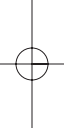
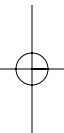
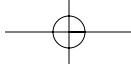
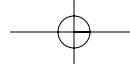


PART ONE

MOVING TARGETS







Chapter 1

Stress! Excess! Success?

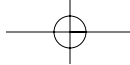
Young Millionaires: What Do They Know That You Don't?

—Headline from cover of
Entrepreneur magazine, November 2002

“Jane” is an attractive, bright, 30-year-old woman with a passion for life. We met her completely by chance at an isolated bed-and-breakfast in the middle of the southern Utah desert, where she was taking some time off from work to think about her life. She and her significant other, Joe, were hiking the back country near Monument Valley, on a spiritual quest to resolve an important question with very practical implications: Should Jane quit her successful job in software to pursue a career in sacred music?

She was fully qualified to do either. Jane had majored in music and math as an undergraduate, and then put herself through music seminary by playing the organ in a local church. Afterward, she'd taken a good job at a startup software firm in her college city. It was a fun and intense team-oriented experience. Her boss was very supportive of her and the tasks were both challenging and lucrative. But after four years on the job, the money and success didn't seem to make up for the stress she felt in this position. How could something so good feel so bad?

As she and Joe talked about the future, the possibility of marriage and kids, and their mutual love of outdoor adventures, Jane found herself torn between competing desires. The software job was a real ego-booster, the people terrific, and the pay high enough to subsidize an apartment in the city. The long hours were tough, though, and she missed having more time for friends. She reflected on all



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those concerts she wasn't attending, all those hours of problem solving at work that left her too tired to really enjoy her time with Joe. Her job was giving her a sense of real accomplishment, but something about it was wearing her down—especially when she thought about doing the same thing for another 20 years. Ironically, her problem wasn't that the job was wrong for her, but that it was right.

We asked Jane what bothered her the most about this situation. She fell silent, chewing on a piece of homemade bread to buy some time. Her face puckered, and she was clearly in distress. As last she said with a frown, "It's not just about time. It's about the whole picture—wanting to do different things and not knowing how to make it work." As we murmured encouragement, she suddenly said with dawning awareness, "There's an *emotional* element to this that the success books don't get at. I've done the right things. I already have 'success.' But it's not enough."

When Jane laid out all the pieces of her problem, we could see why she felt so troubled. Though she was succeeding at her job in software and had the right personality to become a star in her company, another part of her was longing to be involved in music, her true passion. Playing and listening to music provided a satisfaction that was very important and very different from what satisfied her about her software job. Jane missed the sense of contribution and significance that she'd had as a part-time church organist.

But realistically, as a person with high competitive standards, she believed she was actually more talented at solving business problems than as a professional musician. And what about her lifestyle? Her software job was financially lucrative. If she went into a career inside a church, she'd never be able to afford more than a one-room apartment in town. She did not want to live in the suburbs where she'd be isolated from her friends and the culture of the city.

She felt she had to have a certain amount of living space around her. In addition, nature was aesthetically and politically important to her, witness the hiking trip and her interest in the solar-powered hostelry where we conducted the interview—40 miles from the next town in the heart of a sacred space in the wilderness.

However she thought about these complaints, Jane couldn't seem to get control over the dissonance in her own makeup. Each aspect of her character generated a different but possible career or lifestyle. She felt as if she were wandering through a landscape of moving targets. Just as one goal seemed right and reachable, and she took aim to reach it, another popped up that seemed equally appealing and reachable. But try as she might, she could not make all of her interests and needs fit into one cohesive picture.

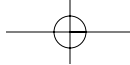
Intuitively, Jane knew this wasn't just a logistical problem of choosing the right job or recalibrating her financial goals. **Her anxiety centered on the larger question of success itself.**

Jane wanted to be a success, but not necessarily like the pumped-up entrepreneurs celebrated in the financial magazines and lionized at her fifth college reunion. However, she could find no magazines or models for the alternative success she was seeking. What did it look like? How did it *feel*? How could the choices she faced be framed to reflect the many aspects of her unique nature and still pave the way to success? What tactics should she use to achieve all the pieces of that puzzle? She felt in danger of becoming like the proverbial donkey who starved to death standing between two stacks of straw because he couldn't make up his mind which one to go after.

