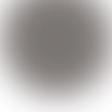


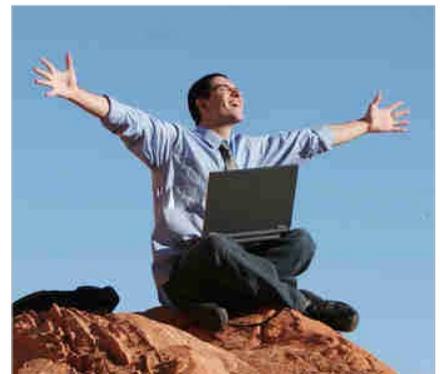
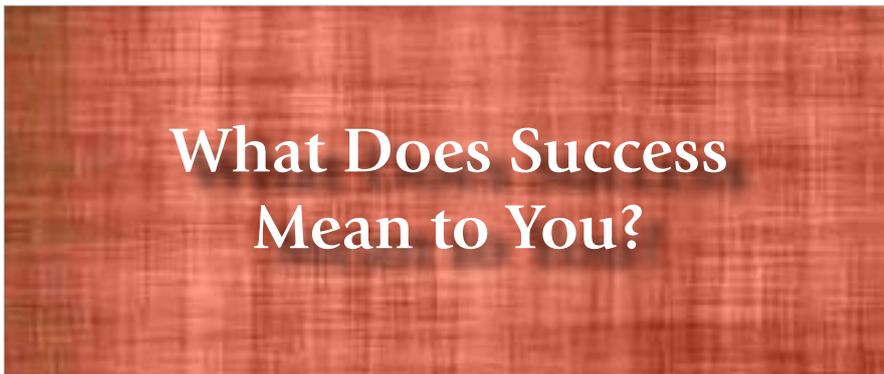


MANDAT  GR  WTH LETTER®

Growth Focus: Success

CEO-Tip *of the Month*

by Guido Quelle



In my lectures, I often ask the students, and in my talks, I often ask the audience the following question: "What does success mean to you?"

The answers vary. Some talk about "being happy," "leading a fulfilled life," "having fun." Others say "becoming chairman," "leading my employees to success," or "being able to help people."

Two important points on this:

1.
There is no right or wrong answer to the question: "What does success mean to you?" The question is relevant because it shows whether someone has thought about "personal success" and because it makes people think about it if they haven't before.

2.
To date, no one – not a single person! – has answered the question "What does success mean to you?" with "having lots of money." Though we can assume that some people thought it even if they didn't say it, it's nevertheless remarkable that this answer has never been given, either because it's considered inappropriate to say it – which is nonsense – or because the individual definition of success truly does have dimensions other than money.

For me, success means having as much free time as possible, no matter what I decide to do with that time. I might use the time to write a book, plan a client project, develop a growth strategy with a client team or just lie in a hammock.

Is this definition of success "right" or "wrong?" Neither. It's my definition.

What is your definition of success? How will you know when you're successful? Particularly as a CEO, chairperson, entrepreneur, you need such a definition so that in the maze of topics you have to deal with, you are able to tell if they are contributing to your personal success or not. Of course you are bound by your business responsibilities, by your company and the goals that go with them, but no one is stopping you – or better said, no one should stop you – from combining your career and your personal life. You live a "holistic" life. If you can't reconcile your business goals with your personal ones, it's time to change things. When taking stock of precisely these questions, many have realized that their current working environment isn't conducive to their personal success.

I'm not suggesting that you question your job, first of all because entrepreneurs have to be sold and can't be fired, but what I would like to suggest is that you try to precisely define what success means to you. And while you're at it, define which criteria you use to determine whether you have already achieved success, or whether it's at least in sight.

Does that require work? Indeed. But it's mental work that will pay off in any number of ways.

Strategy & Leadership

by Guido Quelle

How You and Your Team Can Kick-Start Success



Who wouldn't answer "yes" to the question: "Do you want to be successful?" As if it weren't demanding enough having to define success for yourself, it becomes far more complex and takes on a new dynamic at the corporate level.

Our consultancy projects are always about becoming more successful or becoming successful again. In order for this to work, several things have to happen. Later you will find the key aspects that we consider relevant when it comes to the subject of "success."

