

What's your happy? Ready, set...

February 2016 Newsletter



Writing your
success story

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e-Thoughts —
*The art of setting and
breaking records*



Pave your path to success with these skills and strengths.
More...

Good planning gets you on the road to achievement **More...**

Create balance in your work and personal lives. **More...**

Ready to set a new record? The prospects are almost endless.
More...

Getting help

Confidential support, information and resource referrals are available for a variety of concerns — both work and personal. Call for assistance for you, your household members or your adult children under age 26, whether they live at home or not. Call or visit us online today!

Writing your success story

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Everybody has their own vision of what success looks and feels like. Yet, as different as our ideas may be, the pathways are often alike. There are certain strengths and skills that help pave the way.

Tap into your potential

Does it sometimes seem that others succeed more often or easily than you? Success can seem out of reach. It's easy to feel frustrated and disappointed.

But the fact is, we can all succeed. Success often stems from learning, developing and building upon a set of skills and traits.

Build skills that spell victory

What are some strengths successful people share?¹

- **They're good communicators.** Speaking and listening skills are critical to success. Good communicators can speak to almost anyone and present a positive image. Listening creates rapport and helps you learn from others.

Consider joining a debate club or a Toastmasters² group to improve your speaking skills. Work on paying attention when others talk by taking a class on active listening. Improving in these areas can help make you a better networker. That puts you in a position to meet and connect with others in both the social and business worlds.

- **They make decisions.** Self-confident people are willing to make decisions and see them through. Is every decision a winner? Of course not. But making a mistake is not the end of the world. There's a lot to learn from missteps and failures.

- **They accept responsibility.** Successful people hold themselves accountable. Own your errors rather than blaming others when things go wrong. Become known as someone who's "true to your word." That can be a big step toward success.
- **They're disciplined.** To be successful, it helps to have a sense of where your attention is needed most. Then it's a matter of keeping focused to stay on track.
- **They're upbeat and resilient.** What baby learns to walk without falling down time after time? What inventor, business person or athlete succeeds without trial and error? Your ability to persist counts for more than your ability to take flight the first time you spread your wings.
- **They're honest.** Honesty isn't just the best policy. If you want others to trust and value you, it's the only policy.

Use success strategies

Personality traits are part of the success equation. But most success stories also include careful planning and plain old hard work. Read the next article in this month's bulletin to learn how good planning can help you write your success story.

¹www.about.com

²www.toastmasters.org

Setting sights on your goals

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Zig Ziglar was a well-known author and speaker. Among his many quotes was this: “If you aim at nothing, you’ll hit it every time.”¹

Not only is that worth a good chuckle; it also reinforces the importance of setting goals and making plans.

Benefits of planning

Planning is critical to success. A plan can help you:

- Organize and focus
- Make your action steps more concrete
- Commit to your project or goal

Elements of good planning

How can you make plans that will really work? Here are some ground rules to consider:

1. Before you even embark on a goal, answer this: Do you want to achieve it? Why? What will your life look like after you achieve it? How will it be better or different?

Answering these questions can help you “own” your goal. Once you feel it’s really yours, you become motivated. If others set a goal for you, you’re not likely to be as invested. In fact, you may even resist reaching it. Your goal needs to mean something to you; it has to be what you want to achieve.

- 2. Put it on paper.** Believe it or not, the act of writing down your goal is very powerful. It makes the goal real when you can see it in your own words. As you write, use positive phrases like “I will” rather than “I would like to.” Be specific as in “On February 15, I will start exercising 3 days per week for 30 minutes at a time” rather than “I’ll start exercising more this month.”
- 3. Make copies of your goal.** Post an eye-catching copy of your written goal in the kitchen, bathroom, and your workspace – anywhere you’re likely to see it. This can help remind you and reinforce your efforts.
- 4. Set up action steps.** Identify what needs to happen for you to reach your goal. Break it down into small steps. Write down what you have to do to achieve each step. If you’re going to exercise, plan what time, where, what shoes, clothing and/or equipment you need and other such details. Otherwise, on day 1, you may suddenly realize you forgot to get the mat you need or your sneakers. Cross off each step as you accomplish it.
- 5. Persist, persist, persist.** Be sensible about planning your action steps. You may find you’ve overestimated what and when you can do things. If so, don’t give up: revise and rewrite your goal. Consider partnering with a friend or family member. Using exercise as an example, working out or walking with a buddy helps you stay committed to your goal.
- 6. Celebrate.** It can’t be all sweat and tears. There has to be joy and pleasure to make your goal workable and worthwhile. Plan small rewards along the way and, at the end, give yourself a major high five.

