

Excellence through Natural Talent

What makes a successful 'person ', successful?

If we are to believe many of the business "Gurus", they will have us believe it is quite simple to achieve anything we want in work or life. Often, they preach one simple message. To be successful, all we have to do is set goals. Set and achieve our goals and whatever we want will be ours!

But let me ask you this, "If it's so simple, and we only have to set goals, how come we don't?" How many of us have been on a course only to slip back into our natural way of doing things after a few weeks? Only a few of us set goals, and fewer still achieve them. Why?

The reason is that we all have a unique motivational and decision making profile that stays with us all our lives. Some of us find it easy to set goals. For some it is a lifetime's struggle because it fights against our natural instincts. We only set goals easily when we have this natural motivation.

The question I hear you asking now is, "Can I be successful if I find it difficult to set goals?" The answer is "Yes!" By understanding ourselves better, and by using a number of proven techniques, we can and will achieve more and with much less stress.

Take time out to consider how friends or relatives make a decision to buy something. Everyone approaches such decisions instinctively, according to their unique profile. Some will get all the catalogues, get all the reports, visit all the shops and ask many questions before buying. Some of us will set off with no preconception and just explore the options as we go, until we find the right one. Some of us will set off in search of a specific product, but never find it and never buy. Some will just go out and buy the first one we see! All these different approaches fit with our in-born decision making preferences.

There is a new wave of understanding about how this works for people. We can link learning to a key project and bring it, with ongoing support, to a successful conclusion, by discovering and building on individual talent. As a result, companies can achieve the ultimate spin off, measurable results leading to heightened business excellence for the individuals and companies who choose to follow this path.

The core of these ideas is the theme that in order to achieve business excellence we would need to identify and build on individual Talent. A Talent is defined as "A recurring pattern of thought, feeling or behaviour that can be productively applied". We all have Key Talents and weaknesses and the ethos behind this course is the understanding that:

**"People don't change that much,
Don't waste time trying to put in what was left out,
Try to draw out what was left in,
That is hard enough".**

**"First, Break all The Rules"
Marcus Buckingham and Curt Coffman 1999**

"Neuroscience is telling us that beyond the mid- teens there is a limit to how much of a character can be carved". By the time they are twenty years old most people have developed four lane highways in their mind that enable them to do some things extremely well. Other tasks seem to be like wastelands where it is possible to make progress but with enormous effort.

When asked on a personal level, most people believe that we don't actually change that much, yet we are under constant pressure to do things, and apply ourselves to tasks which are a constant struggle for us. Yet we all have talents that allow us to achieve some things with consummate ease. The work just flows, naturally.



Frank Dick, British Athletics' Director of Coaching has an equation for Excellence, which is:

“Excellence = Talent + Confidence + Motivation”

People who have found or developed a good fit between what they do best and what is required in their jobs will be happier at work and very, very much more productive. We all know of people who are playing to their strengths, how the work flows so naturally. Most of us will know someone who struggles at work because they lack this basic fit with the demands of their role.

The converse, a lack of talent, is only ever important when it is required in their job. This is a weakness because it requires people to work in an area where they are not especially talented. If they are constantly playing to their weaknesses, they struggle, they get stressed, they potentially lose their self-esteem and they get de-motivated. It becomes obvious that people in this situation are less effective and less productive and will ultimately fail to deliver what is expected. If the same people were working in areas where they could build on innate talent the story would be very different.

"The thing I really try to promote in everything I do is the joy of being yourself, and how wonderful it is to just do whatever it is you happen to be good at"

**Professor Susan Greenfield, University of Oxford,
BBCTV July 2000**

Recognition that everyone has their own unique mix of “Talent” and that no one can be good at everything is a key liberating factor in business relationships. Anyone who is able to identify their own unique “Talent” profile will gain the insight into where they should concentrate their energies, to achieve maximum motivation and success. This knowledge will also enable them to concentrate their development in areas that will enhance their natural “Talent”. Knowledge of their weak areas will show them where they need support and enable them to build skills and compensating mechanisms so that they are more effective in those areas when they need to draw on them. Just imagine a business that addressed these areas with a focus on building on what people do well!

The underlying message here is that knowing where to focus our energy and building skills that enhance our natural “Talent” is fundamentally different to learning skills to compensate for lack of “Talent”.



Examples of Talents are:

- The ability to think strategically
- The determination to achieve the goal
- Clarity of purpose
- Ability to Prioritise
- Ability to create a strong foundation of information to build from
- Creative problem solving
- Empathy with the feelings and perspectives of others
- Knowing when to speed the action up or when to slow the pace

To help maximise our potential we can:

- Discover and use our unique talents
- Target them to define and deliver the most productive outcomes
- Build on our strengths
- Cast ourselves into roles that provide the right fit for us
- Draw on support in our low areas

If we can do this we work towards building a personal working climate where we have the opportunity to: -

"Do what we do best every day?"

Successful people use their personal strengths to produce results.

- They understand how they are personally motivated.
- They are clear about what they can offer other people, and what they need from them.
- They know what will work with others.
- They build win/ win solutions that generate the results they need.

In this world of never-ending change our personal, innate style is a constant that we can all rely on. Just imagine the power of knowing and using this to achieve success both at work and at home.

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