

Secrets of Success

Success means different things to different people. To some it means accumulating wealth and valuable possessions. To others it means being reasonably happy and basically satisfied with the way their lives have turned out. And to still others success means achieving goals, status, or recognition – particularly in their careers. The dictionary provides this simple definition (among others) for success: favorable or desired outcome.

But no matter how you define the word, research indicates that people who consider themselves successful share similar personality traits. The following profile has been developed from studies done by Charles A. Garfield at his Peak Performance Center in Berkeley, California and Gail Silverman, an organizational consultant in Miami.

1. **Successful people** are willing to risk change and feel challenged by the unknown. “We all fear the unknown to some extent”, says Silverman, “but success after laying out the worst possible consequences. Most people look at benefits and liabilities and then go back and forth and may never make a final decision. High performers ask, “What is the worst that can happen; can I live with it?” If the answer is “yes”, the risk is worth taking and they proceed as if no risk were involved. If the answer is “no”, they don’t take the risk.
2. **Successful people** are not immobilized by failure, but rather see it as a learning experience. They feel the pangs of failure, but they don’t dwell on it, she says. Instead, they look back at the experience and determine what they’ve learned from it.
3. **Successful people** feel worthy and believe they will achieve their goals, even when the path is unclear. “I’m going to make it” is the successful person’s creed. “They believe in themselves and their abilities”, says Silverman. “They tend to behave as though they’re going to make it, even when they may not know where the path they’re on is leading”. A successful person might say “I can walk a crooked path and deal with ambiguity”.
4. **Successful people** accept the fact that not everyone will love them or approve of them. “If you’re out to please everybody, you really please no one—especially yourself.”
5. **Successful people** pay priority attention to their intimate relationships. Studies have found that most successful people have loving spouses or someone with whom they can let down their defense and just be themselves. They can also appropriately manage and share their feelings – both positive and negative. Successful people have acquired good communication skills and use them to express their thoughts and feelings.
6. **Successful people** do what they do for the art of it and are motivated by internal goals. By contrast, workaholics work to compensate for some inadequacy or need in their lives that are not being met. High performers define success internally and progress is measured against what has been accomplished in the past. They care about outcomes but also enjoy the process of reaching goals.
7. **Successful people** solve problems rather than place blame. Others tend to ask who or what caused a problem. High performers ask, “What is the situation now, where do we want to be, how do we get there?”