

CEO Tip of the Month: What Does Success Mean to You?

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.

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