

## The Elements of Success

*by Jon Craighead*

“The reasonable man adapts himself to the world; the unreasonable man persists in trying to adapt the world to himself. Therefore all progress depends on the unreasonable man.” George Bernard Shaw

A definition of success is the achievement of something desired, planned, or attempted, attributed to hard work. Let’s begin this inquiry by looking into what are the elements of success, and then examine why some people are reliably successful while others repeatedly struggle with mediocrity and failure.

Some suggest that success mostly just happens; that it is a windfall of luck and alignment with the stars, and not a caused reality. This concept is invalidated when studying people who are successful. When examining successful people, one discovers that they practice certain ingrained behaviors such as patience, perseverance, resilience, creativity, adaptability, joyfulness, compassion, and productivity.

In addition to those behaviors, other actionable distinctions can be mastered by any who choose to be reliably successful, such as a steadfast commitment to personal development and an inherent commitment to learning; the art of thinking beyond the familiar, i.e. a willingness to “not know” in order to learn; as well as developing and perfecting a talent for staying the course regardless of the level of difficulty. Successful people embrace the unexpected without losing focus or being discouraged. They trust their instincts until proven wrong; they then accept the new discoveries and incorporate them into the pursuit of the intended outcome.

In summary, successful people are accountable for their actions, with a high level of personal integrity; they are at cause in the matter, as in holding themselves responsible; and they embody trust and enlist confidence by being their word – what they say is bankable.

These habits empower effective people to inspire trust and admiration in others and to provide an excellent model for successful leadership. Such personal attributes distinguish them from the general population. These admirable qualities of successful people challenge the assertion that success is a happenstance, and validate that success is indeed a caused reality.

Another often overlooked dimension of success is the ability to work effectively with others. This is absolutely necessary because we often find ourselves working in teams in order to produce significant outcomes. The distinction “followership” represents a bonding system of leader, manager and worker. This assemblage is indispensable for successful accomplishment. Teamwork is a crucial component of success because we rarely achieve anything of significant value alone.

Leaders and followers have a common interest. While it’s true the follower doesn’t usually have the authority a leader or manager has, nevertheless the partnership of all three is essential to the team’s success. Followers can be agents of change. They can learn from leaders, just as leaders can learn from them. Often followers are the future leaders. In any organizational system this process insures the continuity of a competent leadership pipeline.

It is said that success has many fathers but failure is an orphan. Many of us are reluctant to admit our failure because we think it reflects poorly on our self-image. However, it is a recognized fact that our greatest achievements are often a result of past failures. Additionally, some of our greatest breakthroughs are a result of our most significant challenges. Studies have proven over and over again that skillful practitioners use their failures as stepping stones to breakthroughs that become future discoveries. Unquestionably the fear of failure will handicap and keep anyone out of the winner’s circle. People dedicated to success find what is missing and then use their discoveries to move forward. None of us starts out with the intention to fail; however, failure is mostly an indication that it is time for new thinking and approaches. Accomplished people contend that failure is one of their biggest contributors.

These personal characteristics are the elements of success. They are the pathways for anyone who chooses to be successful. Winston Churchill said, “Success is not final and failure is not fatal. It’s the courage to continue that counts.” The most phenomenal thing is everyone has a choice to be successful – to be the unreasonable person who makes the difference. All that’s required is one’s commitment.