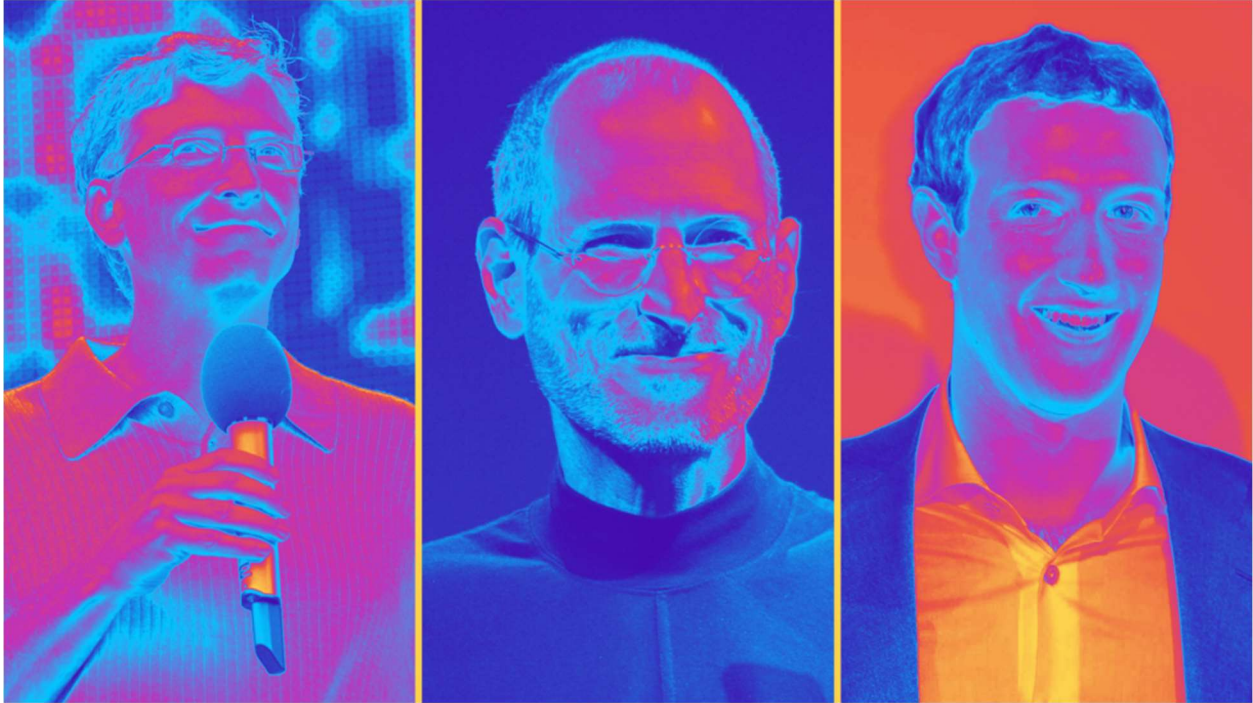


## Stop trying to be Steve Jobs. Focus on these 12 principles instead

These 12 principles can act as guideposts and mile markers to measure your forward progress. Do not take shortcuts



Inman | Carl Medford

Most people want to [be successful](#). Not many wake up in the morning thinking, “I just want to be dead average; I want to go through life making no impact on others.”

Problem is, while we can look at individuals like Steve Jobs, Jeff Bezos, Mark Zuckerberg or Bill Gates and imagine what it would be like to be as successful as they have been, most do not have any idea of what made their success or the first inkling of where to start on their own journey of self-improvement. As a result, lacking a roadmap and assailed by the turbulence of daily survival, they drift into mediocrity.

At its core, success can be defined as [achieving personal goals, whatever they might be](#). [Dictionary.com](#) echoes this by describing it as, “the favorable or prosperous termination of attempts or endeavors; the accomplishment of one’s goals.”

While some equate success with happiness and contentment in whatever state they find themselves, many, however, not content to remain at their current economic level, are driven by ambition to qualify success as “[the attainment of wealth, favor or eminence](#).” They believe that if they can, by their efforts, build a large enough business such that the income level attained allows them to live out their dreams, then they are “successful.”

Whatever your goals and whatever your definition of success, you need tools to get to your goals. Here are my top 12 principles for success:

### **1. Success begins with self-awareness**

Imagine if Thomas Edison had wanted to become a world-class figure skater. Picture Mahatma Gandhi working to become a Michelin-starred chef. Obviously, these are extreme examples, but they illustrate the truth that these men succeeded in their lifetimes because of a fundamental understanding of who they were created to be. They knew their strengths and talents and focused their time and energy accordingly.