Too Many Choices

If Jane is ever going to leverage her talents into a positive outcome, she needs a base on which to stand. Before making a change, she needs a better understanding of where she is *now*. This process is partly associated with the domain of emotional intelligence that expert Daniel Goleman calls "self-awareness."¹ But Jane needs to develop more than her *emotional* baseline; she needs to assess the concrete trajectories of her current situation or she may not be *able* to get what she wants. Why is this so difficult for her?

Jane's dilemma is not unusual today, nor are her problems confined to her generation. In an era that proudly proclaims "no limits," it is commonplace to feel trapped between contradictory possibilities,



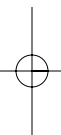
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paralyzed by moving targets and unable to accommodate or even order all the opportunities. Even retiring workers entertain urges to start another business, improve their golf, develop a long-neglected interest, or do something wholly new. Parents with careers hit many moments of reassessment in the course of raising children. Their decisions are not just about time management but about who they want to be in the deepest sense of the word. Some use this self-awareness to reposition their careers toward family needs. Others transform their nurturing inclinations into positions of greater responsibility in their companies.

Such moments of personal reinvention can be liberating, but without some disciplining framework, they can quickly deteriorate into a sense of bondage to the evolving “more.” For example, consider two young friends who seek financial wealth by starting a public relations firm. They vow to each other that they’ll consider themselves satisfied when they have a \$1 million in the bank. The first has a meteoric success and moves his stopping point to \$10 million. The other, also successful, has spending habits that delay him from reaching his original goal. Neither is able to develop a sense of mastery over the many possibilities that they see for themselves: things, jobs, relations, fun, status. As a current MBA student put it, in thinking about what his ideal life would be 10 years from now:

The truth of the matter is that I have no idea how I will make all of this work. I want to be a superhero—to run a company, have children, keep a beautiful home, and have a loving spouse. I want to take a grand vacation in Italy. I want to be a leader who contributes to the well being of society. I want to sit on boards of nonprofit and for-profit organizations.

I want to be the boss. I want to win. I want to be recognized in the newspaper and to be the recipient of numerous accolades and awards. . . . As a result, I have a hard time stepping out of my fantasy world to predict what will truly happen in the future. But the one lesson that I have learned from the past is to be careful of what you wish for, because it just might come true.



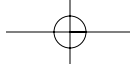
In this poignant moment of truth, we see a person excited about having many targets but self-mocking because it is so unlikely that he'll be able to reach all of them and also because he's not sure where to go first—and clearly, that's not the typical platform from which greatness is achieved. **He has no conception of a middle ground where multiple steps could be taken in pursuit of the things he thinks he might want out of success.** He wants many things on a grand scale; but unlike his cohorts who eagerly signed up to kill themselves on a predictable fast-track position after business school, he hasn't yet chosen to pursue even one of his ambitions. Dripping with irony, he puts a good face on the prospect before him: enduring the path to a success he's not sure he wants.

When Success Feels Just Out of Reach

When we looked at the future goals of an entire MBA class that was about to graduate, we were struck by how frequently these students accept the idea that they are destined to be two entirely different people in life: the one their cohorts know, who will find a lucrative position in a Hobbesian world of self-interested accomplishment, and the future self whom no one knew: the person who would make a larger contribution to society, be a surprisingly good parent, and maybe even master the guitar. It's as if they are standing on the edge of a cliff, sure of their footing now, and planning a future leap to the other side. Except that there is no bridge between here and there.

You may think of this as a choice to be made later, when you have the time, but for most people that idealized future self represents values that are being put on the line *now*. Some will keep moving fast enough to ignore the signs when they become hardened to their own best impulses. Others, like Jane, will be so sensitive to the trade-offs and sense of loss that they jeopardize their chances of reaching any goal in the face of their own indecision.

At one time this problem would simply have been described as the cost of success. But we've become accustomed to entertaining simultaneous, multiple meanings about ourselves and our environment.