Modern worklife balance

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Have you heard of Rocky Byun¹ — the performer who is a master of balance? He amazes people by balancing chairs, eggs, motorcycles, bottles, people — really almost anything — in ways that seem barely possible.

These days, we could all use his skills. And that's especially true when it comes to striking a balance between our work and personal lives.

Creating equilibrium between work and life

Rocky uses the laws of gravity and physics to perform his balancing feats. But those rules don't apply to everyday life.

Work and life are ever-changing. So are your needs and those of your loved ones. Today's demands are different from what they were yesterday and what they will be tomorrow. Is balance possible?

Balance matters

We want balance in our lives so we can earn a living, reach our career goals and still get pleasure from our family, home and community lives.

Balance can help you enjoy:

- A gratifying work life
- Opportunities for learning and development
- Time to enjoy your family and friends, play sports, pursue hobbies and travel
- Less stress and better health

Ways to achieve balance

Balance is within reach if you stay flexible and aware of your own desires. Here are some tips²:

- 1. Be clear and open about your needs.** What matters to you? Do you want to be home at 6 PM for dinner with the kids? Do you need half an hour off during the day to walk or meditate? No one can guess your needs; you need to make them known.

Of course, managers can't meet every employee's desires at every moment. Communicate openly and appropriately at work to find out how you can achieve balance in the context of your job.
- 2. While you're at work, make the most of your work day.** That way you can really get things accomplished. Are your tasks clear to you? If so, you're less likely to spin your wheels on things that don't matter. If not, ask for clarification so you can use your day productively.
- 3. Give yourself permission to disconnect.** We've all heard how important it is to turn off our devices for an hour or half hour each day. Have you tried it? Unplugging your phone, laptop and/or tablet carves out time to be in the "now" without intrusion.
- 4. Meet needs as they occur.** Sometimes work demands more of you. Sometimes your personal life takes priority. Try to pace yourself according to real demands rather than putting time and energy into items that may belong on the back burner for the moment.

Balance is not an end, but a process

We can't expect our lives to be balanced at every moment. When you find yourself feeling off balance, it can help to think of it as a call to action. Like Rocky Byun, you're the expert at balancing your own life.

¹www.youtube.com

²www.entrepreneur.com

e-Thoughts — The art of setting and breaking records

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Our e-Thoughts feature provides close-up views on topics and areas of interest from everyday life.

Growing up, the Guinness Book of Records was always on the coffee table in my house. It held such allure for my parents. Hard workers with jobs that were pretty routine, they were thrilled by the amazing and unusual feats described.

The first edition of the book came out in London in 1944.¹ One thousand copies were given away for free. The next year, the first official book enjoyed a big debut. Since then, over 115 million copies have been sold in 26 languages and more than 100 countries.¹

Guinness gets about 1,000 claims per week from people trying to set new records.² They have over 40,000 records on file, but only about 10 percent make it into print after going through the selection and verification process.²

The pursuit of new records

Why are we so interested in record setting and breaking? People love uphill battles. They love the unusual. They want to see what they can accomplish and how far they can push their limits. And the records aren't always about people. There are animal, geography records and more.

Have you ever thought about setting or breaking a record? The records include things you'd expect. And then there are the unexpected:²

- The largest scoop of ice cream is over 3000 pounds
- The largest gathering of people dressed in Superman costumes is 867
- The most spoons balanced on a person's face at one time is 31
- The longest distance keeping a table in the air with your teeth while walking is 38 feet (and this record was set with a 110 pound woman sitting on the table!)

The thrill and the challenge

Like my parents, I'm enthralled by the unusual. I love reading about goals people dream up. And I'm amazed by the achievements many make.

Ready to set a new record? The prospects are almost endless. Good luck!

¹<http://metro.co.uk>

²www.guinnessworldrecords.com

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