

Career Profiles and Job Search

Traits of successful people

By Lisa Trudel

Once upon a time, someone who thought they had wisdom said, “Life is like an empty canvas and it becomes whatever you paint on it. You can paint misery or you can paint bliss. It is your choice.”

In 2009, when the juggling act of finding and keeping sustainable employment is paramount, this inspirational belief needs a partnership with something more current, especially in the context of career development and continuing education. For example, choice is only a choice when you have accurate knowledge in order to make well-informed decisions. Without correct advice and an awareness of your privilege or power position in society, it is too easy to make a wrong choice, believe in fairy-tales or suffer from workplace-reality-denial.

So how do you find career success? Whatever your occupation, the starting point is research. If you check reliable resources you can easily learn the educational and technical requirements required to be employable. For example, if you want to find work as an Administrative Assistant, check www.jobfutures.ca. Under the number category of 1221, it states that a community college diploma or university degree in business is required, plus experience in a senior clerical position. At www.iaap-toronto.org the site of the Toronto Chapter of the *International Association of Administrative Professionals*, under “Key Trends in Administrative Support, it states that Administrative Assistants need extensive software skills, internet research abilities and strong communication skills.

Once acquiring these skills and credentials, or ones for whatever occupation you are aiming for, you might be told that in addition to your education and skills, you also need to be able to promote yourself. In Canada it is not the most educated or skilled that gets the job, but the best salesperson. Self-marketing includes promotional materials such as targeted resumes and cover letters, business cards for networking, a portfolio to showcase your potential at interviews and a suitable interview outfit to establish your image or brand.

Once acquiring these additional skills, do you still struggle for that elusive career success? Do you wonder why some people find satisfying, self-fulfilling work and you still fight to maintain survival jobs? What is the difference between successful people and you?

There are many traits of highly successful people including the following:

•Successful people have focus. Did you know that statistics prove that 95% of the North American population drifts along in unsatisfying jobs, with lives unfulfilled? Creating a vision of your life five years from today will enable you to focus and set clear goals. Having a focus means beginning with the end-result in mind and asking yourself questions such as: What is it that you need, not just want, from life? Are you willing to compromise to reach your goal? Have you conducted a marketplace assessment to see if your goal is attainable?

•Successful people are leaders and thinkers. The ability to quickly offer solutions when an issue arises is part of a successful person's skill set. They are fast-thinkers who read, improve their lives and stay motivated. They know that university and college is not the end of their learning; it is only just the beginning. According to author Stephen Covey "an increasingly educated conscience will propel us along the path of personal freedom, security, wisdom and power." Successful people also understand that we all have multiple identities. One's gender, race, age, class or other identifier may change over time, or one person may embody multiple cultures and ethnicities simultaneously. Successful people recognize that boxing people in, can be suffocating.

•Successful people have a unique ability to adapt. They adjust to changing environments quickly and without the resistance and complaining that others do. If they burn out from one job, they build another opportunity. If they get turned down from one job, they look for another. They never reject possibilities and instead see opportunities as they build their professional and personal lives. In workplace or educational settings, they are usually the ones who take responsibility for trying to equalize power by encouraging everyone to actively engage, listen, speak and act with respect.

•Successful people have a support group. Rarely are they hermits. They usually have the support of others such as advisors, mentors or colleagues connected with professional associations. Successful people understand that having a team to develop ideas and move forward quickly, is the key to their success. To them, the formula they use for life is $1+1 = 11$. In school or the workplace, they are often the ones using productive curiosity by asking questions to promote change. Successful people feel comfortable being inquisitive because they have a network to give them appropriate guidance and advice.

•**Successful people boost their self-esteem. They have a good grasp on their level of self-worth and know when to increase it in times of self-doubt. For example, to boost their self-confidence, they might do something they have been putting off. This could be writing or calling a friend, cleaning their home, organizing bills or preparing a healthy meal—anything that involves making a decision and then following through. Or they might think back to when they did something new for the first time. Learning something new is often accompanied by feelings of nervousness, lack of self-belief and high stress levels, all of which are necessary parts of the learning process. When needing a self-esteem boost, remembering a learning experience can remind you that it is perfectly normal and you are just learning.**

•**Successful people learn from setbacks. They know not to take rejection or failure personally. The workplace and business world are not personal but instead are about goals and delivering results, so not looking at things from your own perspective is important. For example, if your presentation at school or a report at a meeting did not accomplish what you wanted, you have to find a different way to get through to your audience instead of complaining about your audience. To change things, you have to understand who you are trying to change and rebound with even more confidence next time around.**

•**Successful people take calculated risks. They understand that without taking a risk or a leap of faith, very little happens in the world of work. Being willing to take a risk is not throwing caution to the wind but requires assessing situations, weighing alternatives, believing something is worth doing and then stepping out where you may never have been before and being okay with the possible consequences.**

In all of these traits of successful people there is one common thread: knowing yourself. By discovering more about yourself or confirming something you knew but never said out loud, you can begin to understand what distinguishes you from others and what drives you to succeed.

People who succeed are people who begin their story with: once upon a time, there was a person who not only painted her canvas her own way, but who knew who she was, knew how to craft her career at what she was good at, and was willing to take risks on her own potential. This is the choice that successful people make.

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