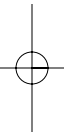
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We accept incoherency as normalcy, preferring to hope for it all rather than make a choice. We accept that focus is good *and* bad (as when it keeps you from going home at night). Our educational systems frequently don't prepare us for this complexity, especially for the problem of resolving noncomparable choices. When you're practicing to make the varsity soccer team, you're feeling guilty about not doing your all for your grade point average.

Success Isn't a Tease—It's a Moving Target

When William James famously called success a “bitch goddess” that the world gives and takes away,² he was referring to that peculiarly powerful combination of desire and dread that money and making it provokes in our culture. You see an ad in the subway that proclaims: “An Acme Diploma will help you achieve the success you deserve!” What can this be about but financial success, the American dream of the one sure path to personal transcendence? Raise your material circumstances and great things will follow—unless, of course, you lose your head and your conscience. In which case, your meteoric rise to the top, complete with stock options, may end up in a perp walk. Or, like a recent editor of the *New York Times*, your lifelong dream to create a great newspaper goes up in smoke after you bend the rules to meet your other organizational goals. Or, through no fault of your own, you simply experience the first really unstable negative market in 20 years and you become one of the 175 formerly hot Internet firms that went out of business in 2000, or one of the bottom 80 percent of today's dot-coms predicted to fail within the next 12 months. Reality strikes everyone: One member of the Young President's Organization attending a Harvard session estimated that he and his friends in Silicon Valley collectively lost \$150 billion in market value in the previous year.

Bring that down to human scale and it's about young college kids and long-term professionals suddenly discovering that the success talents that were clear winners just a few short years ago are now considered *incompetencies*. Corporations and people are told they must

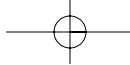


constantly “reinvent” themselves, which raises a really interesting question: When do you get to enjoy and thrive on who you are *now*?

The escalating choices in all our lives—at least as suggested by what others seem to have or do—has also escalated the instability relating to knowing what you should actually pursue and be satisfied in completing. The last week of May 2003 was one of those moments when it became particularly clear that we all live in a world of moving targets and that they are changing at an ever more rapid pace. In that week, two important sports events took place: the fiftieth anniversary of Edmund Hillary and Tenzing Norgay’s ascent of Mt. Everest, and the entry of Annika Sorenstam in the Colonial Country Club’s PGA tournament. Scores of climbers raced to break records at the top of the world, while Sorenstam moved out of women’s competitions to challenge the longstanding male markers of golf success. Both events featured only the most experienced and talented athletes. Success couldn’t be simpler, right?

Well, not quite. In fact, the markers kept changing. Whereas only a few days earlier *winning* the Colonial was the measure of success, once Sorenstam entered, it was about making the final cut or even just getting through the opening rounds without becoming spooked by the media attention. Meanwhile, on Everest, a number of records were made and broken with lightning speed. In one week new targets were set for oldest, youngest, fastest (set again a few days later), and most frequent climbers.

But it’s not happening just in sports. Everyone seems to be struggling with the *Tantalus effect*. This mythological character was punished with an eternal, raging thirst. To make things worse, he was placed in the middle of a magic lake whose waters receded every time he tried to take a drink. So, too, just as you seem to reach a tantalizing success or goal, your position of competitive dominance is snatched away—or you change the target yourself! We break up 30-year marriages to start life over; we abandon successful careers to take time for ourselves. In such an environment, it’s natural to wonder whether our past 30 years were really a success or an illusion of success.



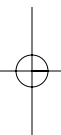
When Do We Get to Declare Victory?

There is an inherent bias in Western and Eastern value systems toward linking what we value with that which endures—whether it is someone’s character in the face of temptation, a religious belief in the face of hardship, or the truth of a great piece of literature. In his classic essay on the genius of Shakespeare, Alexander Pope called this kind of enduring knowledge “literary truth.” However many other plays are written, the truth of *Hamlet’s* insights will not be replaced by these other creations. He contrasted this type of truth with what he called “scientific truth,” which he noted is more temporary. A new discovery of scientific truth can *replace* old discoveries, as the discoveries of Galileo replaced the truths of Copernicus only to be superseded by Einstein.

