of my life. The 5AM routine has been discussed widely, and one should still aim for a healthy night's sleep of 7-8 hours. It might not be for everyone, but if you're someone who has to catch a train around 7:30 and want to exercise, meditate and greet the day before work starts, then a 5AM routine might be right for you.

Let's use Mark Zuckerberg's or Steve Job's as examples. Both used to wear the same clothes every day. They never opened their wardrobe in the morning thinking 'which shirt should I wear'. By taking small decisions out of your life, you simplify your life. If you don't know how to fit in a visit to the gym or journaling or writing a book when you're up against it at work, and you're too tired at night, look into the 5AM routine. The habits within it can change depending on your interests and things you'd like to get done.

There are other routines and habits you might already have. When going on a business trip I routinely pack the things I need and prepare the night before; do you have a check list in your head or on paper? Every pilot has a check list for all gauges and equipment; without it they can't take off. It's all about simple quality control. I have a list for when I take the kids to school to ensure I didn't forget their lunch box or put sunscreen on in the summer.

A few of my guests talked about how they regularly write journals; I do too. Every night I fill in my gratitude journal, reflecting on the good things of the day and things I've learned. It's those small habits that make you go a bit further, reflect a bit more consciously and lets you win a bit more than the competition. Another common habit mentioned was to prepare for the upcoming week on Sundays, spending up to 3 hours getting it planned out.

This is important to whomever you speak to who has success habits; taking stock and journaling what needs to be done, what has to wait, and prioritising the workload. For some of my guests it started with blocking time out in their calendar during the week to think. I'm very productive when blocking out time, as it helps me to get on top of my work load. It makes total sense to me to block time to think. We're often too wired to let go and end up responding to emails or letting other inputs dominate our lives. By scheduling time to think, to reflect, or to take stock of what's going on, draining your brain (Getting Things Done, GTD) by writing everything down that comes to your mind helps us to free up our internal RAM (Random Access Memory). RAM is what David Allen, who wrote Getting Things Done (Allen, David (2015), Getting Things Done: The Art of Stress-free Productivity, Piatkus), describes as our working memory, similar to what we have in our computer. Our brain can only process so many thoughts at a time.

If you think of any manual labour that needs doing, whether that is intellectual or not, the first question one should ask is whether the work is necessary. Once we decide what needs to be done, the follow up question is whether it can be automated. An example is deciding to automate washing dishes instead of washing by hand, which saves time for you to do other things while your dishes are being cleaned.

The next consideration is, if you can't automate it, can you outsource it? I've been outsourcing my ironing for many years. This is to save time, and I think my time is better spent on other things rather than ironing 10 shirts every other weekend. For other tasks there are lots of companies that take on design work, admin tasks, and secretarial tasks. Whatever makes sense for you, and whichever tasks you don't like, there will be companies out there, virtual online or non-virtual offline in your country or another, that can make your life easier.

Whatever makes your life easier, do it. The less you have to think about things, the more time you free up for the important thoughts in life. You can apply that extra time focusing on important topics. If you aren't a morning person and you need to get up and get out of the house early, you need a routine that works for you. One guest explained his routine of focusing on the basics like showering, getting into his clothes that were laid out the night before, and leaving the house in time for the train. He had no worries about breakfast, emptying the dishwasher, making coffee or exercising. His routine is about being in the office on time, sorting out breakfast and coffee on the way. Whatever works for you, and whichever routine you apply, the important bit is that it works for maximising your time for whatever it is that's important to you.

For more information on how to create successful habits and make productivity work for your schedule, please look up my book [#BeBetter](#).

# 14 SUCCESS IS ABOUT BALANCE

SUCCESS isn't created by business itself; a balanced life with family, friends and hobbies is key; happiness is an important factor closely aligned with SUCCESS

Let's talk about happiness, success and work life balance. This chapter is all about you. It's about how you define success and how you want to split your day and night, or your work-day and non-work-day. What I'm saying is that if you're someone without a family or friends, love working 24 hours, and don't want to take breaks, this is fine. This is about your defined balance.

[Louis Efron](#) confirmed that a balanced life is critical to success. The idea is to put your life before your work, e.g. he uses the analogy of putting your horse in front of the cart. Once you defined how you want to live, you have to decide how you support it through a job.

