

The Choice

I've covered many topics in this book hoping to help you become successful. We've examined the technology explosion, the importance of education and character, the free enterprise system, choosing the right career, the resume, the interview, how to act on the job, and Golden Rule thinking. Now let's answer the question, "What is success?"

What Is Success?

Let's examine various views of success:

- To have a satisfying career requiring a degree as a doctor, lawyer, or teacher; or one that may require technical training as a plumber, electrician, or machinist
- To become an entrepreneur and own a business
- To be rich and famous
- To become a champion sports player
- To have so much money that it makes others envious
- To be happily married and have children
- To be healthy and live a full and satisfying life
- To make this world a better place

Some define success from selfish reasons and others have noble purposes. Those who are proud and selfish want the flashiest car, the biggest house, and latest fashions. These individuals are never content, for their view of success

depends on how others view them. Many of these people foolishly go into deep debt trying to impress others.

Some make the wiser decision that focuses on having a satisfying career and living a happy and fruitful life that includes others. These individuals are not focused on impressing others, but are satisfied to live within their means. It's only when you learn to give and think of others that you will attain a life of success.

Never to Complain

Eddie Rickenbacker was an American fighter ace in World War I. He was called, "America's Ace of Aces" and had the highest number of aerial victories over the Germans. He was also a race car driver, designer of automobiles, and the president of Eastern Air Lines. The U.S. government sent him on a mission to deliver a message to General Douglas MacArthur during World War II. He was flying in a Boeing B-17 which had a defective navigation system, and the plane overshot its destination. It ran out of fuel, and the pilots were forced to ditch the plane in the Pacific Ocean, close to Japanese-held enemy territory.

The eight men bound together three rubber rafts so they would be a larger target for search planes to see. Sharks followed the rafts continuously. They had some survival food rations and fishing kits. After three days they ran out of food. For the next six or seven days the ocean was calm and the heat intolerable. Every inch of exposed flesh blistered. The nights were filled with groans, cries, and prayers.

They conducted prayer meeting and sang hymns in order to lift their spirits. On the eight day after the afternoon prayer service, Rickenbacker lay down with his hat covering his

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face. Then something landed on his hat—a sea gull. Slowly Rickenbacker lifted up his hands and grabbed the sea gull's legs and held tight. He wrung its neck and pulled its feathers, and equally divided the bird among the survivors. They used the intestines for fishing bait. They were so hungry they ate the raw meat and even the bones. They also lived on sporadic rain water. This incident of the bird convinced Rickenbacker that God had a purpose in keeping them alive, and they should not lose faith. Rickenbacker took charge.

Since the rafts were uncovered, sunburn was a serious threat. As the days went by without their being seen, the men became discouraged. When sympathy didn't work, Rickenbacker would lash out and criticize them. He insulted and angered everyone in order to help them survive. After spending two weeks searching for the downed crew, the U.S. Army Air Force wanted to call off the search. However, Rickenbacker's wife convinced them to search for another week.

One of the survivors died, and they let his body float away. The other survivors became weaker and weaker. After two weeks the survivors saw search planes, but the search planes didn't see them. They decided to untie the rafts in hopes it would give them a better chance of being seen. Finally, a search plane found one raft, and the occupants were rescued. Another raft landed on an island, and a missionary notified the authorities. The third raft with Rickenbacker was located by a Navy Catalina flying boat. The surviving members suffered from exposure, dehydration, and starvation.

For 24 days, Rickenbacker had drifted in the Pacific Ocean. Rickenbacker had lost 60 pounds and was severely sunburned and had salt water ulcers. He rested for a few days, and then continued on his original mission to see General MacArthur

and to visit bases. From this incident they redesigned the survival equipment on rafts, such as a rubber sheet to protect the survivors from the sun and to gather rain water, and a small seawater distilling kit.