Success straddles each of Pope’s types of truth. Like scientific truth, it is a journey of constant change and replacement. One goal or desire replaces another and demands a shift in attention. But to feel authentic, the past episodes must also have something of lasting value, the equivalent of “literary” or moral truth. Something that endures and is meaningful. This latter kind of value is harder to determine for yourself when the external measures of success are constantly readjusting on the paradigm of “scientific” truth. It is not that shifts in success measures are wrong, but rather that constant shifting without some lasting value to balance it feels meaningless.

Given our deep-seated association of value with the enduring, it’s difficult to view today’s rapid-fire disruption of success with dispassion. Like Jane, the more our targets shift and move, the less settled we feel. So many targets surround us that we can lose all power to move forward effectively. Success takes on a flat, collapsed dimension that gives little satisfaction. The climb to success begins to resemble an Escher drawing of a staircase that goes nowhere.

You wouldn’t think so, however, when you read the celebrations of money and achievement touted in the press or at motivational seminars. We live in a culture that glorifies, lionizes, and simplifies the presentation of success. **Time and again we are all exposed to**



top achievers who are admired for their current wins—the entrepreneur who’s founded three groundbreaking corporations in a row, the person in your firm who got a bigger promotion, the child who makes the all-state soccer team. In our research we learned to be alert for “the rest of the story” as we studied people’s accomplishments and their models of success. When we probed further, we found that many were not necessarily doing very well with their other targets: family, long-term business health, building a place to work that people actually value, developing a personal character that holds up when they get out of the public spotlight. As they themselves discovered, no matter how much money they have made, there’s always someone out there who’s richer or more powerful. Even Bill Gates has his Sultan of Brunei for comparison!

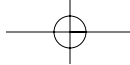
What Is the Enough You Want from Success?

Part of the problem for us all is not knowing what we want from success—what is *just enough*. To escape the buffeting of every new choice out there, you have to be prepared to go beyond generalities and really assess what it is you are seeking:

- What will challenge you?
- What will make a difference in the world?
- What will attract you?
- What will endure even after you’ve moved on?

We found that on first pass, many people say they “just” want happiness from success: things, family security, self-esteem, membership in an elite group. Oh, and maybe a sense of accomplishment. (Wait for it.) Oh yes, and perhaps a certain degree of variety and challenge . . . yes, but it’s all ultimately about doing something of use in the world.

Such generalized statements are typical. On the one hand, they make sense. Even Aristotle noted that our happiness was



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composed of many desired ends and not just one. On the other hand, the glamorization of success doesn't prepare you for the push-pull of having quite so *many* contradictory claims. People go mad seeking success—and many go even madder once they possess it. We suffer angst over *not* being a success, and we fear being a success and losing our soul. In 1967, the writer Joan Didion observed that the most publicized self-doubts in America were *Vietnam*, *Saran-Wrap*, *diet pills*, and *the Bomb*.³ In 2003, the most publicized self-doubts are *Iraq*, *SUVs*, *Dr. Atkins' diet advice*, and *financial success*. They summarize our collective sense of what we *should* seek to do or acquire even as we feel dread about the possible side effects.

And yet what's the alternative? Even if you hate thinking of yourself as baldly pursuing success, would you seriously suggest that this is the wrong object of universal quest as long as it's *real* success as you define it? Isn't it rather like the holy grail—dangerous but impossible to resist? If you succeed in securing success, you possess a powerful talisman against want and rejection, like the Yiddish observation that the man who has money is a good singer—and he can dance, too! But like any grail, this one causes the informed seeker to entertain second thoughts. What price will the quest exact? Will the grail really deliver the dazzling but vague blessings we expect from obtaining it?

We Search for Glory and the Good Life

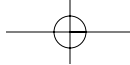
The perplexing glory and pain of success is an age-old moral problem and not just an American anxiety. In Homer's *Iliad*, the Greek hero Achilles has his fate laid out before him: If he stays to fight at Troy, he can become the greatest warrior ever known, but he will also be fated to die before the war ends. He is in love with a woman and adores his father—how tempting to leave the battlefield and enjoy the happiness of home for many years to come. Achilles agonizes over whether he should fulfill his semi-divine potential as a warrior and die young or go home and grow old. As he reflects on the choice before him, neither target fully eclipses the other. Homer compresses

all the tragic implications of this dilemma in a single line: “And yet I must choose.”