When looking at balance, and based on the success podcasts, we're looking at a 'normalised example' for our justification. In this scenario, most people work 9-5 Monday to Fridays, and they have families or hobbies, things they like to do outside work. As a famous person once said, if you find your dream job, you never work a day in your life again; how very true this is.

Happiness is closely related to success, and my humble opinion is that without a partner and maybe children, or a healthy family balance to work, success in work alone isn't worth it, but that might just be my perception. Over the years I've discussed this with many people, and without a counter balance to work it almost doesn't seem worthwhile making the effort to work and move up the career ladder. I never wanted a career solely for myself, but to provide for the family, see them grow up and being able to provide for them.

It's a bit of a bold statement of course. How you define family is down to you as well as whether or not you want to have children. I wasn't sure I wanted children for a long time, but now I couldn't wish for anything more than my two boys, my wife and us sharing experiences and life together.

If you're not lucky enough to have family, you need to have a hobby or a pet. I've have seen people having pets as a replacement for children. Having a hobby is important because it's something that takes your mind away from work, sometimes even from your family. I realised that very late in life, because my focus was always on work and family. There wasn't much room for other interests. Yet the key is to find something you enjoy outside work.

Maybe you play golf, or go hiking, build car models or exercise. It's important to have a focus outside work; ideally, you'll have both family plus a hobby.

Linda Cattelan at [HumanResources](#) confirms that to be truly successful is to have balance in your life. She brings it back to 'happy with every area of life, whether that's career, family, friends, significant other, finances, personal growth, health and wellness, physical environment and even spirituality.' It's a 360° view of life and balance, similar to my 7 pillars to become better ([#BeBetter: A book about productivity and life systems](#)).

A hobby plus or minus the family becomes your balance. The time you spend with your family, teaching your kids about the world, or understanding your partner's profession helps bring everything together. The time you spend actively listening to their days and sharing your experience is wonderful. If you have a hobby you can retreat in solitude with things like running or exercising, or you can spend time with others like a group of friends going for drinks or group hobbies like playing football or basketball.

Life's too short to only have one sided input, to only understand one side of the coin and to not experience other people's opinion, teach and give back to your children or focus on work alone. Life is there to be enjoyed and be happy. Most people are happy when they spend time with family and friends, relax, chill out and have fun or create experiences with others. If your sole focus is work and career, and if you're success driven, there's a danger of getting stuck in a rut of loneliness, only seeing life from a work perspective.

Research suggests that you're prone to be less happy, less satisfied with life, potentially more depressed and more agitated without a work/life balance. From what we understand today, you want to activate different cells in your brain to create a balance of thoughts and a balance of neurones that keep you chemically balanced, which will result in a balance of both activities and sanities. Research also shows that people who have a happy and satisfied life outside work are actually better at their day job, circling ever so much higher into the orbit. Sometimes just switching off your phone and not checking emails after work is a win/win situation for both work and life!

Last but not least, the boundaries of work and life are fluid. With the advent of mobile phones and us being able to check emails 24/7 at any place, you need to define boundaries that work for you. You might potentially accept that work is life and life is work unintentionally.

If you can't separate the fine line of work and life, and can't turn off your phone or close the door to your home office to be physically separated from your work place, then think about the term "Life Life Balance". What I mean by that is to balance life in general. Don't dedicate all your time to one thing, work or life, but dedicate the agreed hours to work

and stop there. If it's in chunks that add up to your contracted hours, dedicate the other time to your family and hobbies. Companies give us more and more flexibility unless you're self-employed, which helps you to define your own schedule. Balancing it is key and being able to switch off and not being engulfed by work is important.

# 15 VISUALISATION LEADS TO SUCCESS

Visualisation of what you want to achieve and focus on creates SUCCESS

When one of my guests first mentioned visualisation, my thoughts went back to the movie [The Secret](#). Imagine things and they will happen, manifest things in your mind, visualise them, and they become true. Who has seen the movie and the scene where the guy is unpacking his boxes out of storage and realises that on his vision board there was a picture from five years earlier of his dream house which was the same house he just bought? His dream, his visualisation, manifested, because his unconscious kept thinking about it and he'd forgotten it until he saw the picture again. The LOA, law of attraction as it's called, works for a lot of people. [Mindvalley's blog](#) writes about the Power of Visualisation which works hand in hand with the Law of Attraction (LOA). However, we often focus on things that could go wrong rather than on what could go right; learning how to use it to your advantage is a key to success.