I have, over the years, run into individuals who wanted to be something they were simply not designed to be. Regardless of how badly they wanted to succeed, they were just not made to [achieve momentum](#) in their desired field.

Personally, I wanted to be a medical doctor. My father was one, and my daughter not only went on to become a physician, but a sought-after specialist who leads her department in a large metropolitan health organization. As for me, although the desire was there, the required discipline was not. I recognized that fact early enough and went on to careers in other fields.

### **2. Success requires vision**

Vision is the ability to see a future differently than today's reality. In a world that had been dominated by horses for centuries, Henry Ford saw a future with automobiles available for the masses, paving the way for the urbanization of America.

In a world of darkness, Westinghouse and Tesla saw a brightly lit [future](#) where the electricity that powered the newly invented light bulb was finally made available to all, transforming the night forever and paving the way for the modern workforce.

John F. Kennedy proclaimed to the world that the United States would put a man on the moon before the end of the decade, triggering vast scientific achievement in many areas. The airplane, radio, television, computer internet ... all flowed from a vision of a better future.

### **3. Success flows from passion**

Passion is a [drive and enthusiasm](#) for the task set before us that drives us through any number of obstacles to reach our final goal.

No one exhibited passion more in the 20<sup>th</sup> century than Winston Churchill. Elected to the role of Prime Minister of Great Britain in England's darkest hour, Churchill accepted the role by saying,

“I would say to the House, as I said to those who have joined this Government: I have nothing to offer but blood, toil, tears and sweat.”

He then gave an impassioned speech that snatched the nation from the throes of self-pity and doom and galvanized them into action. His words included,

*“Even though large tracts of Europe and many old and famous States have fallen or may fall into the grip of the Gestapo and all the odious apparatus of Nazi rule, we shall not flag or fail. We shall go on to the end. We shall fight in France, we shall fight on the seas and oceans, we shall fight with growing confidence and growing strength in the air, we shall defend our island, whatever the cost may be. We shall fight on the beaches, we shall fight on the landing grounds, we shall fight in the fields and in the streets, we shall fight in the hills; we shall never surrender.”*

Flowing from a vision of a unified South Africa, Nelson Mandela’s passion transformed the nation from despondency to freedom.

The most obvious example is Steve Jobs, whose legendary passion drove Apple to be the most valuable company in the world.

Passion flows from optimism about a brighter future and is fueled by the belief that the activities you are involved in will create a better tomorrow. The stronger the passion, the higher the odds that the outcome will be success. With enough passion driving [consistent behaviors](#), the vision of the future can become the reality of today.

#### **4. Success is built upon habits**

Stephen Covey’s book, [The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People](#), has long been viewed as the standard for understanding the need for and the development of habits that lead to success. Covey believed that we start our lives dependent on others who saturate our lives with conditioning that determines how we act and respond through life.

He stated that, in order to succeed and live more effective lives, we must change our habits, and, consequently, who we are and how we respond to the world around us.

F. M. Alexander explained it this way, “People do not decide their futures, they decide their habits and their habits decide their futures.”

Gary Keller, in his book [The One Thing](#) clarifies by stating, “Success is actually a short race — a sprint fueled by discipline just long enough for habit to kick in and take over.”

The issue is not whether or not we have habits – we all do. Our very lives are built upon habits, many of them so deeply ingrained we are not even aware of them. The real question is, are the habits we have the ones that will drive us to success?

Step No. 1, then, is to identify the habits that hinder and, Step No. 2, replace them with habits that will help you achieve your goals. Once the correct habits have been identified, then our ability to initiate and maintain those habits is critical. [Brendon Burchard](#), considered to be the world's No. 1 high-performance coach, states, "Consistency creates the habit and habits create the breakthroughs."

## 5. Success is built upon communication

It is one thing to have a vision, goals and passion; it is something else altogether to be able to communicate effectively with others in order to bring your dreams to fruition.

As you will see a bit later in this article, no one makes it on their own. Therefore, the more effectively you can [communicate with others](#), the better. Paul J. Meyer reiterates this, saying, "Communication — the human connection — is the key to personal and career success."