Sometimes the inescapable choices around prosperity are downright funny. The Roman satirist Horace comically describes a feeling that could be said of New Yorkers today: “When the Romans are in the city, they long for the country. Then they immediately tire of the simple life, and want to rush back to the city.” The difference now is that the explosion of information places more and more of the rewards of success before us: People of any income can comfortably imagine the most exotic vacations just by watching a TV ad or reading a popular magazine. Regular working stiffs can buy \$6 worth of coffee at Starbucks and take a flyer on an IPO. Whereas the most fashionable fashions and furniture used to be the reserve of the well-traveled frequenters of Fifth Avenue and Via Scala, now anyone can find these items on the Internet or even at their local mall. You can even get the “private” skinny on the favorite travel spots of the really upscale traveler in *Andrew Harper’s Hideaway Report*. Despite an era of supposed downsizing, the *average* price of a wedding in the United States is now \$20,000. The more we buy into the luxuries of the supposedly leisure class, the harder we’re really working. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, Americans are averaging only two to two-and-a-half weeks of vacation, while Europeans take five.

Scientific advances make our choices even more numerous. The extension of life expectancy and basic biological functions such as fertility logically invite a youth-oriented population to adopt a no-limits strategy in their youth-like search for novel experiences. Daily reports of yet another twenty-something “making it” (see the quote that begins this chapter) only increase the sense of possibility and anxiety. Define it as growth and it is exciting. Watch it in real time and, for many of us, life is overextended and undersatisfying. So many targets. So little time.

This is especially true for those who have already experienced success. As one head of a publishing division put it: “I can *want* to be fit, fulfilled, and have time to tuck my kids in bed each night—and I do want this. I also want to be at the head of everything I do: board of directors, soccer coach, deacon at church. But that doesn’t take



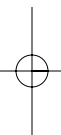
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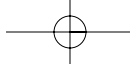
care of the stack of work on my desk and the need to pay my kids' tuition. I stay until all hours, love my job in the abstract, and know I'm crazy for living this way."

It's easy to sympathize with this editor's dilemma. Most people could understand if he were just a bit fearful of considering any other job strategy lest he lose his position to more competitive individuals. Even if these are not your personal fears, they might crop up in thinking about how to encourage your children's success. Today there is widespread concern that children are being pushed too fast, too far, too early. But if you refrain from pushing your child on a prodigy track (intense training and achievement expectations from an early age), can he or she ever be a success when the competition for college is so intense?

Like many, this editor is gripped by an optimistic, wholly American assumption that has been touted for centuries in the success literature of Benjamin Franklin, Horatio Alger, Norman Vincent Peale, and many of today's success gurus. **You should want to have the good life even if you know you'll never fully get there. You have a moral obligation to strive to be all you can be—even if it kills you.** Not obtaining these ideals is a sign of personal failure or a tighter economy or something else that is temporary and possible to overcome. Success Version 21 (for the twenty-first century) has dramatically increased the volume of the static between people's desires, counterdesires, and capacities.

Some individuals have no trouble with this picture. They simply zoom full speed ahead on a course that will maximize one or two of their talents—and hope that the rest will follow. Others see the problem in ambition and materialism and try to exercise a moral sense of restraint in the face of so much pressure. Some people—including ambitious MBAs—told us they were sick and tired of today's success worship. They wondered about whether it wouldn't be preferable simply to drop off the fast track of high achievement. As many in the business school class that was surveyed indicated, the real question is how to exercise control over your options and still remain a contender.





Success Has a Deeper Structure Than Winning—Just Like Our Needs

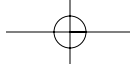
It would be easy if we could simply do triage, sorting out good and bad targets of success and then focusing on those that felt most important. But in a world of moving targets, our sense of what is most important is constantly changing. In our view, the problems around success today—stress, burnout, personal disappointment, and indecision—cannot be solved in a one-stop either/or choice between excess or asceticism, lion or lemming, president or parent. **Like Achilles, we face difficult questions about whether to push the limits or accept them.** For sustained success, you have to do both and on many different dimensions. Success is such an overworked, oversimplified theme that it is easy to underestimate this complexity and therefore the nature of the problems people are confronting.