Clyde Brodin writes in [the Telegraph](#) about the power of visualisation, turning thoughts into reality. He uses people like Felix Baumgartner, who famously jumped out of the highest ever balloon trip, and Michael Phelps, the Olympian swimmer who won 28 medals, who always dreamt big and visualised the outcome, 'living the dream'. The visualisation of your outcome, your goals and dreams, will help you in achieving them.

For one of my podcast guests, this wasn't any different. He came from humble beginnings and kept visualising how things would be better in the future. From a low salary, living day to day, and owning only one suit, he went to become an agency owner, eventually selling that business to a bigger agency group and netting a handsome sum of money. He didn't stop there, as money never really motivated him, and still doesn't to this day. He still meditates and journals and thinks and visualises things he would like to achieve.

I've experienced similar events for myself. In the wider personal development community this principle is well recognised, that thoughts and pictures create who you'll become. It's a manifestation in the mind of a picture of something you want to achieve or want to become, which takes a lot of focus. I sometimes use a meditation technique that only focuses on that, focuses on what you want to become and what you want to achieve. In NLP (Neuro Linguistic Programming) we use a technique that has you visualise 'if you were already there, imagine how you got there'. Imagine you already owned that Porsche or made the difference in researching for the HIV virus; how did you get there? Visualise the way you

came and imagine walking the path moving forward. Do it often enough and manifest the thought in your unconscious, to bring it out consciously over time.

From Mahatma Gandhi to Jim Rohn, Darren Hardy to Anthony Robbins. most personal development trainers suggest you stop your inner voice that tells you 'you're going to fail'. They say to turn up the positive thinking and develop a growth mindset. Start with the voices in your head that tell you that you can't achieve something, though this might sound quite peculiar at first, and ignore them or turn them off. Practise mindfulness and stop following random thoughts; focus on very particular images of what your future could look like, or what you might achieve.

Leading from positive self-talk and a can-do attitude, you start visualising how to achieve success; you'll amplify positive voices. What would it mean for you to be successful; what would it look like? How does it feel?

Over 15 years ago I learned a re-framing exercise in my NLP which taught me how to make the picture of a negative outcome small and black and white in your head, even make it go away. At the same time, increase the positive pictures and colourful positive outcomes in your head; focus on the positives, a very simple concept. It takes some practise to do it correctly though. [Matt Mayberry](#) writes about how important it is to visualise and suggests techniques like a vision board, trigger card or feeding your mind with happy and loving memories.

For success you can go further. You can visualise what success might look like. A lot of athletes use visualisation to play better and improve their skills. There's a [study](#) suggesting that by programming the subconscious brain for success you actually achieve it. Visualising that you score the goal in the premier league final or that you win the Grand Slam will help you do that very thing. Whatever it is, concentrate and visualise positive things and successes. You'll get there; all you have to do is believe.

There are other studies of athletics proving that by solely visualising the next run or game and imagining that you win, you gain confidence and to a certain extent 'fitness' to achieve it. I'm not saying you can get fit by lying in bed visualising a 10K, or that everything you envision will happen exactly the way you see it, but you can get better and more determined imaging the actual run and race day, having 'virtually' run it before in your mind. It gives you the competitive edge, refines your approach, and ultimately makes you more successful.

# 16 MINDFULNESS, MEDITATION AND SUCCESS

Journaling and meditation lead to a balanced mind and reflection fostering SUCCESS

Mindfulness is becoming a buzz word as we speak. Zen and the idea of being in the moment, nourishing one's stillness, looking inside oneself to open up is spreading. I could go on about catch phrases, and the wider marketing about mindfulness. However, there's a lot of truth to mindfulness and its positive effect on health. As a matter of fact, one of the podcasts focuses on how important the "here and now" is for coaching and goal setting.

Matt Tunney suggests in [Success magazine](#) that being mindful is a shift from "being our thinking" to being aware of our thinking. Mindfulness leads to increased resilience to stress, improved decision making and improved EQ. All of those lead to a more successful life. In summary, we are what we think, and we can control our thoughts. Yet, so often we allow thoughts to control us.