## 6. Success flows from excellence

Phill Daniels, an Australian executive who attended a seminar by Tom Peters, cites Peters as saying, "Reward excellent failures. Punish mediocre successes." That comment from Peters, author of the landmark book, [In Search of Excellence](#), has become, in Daniels' words, "the six words that underpin my company's success."

Mediocrity is easy to find. It clutters the landscape everywhere we look. Excellence, however, is much harder to unearth — a point proved by Peters by the fact that *In Search of Excellence*, written in 1982, was only the first of his 18 books, including *The Excellence Dividend*, *Re-imagine! (Business excellence in a disruptive age)*, *A Passion for Excellence*, *The Pursuit of WOW!* And more.

Excellence is not an activity; it is a way of life. It is a belief system that, once embraced, oozes from every pore and action and leads to improvement — one thought, one action, one day at a time. The philosopher Will Durant says it this way: "We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence, then, is not an act, but a habit."

## 7. Success seldom happens the first time out the gate

There will always be examples of those who step up to the plate and hit a grand slam home run on their first at-bat. They are a significant minority, however — an anomaly we cannot honestly expect to reiterate. In contrast, most [modern success stories](#) are more like a phoenix rising from the ashes of defeat.

Many do not realize that the Ford Motor Company was Henry Ford's third attempt to manufacture automobiles. Thomas Edison and the light bulb are an obvious example. Walt Disney started several animation companies before finding success with his mouse. Abraham Lincoln failed numerous times in multiple endeavors.

If you have never heard of Traf-O-Data, it is because it was Bill Gates' first failed attempt at building a device. History is full of entrepreneurs who, after failing, dusted themselves off and started all over again.

## **8. Success leaves clues**

Gary Keller, writing in [\*The Millionaire Real Estate Agent\*](#), arguably the most significant real estate book in history, starts with four quotes from Tony Robbins.

**Quote No. 1: "Long ago, I realized that success leaves clues, that people who produce outstanding results do specific things to create those results."**

**Quote No. 2: "Actions are the source of all results .... This process of discovering exactly and specifically what people do to produce a specific result is called modeling."**

**Quote No. 3: "To me, modeling is the pathway to excellence .... The movers and shakers of the world are often professional modelers — people who have mastered the art of learning everything they can by following other people's experience rather than their own."**

**Quote No. 4: "To model excellence you should be a detective, an investigator, someone who asks lots of questions and tracks down all the clues to what produces excellence .... Building from the successes of others is one of the fundamental aspects of most learning."**

There is no need to reinvent the systems and structures for success. Although your idea may be different, the pathway to developing that idea has been well paved. Take the time and effort to study those successful people you wish to emulate to discover the breadcrumbs they have left that you can follow.

## **9. Success is a long game**

Quality takes time: It takes longer to build a Rolls-Royce than a Toyota Camry. In and of itself, there is nothing wrong with a Camry, as evidenced by the fact that they are everywhere. We

may encounter many on any given day, yet they do not leave us with any vivid impressions: none of my kids ever got excited about spotting a Camry.

In contrast, however, they went nuts when a Rolls-Royce pulled up beside us. It also explains why the largest crowds in the BMW Welt showroom in Munich, Germany are always clustered around the Rolls-Royces on display (built by BMW AG since 2003).

Success takes time. This is a real dilemma in our instant society where results are now registered in nanoseconds, not years. True success is built the same way a brick building is constructed: brick-upon-brick, floor-upon-floor. In fact, if growth happens too fast, it will outpace the infrastructure required to support it and everything will eventually collapse inward.

The key is obviously the foundation and here is where many real estate agents set themselves up for failure. Instead of building on solid practices such as prospecting, [nurturing relationships](#) and building a stellar SOI database, they look for shortcuts such as buying expensive online leads, paying for territories, putting 'glamor' ads in magazines, putting their face on shopping carts, billboards or other gimmicky programs that sound good when the salesperson is touting their benefits, but reap little or no effect all the while draining the coffers.

Locating the talent to run a well-oiled business takes time and extensive patience. I've lost count of the number of well-meaning business owners who have hurried the hiring process, only to discover that the persons they have invested time and money in to help build their business actually detracted from rather than enhanced the bottom line.