Success Is Multidimensional

To realize your visions, you have to approach success as representing many important psychological and metaphysical quandaries:

- To the degree that it signifies accomplishment, it represents notions of mastery.
- To the degree that it signifies luck, it represents powers that are larger than human ability and shape our destiny.
- To the degree that it signifies reward, it represents justice and other moral obligations.
- To the degree that it signifies things that are admired by society, it represents belonging.
- To the degree that it brings pleasure, it represents happiness.

Success helps us articulate what we believe are the core boundaries of human nature, the parameters of the universal search for pleasure, and the moral components of what it means to live well.



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It is a definer of purpose, a rudder for social organization, a maker of meaning.

Success Is Not Just Winning Big

It's important to review the potential richness success can represent in your life, especially since much of the success advice today is written without a view to these meanings. Success has been reduced to winning big. Often, discussions of success, especially in business, are based on people who don't acknowledge the pull of multiple desires out of an overwhelming passion for one thing. Their focus may be a result of being emotionally immature or literally being young, like the twenty-year-old millionaire featured on the cover of *Entrepreneur* magazine. Or they may have silenced their inner struggles with a robust air of self-confidence.

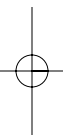
Such approaches are creating a crisis of leadership and personal complaint in our society. Businesses choose profit as the only measure of success and then fail to grow. Stay-at-home parents choose family service as the only measure of success and then wince at their own self-worth in a larger universe. Narrow success is, ultimately, narrowly rewarding. It holds up neither for individuals nor for society.

Our surveys revealed some very important information about success and its attributes.

Success Is Not a Platitude

When we surveyed 90 executives attending Harvard Business School programs about how they measured success, they tended to state broad, nonspecific measures ranging across many different domains of life. Their top indicators of success were:

- Making a difference.
- Having family happiness and harmony.
- Being involved with a business with significant achievements, that is solid.



- Being spoken of with respect, as a person of integrity.
- Having children who share your values.
- Making a contribution to society.

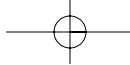
Many of these executives expressed the hope that their time at Harvard Business School would equip them to achieve the mix of all these goals more skillfully. On the other hand, they showed a distinct bias for simple and uncomplicated explanations of success. When asked if they had any special maxims about success that presented their views, typical answers were:

- Be true to yourself (“I am the captain of my soul”).
- Teamwork and respect solve most problems.
- Luck is where preparation meets opportunity.
- All success comes from failure.
- He who does not risk cannot win.
- The process is just as much fun as the result.

Despite our admiration for these people, their generalities were of limited help. They read suspiciously like a lukewarm audiotape of the latest motivational book. Our chief concern was with “the rest of the story.” If people really measure their success by multiple standards and desires, how do they reconcile these targets with the simple road maps of advice they encounter in books and business courses? On what basis did experienced achievers make decisions about the parameters of what they regarded as the good life, and where did their pursuit of success fit into this picture?

“Perfect Success”

When we dug deeper, we discovered that most people experience many stages in their understanding of success and that no one event in this process is purely about a single goal. Even for those who felt

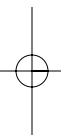


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that money and power were hugely important at first, upon acquiring these things, most sought something more in terms of personal happiness, family health, and the social value of their business contributions. Those who are able to sustain such complexity alter their measures and actions around success accordingly. We found that we were drawn to certain types of successful achievers by their paradoxical ability to *retain* a complex intuition of what would be truly enduring in their eyes even as they skillfully shifted their attention from need to need.

By contrast, some of the successful entrepreneurs we interviewed—like many other people—adopted many simplifying strategies to make all the pieces work together but they lost the richness of their dreams in the process. They believed a single habit (such as focus) to be the secret to success, or devised personal rules that collapsed all their goals into large encompassing synergies: Success is not about selfishness but about win-win. It's not about having it all but being all you can be. Be true to yourself and you'll always succeed.