Headspace published some [research](#) that shows mindfulness reducing stress in organisations, which in itself accounts for as much as US\$ 300 billion in lost productivity. That is on top of US\$ 200 billion in stress-related illnesses and people being absent from work. This shows mind blowing figures of the impact mindfulness can have on the bottom line of any company. Job satisfaction, productivity and emotional engagement all increased if mindfulness and meditation practises were introduced within companies. Yet, in most companies, the regular meet-up of mindfulness people, or the mindfulness trainers or facilitators are rare. Funds to foster the adoption are still few and far between.

I interviewed a mindfulness trainer for my podcast who was training trainers to implement a programme across a huge global organisation. On top of that, he introduced the programme into other big corporates. The need for mindfulness, and the application of mindfulness in organisations, is growing. The rapid development of technology, the always on connection and constant distraction of work, the 'no escape' route, will result in companies eventually having to implement a mindfulness practise, similar to offering prayer rooms or counselling.

Vertikal Kshyap defines mindfulness as a way to improve productivity and gain a greater work life balance, as well as staying [relaxed](#). You understand yourself better, which helps with how you present yourself and how you work with others, all relating to self-awareness, EQ, teamwork and other factors that lead to success.

I think this is a good thing. As a trained mindfulness trainer, I'm not only seeing opportunities for colleagues and myself, but a necessity to combat our life's pressures, stress and anxieties. It's time to re-think the way we're working, and we all benefit from meditation, mental awareness and mindfulness practise at work and at home.

Part of my daily routine is to meditate. I normally meditate 25 minutes in the morning and an additional 5-15 minutes during the day or at night. I've been doing that for many years and I have experienced a calmer mind, a mind I can control a lot easier and the ability to concentrate better. No matter how hard life has treated me, through the darkest winters and worst life and work situations, I've managed to survive and stay calm.

Most of my podcast guests have similar stories. They have a routine or a habit that enforces mindfulness such as deep breathing, cold showers, reading novels, performing martial arts or journaling, relaxation routines or meditative habits. Meditation and regular relaxation will help you to transform your mind and the way you deal with everyday input as well as things that get thrown at you.

Stress is a common problem. I believe, and have attended courses, on how mindfulness can combat sleep problems also. How important sleep is has been written about often, and it's definitely a problem a lot of people have. You can reduce stress and increase happiness through meditation. Your brain changes over time to cope better with unexpected thoughts, unexpected things that come its way, and your concentration improves.

There's scientific research suggesting a lot of good things come from meditation. I find that by concentrating on nothing and reflecting on things I'm able to better control any kind of thought process and input. Whilst sometimes my mind still wanders, it's okay to accept that and not beat oneself up; meditation is a constantly learning process, and over time you get better.

What matters with any routine, and that includes meditation is it needs to work for you. If your meditation is a long walk with your partner at the weekend, or taking the dog for a walk, so be it. If journaling or swimming or running is your form of meditation, that's okay too. It's important for you to find your form of meditation.

Whichever practise you choose, the key is that it works for you and you get relief from it. Some get relief by simply going to the gym, while others realise, they need meditation or a complete 'brain reboot'. What I mean by that is they need to turn off the work brain and turn on the private brain. Some people are good in doing that, and everyone else benefits from switching the mind off.

What also helps to process your thoughts is journaling. Many of guests journal regularly. I jot down the most important thoughts of the day in a gratitude journal every night. This way, I focus on all the positive things happening in a day. Other times I write blog posts or just write or think on paper – whatever works for you to relax and empty your brain; similar to GTD and the ‘brain drain’.

People sometimes underestimate the reality that everyone is different. I believe it’s important to set time aside on a daily basis to calm your mind, to reflect and to make sure you’re able to cope with a lot of input because too much input can be overwhelming. Think about it; more email, more demands, more of everything all leads to information overload, less time, and too much work. Be sure to find a way to cope with it, relax your brain and train your brain to be ready. Meditation is a wonderful thing to achieve just that.

# 17 VALUES AND SUCCESS

High standards for yourself and others build a basis for  
SUCCESS

I'm a person with high standards and integrity. I always hold myself accountable to the highest standards; delivering tasks on time, within budget and with the highest quality I can produce. Does that mean I'm perfect – far from it. Even the most 'perfect' person can only do their best.