1. Measured values

Wanting success without having defined how to recognize it when it comes is negligent. While defining quantitative measured values is relatively easy, defining qualitative measured values presents a few obstacles. But with quantitative measured values, ambiguity also quickly becomes apparent. How do we know, for example, whether growth of 10 percent for the coming year is a) realistic and b) correct? Why not 8 percent? Or 17 percent? "Good to Great" – a nice book title by Jim Collins, but what does "good" mean and what does "great" mean? Define measured values, including qualitative measured values, for success together with your team. This process alone will yield significant advances on the road to reaching your goal.

2. Language

What language does your company use? Is success recognized within the company? Are successful employees given positive attention? Are there initiatives for making customers more successful? Or do you just keep making "deals?" Are leaders praised for their ideas? Is it acknowledged that success is rewarded? Or is there a culture of envy? What happens when the boss gets a new car? What do the employees say? "Great car!" or "He should have given me a raise instead!" Is the future talked about positively? Or is there an "everything is so bad, why am I working here" mentality?

Pay attention to the language being used. Make sure that success is talked about positively and that no one gossips about customers or makes snide remarks behind their backs. Language is the expression of thought.

3. Best practices

Best practices are a tried and tested way of learning. The real best practices are not – as is commonly taught – outside the business, but are to be found within the business itself. Constantly looking outside to see what some area of industry is doing better than yours must be curbed, because it means passing on responsibility. There is nothing wrong with a stationery wholesaler, for ex-

ample, looking at a pharmacy wholesaler to see which processes are used to keep the error rate low and therefore create a high productivity level. But looking inward mustn't be forgotten. All too often, best practices aren't sought internally – a waste of potential.

Major best practices are hidden in your business. Uncover them – or better still, let them uncover themselves. What works particularly well and why? Learn from these things and multiply the lessons learned.

4. Planning

If you've defined how to measure success, you've already taken a major step that we call "what." Too often, after the difficult task of defining "what," we tend to sit back and ignore or only vaguely define the rest of the process. A fatal mistake, since the energy that went into "what" is lost if it isn't followed by a substantial "how." What does the path to success look like? What are the phases? What are the steps? Which detours might we have to take? The classic we see here are planning sessions that regularly start in late summer or fall – which is fine as long as you assume the fiscal year is the calendar year. Planning takes place at all costs, but no one asks: "How exactly are we going to achieve these figures? Which measures will most likely lead to success?" Don't take the responsibility away from your employees. The decisions we make, the actions we take are what bring success. Defining success is a necessary step, but not enough.

5. Let go of the past

Successful businesses leave the past behind relatively quickly – irrespective of whether or not it was successful. The past can't be changed and not a lot can be learned from it. The only thing that works reliably is looking for success (or failure) patterns. Here "pattern" means a replicable, regularly appearing phenomenon. We need to ask, "Have we introduced particular processes that regularly result in success (or failure)?" with the emphasis on "regular." Learn from these.

Don't look at the past from the point of view of individual cases; instead look for patterns. Ideally, you should devote more time to looking for patterns of success than patterns of failure, since if you manage to multiply the success patterns the failures will decrease dramatically.

6. Innovation as a key to success

Let's look at growth targets as an example: Don't see growth purely as expansion or enlargement. Look at the definition of success and most of all at innovation. Do you really have to sell more of a certain product? Or could you simply discontinue it gradually? Do you really need so many products? Does anyone actually know all your company's products and services? Where do you get your innovation energy?

Ensure that you have a strong and replicable innovation process. Don't allow a "more of the same" mentality at your company. "More of the same" won't win any awards in the long run.

7. Prepare for success

Companies almost always have a plan B, in case something goes wrong with the new growth initiative. Actually, there is usually more than one plan B; there are plans for minor difficulties and a "master plan B" for use if there are major problems. Meticulous plans are made, also taking into account risk factors, for when plan A doesn't work out.

Risk management is a good buzzword. In my opinion there should also be a plan C, which will come into force when success is unexpectedly great. From a risk point of view, this is completely ignored. What happens if a new sales strategy actually works and we not only get numerous new customers, but the old customers buy more? Can we cope with the rush or is there a flaw in our plan? What happens if our new product is a hit, and it's flying off the shelf? Can we meet the demand? Will our suppliers go along with this?

One of the biggest weaknesses when we talk about growth is that companies aren't prepared for success. Just imagine: The success that has been so carefully planned for is ruined by too much success. Fatal. But it isn't really difficult to prepare for success, once you've embraced the idea.

Are you prepared for success?

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