We've all heard these neat formulations before, and who would deny their motivational power? But the very charm and superficial plausibility of such statements can actually be very misleading if you adopt a "one-hit-gets-all" assertion as your model. When we looked behind the veil of good intentions, most of the targets they depicted as having a good "fit" with their overall values actually only fit periodically. The rest of the time they demanded trade-offs and sacrifices. You can be a top executive and know you care about family, but even if you go to a therapist to change your workaholic habits, your time in therapy is going to be a drain on the family's other needs for your attention. You can look for a win-win solution with your customer, but if you don't distinguish between their needs and yours, you will soon be out of business. You can feel a deep obligation to be generous, but chances are you won't be giving *all* your money away to the point where you lead a life of poverty so that others can be more prosperous. On what basis do you decide what is enough for yourself and what is enough to give to others?



Learning from Public Figures

Many people underestimate the calibrating measures they are really applying to their lives. Today's worker is far more aware of the choices and costs of success, but still people are often unprepared for the moral and practical ambiguity this presents. We tried a little thought exercise in our executive classes. We prepared four *Doers' Profiles* of obvious public successes—Jimmy Carter, Katharine Graham, Donald Trump, and Bill Gates—drawing from their own writings to get as close to their thinking as possible. What was it, we asked, that accounted for their success? Every class discussion ended in a very mixed review. Strengths (such as focus and passion to win) became weaknesses under certain conditions and yet were essential to success. Jimmy Carter was a great ex-president but not a success as a president. Katharine Graham had exhibited great and lasting leadership as a publisher, but no one wanted to replicate the tragedies of her married life and childhood, which seemed to fuel this great strength. Donald Trump was no doubt an innovative triumph at branding buildings and himself, but there were doubts about the ultimate value of his tactics. Bill Gates was simply unreal, revealing little of his inner self beyond pride in mastering many kinds of problems. As the flaws emerged, many participants in our classes objected that although these figures exhibited successful habits, *none* of the people we studied were real successes in their eyes.

We pressed further. If that was the case, then come up with an example of what you consider *real* success in light of your reservations. The executives tended to go to the other extreme of wealth and worldly power, citing one-dimensional examples of self-sacrifice such as Gandhi or Mother Theresa. Why was it, then, that none of them chose to go to Calcutta? Were they aware of Gandhi's own family problems, or Mother Theresa's occasional personal soul sickness from overwork? If they took these moments of unhappiness or neglect of important values seriously, what did it say about these leaders' success?

The only surprise here was their surprise that choices in one area of leadership and success seemed inextricably linked to

failures to achieve other things valued as good. The positive-negative aspects of success have been one of the most lasting puzzles of great literature and history: What are the characteristics of true leadership, and why can't one person of great talent do it all? Agamemnon was the most powerful leader at Troy, but sacrificed his own daughter to get there. Lear is both deservedly noble king and deservedly abject slave to his dissatisfied court. Lincoln implicitly tolerated Sherman's brutality even as he fought against the intolerance of slavery. Not one of our interviewees (though we admired them all) was totally uncontroversial in terms of family devotion or self interestedness. Many historical "great man" theories would suggest that these very contradictions occasion greatness. As the Greek philosopher Hippocrates once explained, "*Polemos* (war, conflict) is the progenitor of all things."

What do these conflicts represent to us, not just in practical terms but in moral and emotional responses? When is the pursuit of conflicting targets a legitimate feature of real success, and when is it simply success at the price of higher values? Is there a success model that actually helps manage these conflicts in a way that gets you more, if not all, of what you and others desire? The short answer is yes—but you have to be prepared to do more than "lock and load" on one idealized target.

The Rest of the Story

When we entertain success stories in which heroic Doers blast through all obstacles in the pursuit of One Great Goal and afterward "have it all," we are likely to hitch our stars to something that does not really represent the full spectrum of what we really expect—and can get—from success. As we discovered, there usually turns out to be more to the story, and this raises the kind of reservations our students had about the four Doers' profiles.