What's important is that you should live a life full of values. What is it that makes you tick, and how would you like to be treated? Imagine you're working in sales or account management, and you're thinking of what services to provide to your clients. The best thing to do is ask them; isn't that simple? What do they need in order to be more successful? What would make their life easier? What would you have to offer them for them to make more money and get a higher ROI from your services?

One of the reasons values affect success is as they affect your life's decisions. They influence your career choice as much as how important things are for you. If you don't live a life in unison with your values, you won't be happy and it'll impede your success. You'll be out of sync with yourself and your goals; it's hard to be successful without those values.

Values give meaning to your life. If your work or life conflicts with your values, this creates stress and impacts relationships at home and at work, resulting in lower productivity, happiness and ultimately success.

[Cecile Peterkin writes](#) that values change over time based on experience, and this is important to consider when pursuing any kind of career or success.

This is an example of how to think, but the reason I bring that up is that you should always put your high standards first. If you promised a client a document by the end of the week, give them an update by then. Don't ignore it and don't forget giving feedback; not only is it a violation of high standards but you'll diminish your credibility forever.

Have you ever waited on a train to move or a plane to land, but nothing's happening and you haven't received any information on what's going on? Didn't that make you feel annoyed? I bet that 99% of readers say it's awful not to get information when it's needed. If you expect this behaviour from others, lead by example, be a good person and keep people informed.

It's important to keep one's values and standards up on the work you do no matter who it's for. Your clients, family, friends and co-workers are important to your long-term success; always remember to treat people the way you want to be treated.

Most of the people I interviewed had high standards for themselves, and they defined values for themselves and others to live by. They had reasons and values on what to work on. Some had limitations they set themselves, e.g. to not do something or not to record a podcast after 5 pm. I had to respect their values, and their prioritisation of tasks. That's who they are, and some were really strict with their rules. I believe that's why they made it to the top.

In line with values and high expectations goes self-discipline. Successful people hold themselves accountable for what they do. The same goes for their team. They set high expectations on their team. Sometimes they forgot that the members of team were employees, maybe not as motivated as the founding member and therefore not working to the same standards. Great managers and leaders manage to project their values and expectations into the culture of their organisation in order to raise the bar across the entirety of the company. That's a very smart move.

Whether it's high work ethics, gender equality, emotional intelligence or helping others - there are traits that are presented by most successful leaders. Those values need to be lived by and demonstrated on a daily basis.

When living with high standards, you often have to accept that others can't live up to them. This is something I learned early in my career. Whilst I think something might be right and the right thing to do, others might disagree and that's okay. As an emotional intelligent leader, you need to accept that people differ and that people might get motivated differently than you. Not everyone can live to my values and standards, and neither can I live to theirs.

Over the years I've learned that having high standards and measuring up to them is important to me. It's never letting your guard down no matter what comes your way. You measure yourself constantly and make sure you keep up the good work.

There are values you define for organisations. Some guests talked about the values they set for their company and how they wrote them down for the people who they work with. That's an important task if you ask me, getting people in one room to accept responsibility for what the company should stand for, and how they achieve those values. It needs to be a day to day process in aligning the company values with everyone who works there, building those values into the culture. This results in happier employees, as expectations and culture are defined by those very values.

Looking at it from a personal angle, if you want to be successful as a person, don't drop your values to get a job or a deal done. Stick to what you mean to represent and live your values. If that means you might have to walk away from a deal or a job, then do it.

# 18 CULTURE OF A BUSINESS

The culture of a business defines how well it does

This is one of the most obvious success principles, don't you think? It might not be about you being successful as an individual, yet I always argue that any manager rises with the tide, but so does team and business success.

[Deloitte](#) published a paper on culture that states 'when a company's culture is clearly aligned with business strategy, it attracts people who feel comfortable in it, which in turn should produce a heightened level of engagement [...] leading to success.' Their survey suggests that 87% of all participants think culture is important to success.

It wasn't until one of my later podcasts when one of my guests mentioned culture and how it's important to build a culture with certain values. It reminded me of another podcast when I discussed how the company was created and wrote down principles, they wanted to align themselves with, defining their culture and essentially deciding how to work.

A friend and podcast guest of mine wrote the book *The Joy of Work* (Daisley, Bruce (2019), Random House Business). I totally believe in everything I read, and his work is based on his own podcast. He summarised the most important principles on how to get fun back at work, something that aligns with this chapter. I could just write a book about the culture at work, but that's not what this one is about. Here, I can only mention the importance of culture to an organisation for success; for more details on how to create this culture, please read Bruce's book.

