

Concerning Successful Careers

With Insights for Careers in General

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What we will talk about

- Dose of reality
- Choosing an employer
- Once you start working
- What to do with that first paycheck
- Summary

Success is no accident of birth

- ▣ Grew up in the rural deep woods of the deep south
- ▣ Parents earned GED late in life
- ▣ Am a late bloomer
- ▣ Could not handle college prep in high school
- ▣ Could hardly pass arithmetic test though high school junior year
- ▣ Lucky to meet a teacher from Greece who took me under his wing
- ▣ Too immature to start college right after high school
- ▣ Too poor anyway - Parents could no way afford to help
- ▣ Moved to Holland - Lived there 2.5 years before returning
- ▣ Grew up a lot - worked - saved money - earned scholarship
- ▣ Spent 13 years earning four technical degrees
- ▣ Each degree completed with no debt and money in the bank
- ▣ So, birth is not what matters
 - How hard are you willing to work? How persistent are you?
 - Do you do more than is assigned? Do you take initiative?
 - Do you have a strong performance ethic?
 - Do you focus on important goals and achieve them?

What to look for in a company

- ▣ Of course benefits and pay matter
 - only a baseline though
- ▣ Career success comes from working for solid companies
- ▣ What do I personally look for?
 - worthwhile vision from which measurable performance metrics can be derived
 - strong corporate desire to achieve that vision
 - focus applied to important activities so that vision can be achieved
 - funding to proceed so that time is not fragmented to the point where nothing meaningful can be accomplished

Presenting yourself for that first job

- ▣ You have little to no experience - What should you talk about?
- ▣ What separates you from all the other inexperienced graduates?
- ▣ What have you accomplished that matters?
- ▣ Business are looking for that spark, that promise of success
- ▣ Talk about how well you have served
 - public service, activities where real-world skills were gained
 - club officer, sports team captain, meaningful travel, serious hobbies
 - volunteer work, tutoring, -- those are examples, there are many others
- ▣ Talk about what you have achieved
 - publications in peer-reviewed literature, senior project, lab projects
 - personal initiatives, internship results, relevant part-time work
- ▣ Avoid making big deal out of small things
 - know the company you are applying to, what business they are they in
 - don't emphasize things one is expected to have learned already
 - ▣ ex: office automation tools, programming in Basic, simple computer use, ...
 - ▣ such things are not differentiators, they are only part of the baseline

Once on the job

Ask Yourself:

- ▣ How can I be worth more to this company?
- ▣ What new things should I learn?
- ▣ How can I help this company achieve more in less time?
- ▣ In what ways can I help cut costs while increasing profitability and quality?
- ▣ What new systems could I implement?
- ▣ What new things/ideas/approaches could I implement that would give this company a competitive edge?

Robins, Anthony (1994) "Giant Steps". NY,NY: Simon & Schuster, p 366.

Minimalism is the enemy of success

- ▣ One hears the litany of minimalism every day
 - what is the least I can do to get by
- ▣ Minimalists want the fruit of toil without the toil
- ▣ Mediocrity is the result
- ▣ Catering to minimalists yields lowest common denominator
 - they do not reach the success of which they are capable
 - they do not raise the general level of their groups
 - they achieve no satisfaction from life, only frustration
 - they create downward cycle of incompetence, failure, low self-esteem
- ▣ Don't let this cancer eat away at your character and career
- ▣ Don't just go through the motions, be passionate
 - if you want to be passionate and successful, associate with passionate and successful people, stay away from minimalists

Kelly, Matthew (2004) "The Rhythm of Life". NY, NY: Simon & Schuster, pp 104-108.

Applied to technical work

- ▣ Study, Learn, Demonstrate, Document, Publish, Apply
- ▣ Transition from theory and abstract thoughts to production reality
- ▣ Strike a Balance
 - technology push: Offering original ideas
 vs.
 - technology pull: Doing what funders say they want
- ▣ Think independently but solve funders' problems
- ▣ Know their goals, critical missions, arenas of activity
 - gives basis for original ideas, suggestions, and recommendations
 - establishes trust if done with a focus on the funder
 - focus on what THEY want and need

What to do with that first paycheck

- ▣ You graduate and find a job
- ▣ Likely more money than you have ever seen at a single time
- ▣ Represents opportunity, not invitation to spending
 - need to live below your income
 - not necessary to chase fads or follow the crowd
 - do save for emergencies and invest for your future
- ▣ Many people graduate and promptly go into such debt that they will be years paying for things that depreciate much faster than the debt can be repaid
- ▣ Big difference between needs and wants
 - not at all the same things
 - don't kid yourself into turning wants into "needs"
- ▣ Be excessive in satisfying wants and you will always be poor
- ▣ Unnecessary debt is a sure way to economic slavery

Overall

- ▣ Do not fall for “accident of birth” nonsense
- ▣ Avoid minimalism in all its forms
- ▣ Remember that success is not a trivial undertaking
- ▣ Choose your employer carefully
- ▣ Make yourself useful to the company that hires you
- ▣ Ensure that your customers and clients are satisfied
- ▣ Proactively apply your talents, skills, knowledge
- ▣ Live below your income
- ▣ Beware the economic bondage of unnecessary debt

*Dreams come true when preparation,
opportunity, decision, and action meet*