[Felecia Etienne, MBA, CHPC](#), states,

*"Overnight Success is a myth. Plain and simple. It doesn't exist. And anyone who tells you otherwise is likely selling something. The truth is that Success takes time, energy, consistency, and focus. There's no such thing as an overnight success story because sustainable Success comes from years of dedication and hard work. Sure, there may be the odd case of someone becoming an 'overnight success,' but this is usually due to years of unrecognized or unacknowledged work beforehand."*

## **10. Success does not happen in a vacuum**

Often attributed to Sir Isaac Newton but presumably originated long before, the saying, "If I have seen further, it is by standing on the shoulders of giants" captures the reality that everyone's success is built upon the efforts of those who have gone before and paved the way.

This was certainly the case for Jennifer Doudna and Emmanuelle Charpentier, winners of the 2020 Nobel Prize in Chemistry. Doudna's work, detailed in Walter Isaacson's book, *The Code Breaker: [Jennifer Doudna, Gene Editing, and the Future of the Human Race](#)*, highlights that the

giant's shoulders Doudna scaled were the pair who discovered the double helix structure of DNA, James Watson and Francis Crick.

Named by *Time* in 2015 as one of the 100 most influential persons in the world, Doudna also did not act alone; she collaborated with a number of others and the resulting technology not only helped resolve the COVID-19 crisis but has vast implications for gene editing in the future.

"Great things in business are never done by one person," agreed Steve Jobs. "They're done by a team of people." Robert Reffkin, CEO and founder of Compass, echoes this thought in his book [No One Succeeds Alone](#). The book's informational page states,

*"No one expected a dreadlocked fifteen-year-old who cared more about his DJ business than his homework to grow up to become one of the youngest-ever White House fellows, create multiple nonprofits, and found a multibillion-dollar company. But Robert Reffkin — raised by an Israeli immigrant single mother, disowned by his maternal grandparents for being Black, and abandoned by his father — has always defied the odds."*

Bottom line: Solo operators will never get far by themselves. This demonstrates the value of teams: Learn how to collaborate, share and work together to achieve far more than you could on your own.

## **11. Success includes luck**

While many successful individuals would like to claim that it was their intelligence or skills that propelled them to the top, [a recent study by the University of Catania in Italy](#) indicates that opportunity and fortune play a key role as well. Adi Gaskell, contributor for Forbes, concludes his summary of the study by stating,

*"What this study tells us however is that whilst individuals can contribute somewhat to their own success, there is also a considerable amount of fortune involved, with their success likely to have involved many other things in addition to their own greatness."*

Let's face it — there is always a modicum of luck in life. There is no way to eliminate chance. You can, however, stack the odds in your favor by being prepared to capitalize on "luck" when it comes your way. The Roman Stoic philosopher Seneca stated, "Luck is what happens when preparation meets opportunity."

The goal, then, is to make sure you do not take shortcuts when working on your career. By being fully skilled-up, you will be able to effectively respond when opportunity opens its door.

## **12. Success does not bring joy and happiness**

We live in a world that believes that happiness comes from attaining significant achievements and success. If only.

One only needs to look at the massive numbers of suicides and drug overdoses amongst those who have “succeeded” to figure out that their success did not contribute to their happiness and well-being. In fact, it could be said that quite often, the opposite was true.

In reality, happiness and success rarely go hand-in-hand. In fact, happiness comes before success. If you were happy before you were successful, then happiness could grow as your success increases. On the other hand, if you sought success hoping it would bring happiness, then the opposite could happen.

An [article in Inc.com](#) by Laura Garnett, performance strategist and author, provides clarification:

*“As a culture, we also idealize the wealthy and powerful. We’re fascinated by their lives and even more fascinated with how they achieved everything they have. Documentaries about the success of some of the top leaders in our recent times — Warren Buffett, Steve Jobs, Bill Gates — are prolific.*

*But the big question never asked is: Are they happy? Even better, are they emotionally healthy? Emotionally healthy people are self-aware, have inner confidence, and maintain fulfilling relationships. They’ve also worked through their emotional baggage. This emotional health is the definition of true happiness – not success or wealth.*

*The truth is, many of those who seem perfect on the outside are struggling on the inside, and the very people we think are happiest are actually the least. On the flip side, it’s often hard to identify the truly happy people. They don’t need to flaunt their emotional health — because inner peace and happiness make them crave external validation less.”*

Do you want to be successful? These 12 principles can act as guideposts and mile markers to measure your forward progress. Do not take shortcuts. Also, at the end of the day, true success is never measured by how much you can accumulate, but rather, how much of a change you can make in the lives of others by pouring the fruit of your success into them.