The culture of an organisation is defined by its values, and of course by the people working there and adhering to the values. Therefore, things like togetherness, teamwork and how the team trusts their managers and other individuals are key. It's also about transparency of management sharing information with staff and how open they are. It goes in line with what we've already covered, forming a culture around values and work life balance, around diversity, around mindfulness and all the other principles.

The culture of an organisation brings it all together in terms of what you should create. By creating a culture that's all about achievement, flexibility and trust, you create a culture around people that want to win and be successful. Isn't that almost beautiful, bringing it all together?

Let's look at an example. If Johanna Smith likes her work and enjoys going to work, she's a happy employee. If her kids are ill and she can work from home and no one counts the hours, she's even happier. Her kids will always be more important than her work, and her work place accepts that. Hence, when she leaves 30 minutes earlier in order to catch a train that gets her home to pick up the kids from the child minder, her manager doesn't mind. Her manager knows she either makes up the time, or her work is so good that half an hour here and there doesn't matter. Her results are stacking up and she is doing an amazing job; who's counting the hours?

As a result, Johanna is happier at work. Her happiness is contagious, and she helps others to achieve their goals, manages her team well and leads by example. What else could an employer wish for?

By allowing people to work as they would like to, hours that are convenient for them, a great location, at a competitive salary, with flexibility and trust in their input and a results driven nature, people will perform better. It's really that simple.

However, most companies still have a 9-5 culture embedded, where people measure time vs. output. I don't understand that concept and align myself with most of my guests, where the summary of a happy work culture is the respect of the individual, acknowledging their common sense and intellect.

Of course, you do get the odd one out and have to manage these people, but that happens. One of the reasons that happens is that employees are stuck in routines and brules (bull shit rules as defined by Mindvalley's Vishen Lakhiani) about work and what they have to and don't have to do.

With the advent and take-over of the millennial generation, the key to a happy work place and culture is about making all work enjoyable no matter what, trusting people and their judgement. It's not easy to do, as it's less tangible in terms of measurement, but it's well worth [the effort](#).

# 19 SUCCESS AND AUTHENTICITY

Stay true to yourself

This principle was actually defined as ‘don’t be a dick’ by one of my interviewees – being authentic in your approach will get you a lot further than being disingenuous. There are loads of successful people you would say aren’t authentic, seems false, maybe even fraudulent. However, it’s proven that if you’re authentic and honest, you can be more successful.

[Shaifali Aggarwal writes](#) about the importance of authenticity to build genuine relationships, and therefore also motivate people, as they are their true self. She adds that “it’s increasingly difficult to copy someone’s else’s branding, value proposition, positioning, and strategies.”

It goes in line with what a few guests said, that a) you should be self-aware – both based on authenticity and EQ, and b) that that success gives you the choice of decisions.

The latter is a bit tricky, as monetary success will make it easier for you to make decisions, though success is not all about money. What I learned was that if you’re successful and build a business or a life that rewards you with success, you’re more in line with what you want to do and who you want to become.

Essentially, you’re closer to your inner self and therefore, you’re more successful by your own definition, because you make decisions based on your inner values and inner authenticity. This inner confidence will give you more certainty about making decisions, and if you’re rich on the back of being successful, this is even more true as it gives you more of a security blanket, and potentially even more freedom of choice. One could almost say that if you’ve been successful, you learned how to make the right decisions, and therefore will make the right decisions moving forward.

Authenticity means you’re deeply connected to your inner self. You know who you are, and this results in you expressing your thoughts freely and being real about yourself, not playing political or self-centred games that only help your own cause. In order to practise authenticity, according to [Chopra](#), you have to go with how you feel. Whether you’re having a bad or good feeling, speak about it and address it. You shouldn’t build a wall around yourself, but release the fear of vulnerability, which in return will increase your confidence. Given that you have more confidence, you’ll likely to be more successful.

As you go along you evolve, learn, and expand your consciousness, and your opinions will expand. A change of mind and attitude towards a topic is allowed. Allow yourself to change

opinions. Express yourself, as nothing is ever set in stone. How often do things change, and therefore need a different approach? By being true to yourself and authentic, you can deal with it and convince others of your opinions. This results in you being seen as a leader, something you must accept of yourself.

