

The Ego of Success...Redefining Success (Part 3)

Success needs to be redefined.

In my previous two articles on *The Ego of Success*, I have sought to warn against the danger of success. I have also made a distinction between successful and great leaders.

In this issue, I attempt to redefine success. Failure to have a proper perspective of success can lead to the damaging effects of ego.

Different definitions of success have been propositioned. Allow me to share my perspective of success. We will cover the first four of eight perspectives in this issue.

1. Success must be seen in terms of character formation

If success corrupts the character, it cannot be considered success. We need to redefine success in terms of our moral character. True success makes people of great character. The constant questions we need to ask ourselves to measure our success are:

Are we becoming people of integrity?
Are we people of principle?
Have we become more generous?
Do we practice love and compassion?

This must be the first priority of successful leaders.

The great Mahandas K. Gandhi on things that will destroy leaders:.

Politics without principle
Pleasure without conscience
Wealth without work
Knowledge without character
Business without morality
Science without humanity
Worship without sacrifice

How true!

2. Success is about developing a healthier family life.

I am reminded of my voluntary work in mediating divorce couples. The story keeps repeating itself.

I was mediating between a multi-millionaire property developer husband and a high-flying banker wife. During the caucus session, the wife confided, "My husband

always tells my son and me, 'I work very hard. I am building all these empires for you.' Now he has built the empires but we are no more there to live in them!"

The common justification for making business our No. 1 and chief priority, "I am doing it for the family" has left too many chief executives family-less.

How tragic! Certainly, success must be measured beyond economic terms. Perhaps, we need to a different criteria to evaluate our 'Businessman of the Year' award!

3. Success is about becoming the best that we can be.

Bob Buford, a well-known cable television executive and owner, "It's just like a tennis match. When I play, I play my best. I just do."

Being our best is a two-edged sword. It can drive us to physical and emotional collapse. For convicted Michael Milken, he worked twenty-hour days and expected the same work schedule of his coworkers. He is commonly reported to be ruthless and intimidating of others in securing a deal.

There is no concept of temperance. The only motivational banner is "More!" For him, the desire for power is limitless, causing him to place no constraints on either his ambitions for growth or the means of achieving growth.ⁱ

It is important that in our striving for excellence, it must be tempered by both character development and family commitment.

Excellence is finding alignment in "can, want and should." "Can" refers to our competence & talents. "Want" has to do with our motivations and passion. "Should" applies to our values.

Becoming the best is the constant commitment to develop our competency, discovering and rekindling our true passion, and shaping our core values. When our 'can, want and should' are aligned, we will are most fulfilled.

4. Success is about developing our successor.

Tom Jones of Epsilon defines success in three ways, "For me, in this company, my success would be to have left three legacies: One, someone to replace me so that the company is not at risk; two, a solid value system that will transcend both them and me in terms of what the company stands for; and three, economic soundness and stability."ⁱⁱ Success without successors is not success.

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ⁱ Nash, L.L. 1994. *Believers in Business*. Thomas. Nelson Publishers. Nashville. USA.

ⁱⁱ Nash, L.L. 1994. *Believers in Business*. Thomas. Nelson Publishers. Nashville. USA.