A successful life is a satisfied life. But you'll never have a satisfied life unless you include others. Notice that Rickenbacker assumed leadership and tried to motivate the men to want to live. One of his methods to help the survivors not give up was to use sarcasm and ridicule. One man tried to commit suicide to make room for others, but Rickenbacker hauled him into the raft and accused him of being a coward. After the incident Rickenbacker learned that several of them made a vow they would continue to live just to have the pleasure of burying him at sea.¹ Rickenbacker's concern for those men helped to keep them alive.

After this great rescue, Dale Carnegie asked Rickenbacker what was the biggest lesson he learned from being hopelessly lost in the Pacific. Rickenbacker said the biggest lesson he learned was:

If you have all the fresh water you want to drink and all the food you want to eat, you ought never to complain about anything.²

What a lesson to learn. How many teens go about griping that they don't have the latest fashion clothes or gadgets? The home is too hot or too cold. Their parents don't give them enough money. Both parents may be working to make ends meet, but they're never satisfied with the sacrifices their parents make. They're only concerned about themselves. "Give me, give me, give me," is their constant demand.

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Wake up teens! Life is more than trying to impress others with your clothes or gadgets. Stop griping so much and learn to appreciate and be thankful for the things you do have. It's like the person who complained he had no shoes until he saw someone who had no feet.

Your Goal

Success is simply accomplishing a desired goal. The first thing you must do is make goals for your life. What do you want to accomplish? What's your dream? You're young, so dream big. But dream realistic dreams that are built on your desires and abilities. Then be willing to work hard to fulfill your dreams.

In your desire to fulfill your dream, make sure you remove any obstacles that will hinder you from fulfilling your goals. Once you have established your goals, ask yourself, "What must I do to accomplish these goals?"

Then this difficult step must be applied: be disciplined to make the proper choices to bring your goals to fruition. Everyone has dreams, but few are willing to pay the price to achieve them. Benjamin Franklin said, "There are no gains without pains."

Setting goals is an important step to become successful. We'll examine the goals one should pursue in order to become a great leader. Many of these same principles apply for whatever goal you desire to achieve.

Ingredients of Leadership

Warren Bennis is a university professor and has had a significant impact on the fields of leadership and management. *Forbes* magazine called him, "dean of leadership gurus." *The*

Financial Times labeled him “the professor who established leadership as a respectable academic field.” Joseph Boyett and Jimmie Boyett in “*The Guru Guide*” list Warren Bennis’s basic Ingredients of Leadership:

Guiding Vision: You have a clear idea of what you want to do—professionally and personally—and the strength to persist in the face of setbacks, even failures.

Passion: You have an underlying passion for the promises of life, combined with a very particular passion for a vocation, a profession, a course of action. You love what you do.

Integrity: Your integrity is derived from self-knowledge, candor, and maturity. You know your strengths and weaknesses, are true to your principles, and have learned from experience how to learn from and work with others.

Trust: You have earned people’s trust.

Curiosity: You wonder about everything and want to learn as much as you can.

Daring: You are willing to take risks, experiment, and try new things.³

Read and study these six principles. What is your vision and passion? Do you have integrity and have you earned people’s trust? Are you curious and willing to step out even if you fail? These principles make great and successful leaders.

Practical Ideas for Teen Success

Listed below are 30 practical ideas for teen success. I encourage you to study and meditate on these principles. Be

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like Benjamin Franklin who spent over two years examining his flaws to overcome them. These practical ideas can become a major influence for your future.

1. Be a person of character—respectful, responsible, open-minded, humble, fair, compassionate, friendly, cooperative, diligent, and self-disciplined.

2. Don't be a liar; for once you're caught lying, who can trust you?

3. Avoid living a destructive lifestyle: don't smoke, drink, do drugs, gamble, or have premarital sex.

4. Be careful in your dating life. Don't just go for looks, but be committed to choose only those with character.

5. Be willing to resist peer pressure and to be firm in your values.

6. Choose your friends carefully. Aim to find where good people meet and join them.

7. Don't be a pessimist and go around complaining. If you have nothing good to say, keep quiet. Don't become known as a griper.