If you think about it, essentially once you're connected more deeply with yourself, and you're the person you want to be and portray that on the outside, it results in you being seen as an authentic person, someone who's successful, and people accept you for who you are, what you achieve and see you as a leader, which leads to a positive chain reaction.

It goes in line with an energy shift, and others will support you because authenticity attracts followers. Often you see that authentic leaders score very high in trust.

If you look at authenticity from a different success point of view, you might want to consider an array of similar or same behaviours. There might be something that's selling well at the moment and everyone's clamouring for it.

How does your product differentiate itself from others? The way to differentiate the product, or yourself offering a service, is that your authenticity will stick out. It's about being honest and standing out, as you're real and build trust within others. As you get deeper into business and personal relationships, both sides are investing and trusting in those relationships. You're seen as human and being approachable, which ties back into earlier mentions of EQ and trust based on authenticity.

According to [Forbes](#), authenticity requires clarity. People who are authentic are better in articulating their values and intentions. This leads to certainty, which is something humans crave, resulting in a reward response in our brain. It comes back to knowing who you are, being a self-aware person, speaking and acting from the bottom of your heart, making decisions to benefit yourself and others, and caring. You put others above yourself, treat others equally, and therefore create positive energy as an authentic leader.

# CONCLUSION: SUCCESS EQUALS HAPPINESS – IS THAT TRUE?

In my final chapter, I want to write about happiness and success. Why? Very often, during my discussions with my guests, we drifted in a philosophical discussion around success and whether we are happier if we are successful. And given what we said in chapter 14, happiness is also related to having a life-life balance.

I come back to what I said originally, that I set out to record the conversations others couldn't have, and interview successful people in my eyes and what my expectations were. I expected more people saying it was all about money, but most people brought it quickly down to being happy and content. Whether that's related to the success they achieved, or more likely that they achieved success in the widest sense of being independent from money, which gave them the choice to do what they wanted is unsure. Still, they were happier.

For most, the money aspect wasn't relevant; the important thing was happiness. It might be that when we're striving for success and whatever that means from a personal point of view, achieving what we were striving for makes us happy.

Yet, some of the entrepreneurs said they couldn't stop. Is it about getting happier? Is success like a drug for fulfilment that, similar to cigarette smoking, makes you addicted to happiness? Every time you're successful in your job or life project, are you getting a kicker to do it again and again? Is there a classic 'chain' of being a serial entrepreneur?

As one of my guests said, we are defining success too much by looking at others rather than feeling what's going on inside us. We're having successes all the time, small wins in the here and now, which we must define for ourselves and not base on comparison. Happiness is a great fulfilment rather than an ongoing 'goal achievement'.

The happier you are in life, the better you are at your job, the higher you get on the career ladder, the greater the 'work success'; is that true? Can we really single happiness out as a factor for success? Probably not. It's a combination of factors, but having a stable, happy life will certainly help people to progress through the challenges at work.

My take would definitely be that achievement of any kind of goal, a milestone in your life, success as most people would call it, will make you a little bit happier. As you start dreaming about achieving something, whether that is earning money or being a CEO, or helping someone every day or being a good nurse, once you strive for those dreams to become reality, and your reality becomes real, you've achieved success. This in turn will trigger happiness.

So it's not the money but the building of a company and selling it. It's not the money but the step on the career ladder, the opportunity to serve or whatever it might be, to be able to live a life worth living, spending time with your children. All of those are valid reasons, and in over 40 episodes you've heard my guests' opinions which relate to happiness and success. This goes hand in hand but aren't necessarily the same thing!

It's an upward trajectory, as happiness will foster success. A positive, happy outlook on life will result in a better performance at work, and therefore a quicker progression of a career or a more fulfilled job. The daily grind turns into a daily love affair, something where you can truly enjoy every moment. You'll achieve more, and you'll be happier as you achieve even more.

My next bigger focus is around mindfulness at work, and how the set-up of mindfulness practises at work can influence not only happiness, but ultimately success and productivity. Personally, from the work I am doing, I want to combine EQ and mindfulness into a guideline for businesses to foster both happier employees and more productive outputs.

This concludes my learning from the initial podcast series, and the principles for success.

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