



The Journey to Success

Becoming successful doesn't just happen; it's a process that requires planning and perseverance.

by **Kindra Gordon**

It's been 15 fast years since I graduated from college, and I feel fortunate to have a family of my own and a writing career that I enjoy. From time to time, I'll meet a young person who will ask me, "What's been most important to achieving success?"

Well, I recognize that success means different things to different people, but from my perspective, I put some thought into the things that I believe have been beneficial in my life.

Attitude is most important

The importance of a positive attitude first sparked my attention when I was a high school FFA student and attended a leadership conference in our nation's capital. It was there I heard a powerful quote

attributed to minister and author Charles Swindoll. It was this:

"Attitude is more important than facts. It is more important than the past, than education, than money, than circumstances, than failures, than success, than what other people think or say or do. It is more important than appearance, giftedness or skill.

It will make or break a company, a home, a relationship. The remarkable thing is we have a choice, every day regarding the attitude we will embrace for the day. We cannot change our past. We cannot change the fact that other people will act in a certain way. We cannot change the inevitable. The only thing we can do is play on the one string we have, and that is our attitude. I am convinced that life is

10% what happens to me and 90% how I react to it."

It was that last sentence that stayed with me: "... life is 10% what happens to me and 90% how I react to it."

Rather than dwell on the past or a problem, I realized that having a positive attitude and seeking solutions is what moves you forward and, ultimately, makes life more enjoyable and successful.

Think about it; don't you enjoy being around someone who has an inspiring "can-do" attitude? Why not be one of those people? When we view the world with a positive attitude, it certainly becomes our oyster.

I recently read a short article that illustrated this point. It compared why some people seem to have all the luck while others are perpetually unlucky. What's the difference? The article went on to say it's all about attitude. Here's a summary of the piece:

Professor Richard Wiseman of the University of Hertfordshire was determined to get to the scientific bottom of the phenomenon of luck. He placed advertisements in national newspapers asking for people who felt consistently lucky or unlucky to contact him. Wiseman then interviewed hundreds of them over several years, monitored their lives and had them take part in experiments.

At the conclusion of his research, Wiseman reports that the results revealed that although these people have almost no insight into the causes of their luck, their thoughts and behavior were responsible for much of their good or bad fortune — essentially it was their attitude.

He gives the example of seemingly chance opportunities. Lucky people consistently encounter such opportunities, whereas unlucky people do not. Wiseman says, "I carried out a simple experiment to discover whether this was due to differences in their ability to spot such opportunities. I gave both lucky and unlucky people a newspaper, and asked them to look through it and tell me how

many photographs were inside. I had secretly placed a large message halfway through the newspaper saying: "Tell the experimenter you have seen this and win \$50."

This message took up half of the page and was written in type that was more than 2 inches high. It was staring everyone straight in the face, but the unlucky people tended to miss it, and the lucky people tended to spot it.

Unlucky people are generally more tense than lucky people, and this anxiety disrupts their ability to notice the unexpected, he concluded. Wiseman has authored a book on his findings. It is titled "The Luck Factor."

Bottom line: A positive attitude is everything — no matter what your age. And the best part of all is that we each have the power to choose to be upbeat, optimistic and inspiring. Remember "... life is 10% what happens to me and 90% how I react to it."

Dream big, then take the initiative

With the right attitude, it becomes pretty natural to dream big — you know those daydreams in your head when you think someday I'm going to do this or someday I'm going to go there. Dreaming can be a great way to envision who you might become or what you might achieve, and it's something I think everyone — young and old — should do more of.

Every now and then — not just on New Year's Day when you're plotting your resolutions for the year — make a wish list of the dreams in your head. Some might call it a "bucket list" like the storyline in the recent movie of the same name, where two men facing terminal cancer made the list of things they'd like to do before they "kicked the bucket."