8. Don't defend your mistakes; learn to apologize quickly.

9. Don't just aim to make lots of money; learn to help others and to smell the roses.

10. Learn from other people's experience. Experience is the best teacher, but a wiser way to learn is from other people's experiences.

11. Get enough rest. You can't be a good student or employee if you're always tired.

12. Don't be a goof off. Give your employer an

honest day's work, even if you're the only one doing so.

13. If you run out of work, ask for more. Don't make a two hour project an all-day affair. You may get away with it, but in the long run, you'll get the reputation as a slacker. There's plenty of them around—don't become one of them.

14. Make it a habit to always be on time.

15. When working, learn to double and triple check your work. Mistakes can be costly for a company.

16. Put yourself in your employer's shoes. How would you want an employee to work if you were the employer?

17. Think like an owner by being skilled and efficient. Such employees advance and earn top wages

18. Become an expert in your field of work. Read books and trade magazines. Stay abreast of technology.

19. Be vigilant about your occupation and skills. If you see your occupation is changing, accept it and change with it.

20. Do you see a problem? Aim to become a solution.

21. Be teachable and welcome correction. Make it a practice to seek advice and counsel.

22. Become an employee that employers dream of hiring. Because such employees are rare, there's always a demand for them.

23. Be an enthusiastic learner. Be willing to go to school to further your education.

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24. Don't try to achieve success without working hard. That's an idle dream.

25. If you leave a job—don't burn your bridges. Build a reputation as a good employee. Your reputation follows you.

26. Be prepared for trouble. Don't fall apart when trouble strikes. Sometimes layoffs do occur.

27. Avoid debt. Don't live a life trying to impress others. Learn to live within your means.

28. Don't be just a talker or a dreamer. Success comes only to diligent workers who are willing to work hard and learn.

29. Be thankful and learn to appreciate what you have.

30. Live the Golden Rule by being a lover of people. It's the key for successful living.

Free Will to Choose

The decision to have a successful life hinges on you. You have free will. You can choose either to listen and learn, or to be proud and stubborn. You must decide. Remember, you reap what you sow. Reject counsel and wisdom: you'll suffer the consequences. Obey counsel and wisdom: you'll reap the rewards. There's an old saying, "You may lead a horse to water, but you can't make him drink."

I did something that had a major impact on my life. I've heard people say, "If I had to live my life over, I'd do things differently." That's wishful thinking. You can't live your life over. You have only one chance to live your life. But as a young person I envisioned myself lying in a coffin. Then I

said, “I’m going to live my life so when I’m older I won’t have any regrets.”

I can truthfully say, if I had the opportunity to live my life over, I’d do the same things that I have done. Life has led me into various careers: tool and die maker, foreman, tool designer, operations manager, teacher, assistant dean of boys, owner and president of three companies, and author. As a teenager, I never dreamed of any of these occupations. But life presented these choices to me, and because of these multiple careers, I’m able to write this book, trying to help teens become successful. If you look at our website, you’ll see my desire is to help everyone, both young and old, to become successful; and to restore the foundational principles that made our nation great. To me, it’s a fool’s dream to see how much money I can take to the grave with me.

A New Generation of Teens

Some of you reading this book will lay it aside; others will be so passionate for success that you’ll purchase your own copy. You’ll use a highlighter and mark every important truth that you want to master. You’ll read it not just once, but you’ll read and study this book over and over until the truths for success become part of your life. You might not be the brightest in the class, but you have made the choice to have a successful life.

You’re young and the future lies before you. You want also to make this world a better place for others. America needs a new generation of teens with sterling character to stand up, put their shoulders back, and be determined to make our nation the best in the world. It won’t be easy, but you’re determined to answer that challenge. I wish you my very best.