The key is to let your imagination soar. Don't get bogged down with thoughts of "that's not possible or how would I do that." Instead, just concentrate on what might make you happy, what might challenge you, what might make you feel fulfilled.

You can have a dream list for places you'd like to visit; things you'd like to accomplish on your ranch, in your business or in your career; and even dreams of activities you'd like to do.

Be sure to write your list down: these then become your goals to guide your efforts. I think many people do have goals, but they make a common mistake of failing to follow through. Having written goals that you see daily (or several times a day) can help you remain focused and increase your chance for success. Studies have shown that we do become or achieve that which we tend to focus on. Or, as business guru Peter Drucker is quoted as saying: "The best way to predict the future is to create it." When you have goals that you focus on, you can create your future.

I also like the fact that the first two letters in the word goal spell "go." It's a reminder that you won't accomplish anything unless you get ready, set and go!

Goal

That leads me to another of my favorite sayings: chances aren't given; they're taken. I interpret that to mean you can't stand around waiting for things to happen — to be handed to you. Instead, you've got to go out and create your future — take chances and make opportunities come your way.

I learned this firsthand during my first job out of graduate school.

"... I am convinced that life is 10% what happens to me and 90% how I react to it."

— Charles Swindoll

The job was with the federal government and the salary was good. However, I didn't feel that it was where I was meant to be long-term.

So, after about a year, rather than wait for a new employer to find me, I took it upon myself to research about a dozen companies that I thought I might like to work with. I then boldly put my résumé and cover letter together and sent them off to those companies. I didn't wait to see if they had any open positions; I wanted to introduce myself and make them aware that I was out there. From that process, within a month I had two interviews and ultimately landed my job as an associate editor at *BEEF* — my dream job and the stepping-stone to my career as a writer.

The lesson I learned was that if you are unhappy with something, don't stay miserable, don't wait for someone else to fix it; instead, focus on taking action and finding solutions.

In her book "Everyday Grace," Marianne Williamson says, "A life of magnitude does not just happen. It is consciously chosen." Successful people don't wait for opportunities

continued on page 176...

More lessons learned

Looking back at college, I'm glad I:

- Got involved with clubs and judging teams. The network of people you meet who have common interests will remain among your friends and colleagues your entire career.
- Had a couple different summer jobs/internships to help me determine what career area best matched my interests. Take the opportunity to find out what the working world will be like.
- Worked hard. Maintaining good grades was important to me — it required a lot of work, but it opened doors for scholarships, and it set in place important work habits and attention to detail that now carry over to my career. **HW**

to come their way — to be given to them; they go out and seek opportunities — they take risks and take the initiative.

Be extraordinary

“It only takes a little extra to turn the ordinary into extraordinary” — that’s a motto I think we all need to remember and seek to find ways to put the extra into our relationships, our work and the organizations we serve.

We’ve all met those people in our lives who did go the extra mile, and haven’t we always admired and remembered them for that? Why not be one of those people?

If you’re a junior Hereford member, what can you do to stand out from the competition? If you

are a business person, what little extras could you do to enhance your customer relationships? If you’re a seedstock operator and you just had your annual production sale, what is something extraordinary that you could do to thank this year’s buyers? Something small, but something notable.

One example of extraordinary that stays in my mind is Robin Mead from Georgia, who was recognized in 2008 by the National Organization of Poll-ettes (NOP) for her contributions to the Hereford breed, youth and the NOP.

I’ve never met Robin, but from the press release I read it said she was a city girl until 2003, when she married a Hereford breeder and has been involved

in the breed ever since. The story went on to tell that for one event Robin volunteered to put together “goodie bags” for juniors attending a fitter’s workshop. She went beyond the call of duty and collected a show stick, water hose, bucket, feed pan and other show supplies for each junior. The thrill and appreciation by the juniors was evident.

This was an example of someone who took the ordinary and added a little extra to make it an extraordinary experience.

Think about what you can do to be extraordinary as well! **HW**