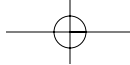
Take, as one example from many you could find, Bernie Ebbers, the former CEO of WorldCom, and Scott Sullivan, WorldCom's former chief financial officer. Not so long ago, WorldCom was on

everyone's success list, a real value in a competitive marketplace. The lives of these leaders were envied and emulated. But by 2002, Ebbers was in personal debt to his company to the tune of \$408 million and in no position to pay. His wealth was largely in WorldCom stock, which plunged 97 percent over three years. Meanwhile, WorldCom's former CIO Scott Sullivan was accused of the largest accounting fraud in U.S. history, and in April 2003 was hit with new charges of fraud and lying on financial statements to help the company secure more than \$4 billion in credit. Yet, many people had previously seen these men as successful. According to Mitchell Marcus, who worked for WorldCom for 14 years, these two "were considered near genius, if not saints, by the majority of company employees,"⁴ They're not the only idols being torn down these days.

We concluded that the search for a balance of good things from success cannot be achieved through the emulation of a perfect success example, much to the disappointment of many. Nor can we promise to reveal the sure-fire secret strategy or personality type that makes it all work seamlessly. By now everyone should be wary of these stories, like the archetypal working mother who wraps up a multimillion dollar deal during her twelfth hour of labor, returns to work two weeks later, sends her kid to Harvard, and is universally loved by her family and feared on the squash court. Do you know this woman? Neither do we. Either these people live on a different planet, where time and physical energy have no meaning, or their romanticized success stories are delusional. In either case, they don't really help the rest of us mortals cope with our relentlessly moving targets. Even if you could secure enough wealth, power, and good health to buy a ticket to this planet, you would still hold different expectations about success that reflected your unique values and needs.

Embrace Conflict

Instead of trying to reduce your many desires around a good life to a common denominator like your company's stock price, it is important to embrace the idea that diverse, sometimes conflicting impulses



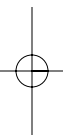
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are not only inescapable—they are also *a positive resource* in thinking about what success really means and how you will pursue it. It is possible to achieve a more balanced, well-rounded, contributing form of success, but to do so, you have to be able to manage a vision of success that is inherently multifaceted. For business people who have learned to prioritize quickly, it can be hard to take this step back and give credence to the whole picture.

What we (and those who depend on us) really need is a better understanding of the process of complex choice in the pursuit of success:

- How do we identify and evaluate the many changing targets that pop up?
- How do we aim effectively at both opportunities and obstacles?
- How do we shift from a lock-and-load rigidity to an adaptive set of goals?
- How do we hone in on the right targets when presented with conflicting alternatives?
- How do we order the chaos of these demands so that every choice is not an occasion for regrets about the road not taken?
- How do we choose the right ammunition for each target?

Our research uncovered a critical skill that we've not seen fully identified before. The high achievers who were able to handle success and make positive contributions in the lives of many others not only recognized multiple goals in their work and life, they managed to retain a deep sense of commitment to whatever they were engaged in, in spite of having these multiple targets. They accomplished this through a special kind of adaptiveness to complexity that involved both intense focus and lightning abandonment of one mode of experience for another. (We call this strategy *Switching and Linking*, and we discuss it in detail in Part Three.) They could attend to family. They could act in their own interests



but also in the interest of others. Instead of chaos, they created a coherent sequence to their goals around success.

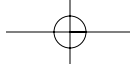
You might expect that they did this by radically reducing or eliminating the complex ambitions that are causing so much confusion for people in real time. Indeed, the media often depict some of our interviewees as having a meteoric success that brooks no side-tracks. We discovered that the reason they weren't being side-tracked was not that they'd set only one goal for themselves, but that they *regularly* "nailed" different aspects of their aspirations in the here and now. As they chalked up a victory, their aspirations and their abilities were increased as was their sense of satisfaction. Instead of feeling cheated out of not getting it all, they were renewed by a sense of just enough and could move on to the next challenge.

To develop the same ability, you have to change the way you understand the landscape of success. Whether shooting for the moon or trying to get to your friend's birthday party, you have to become an expert at the ballistics of moving targets.

Hitting the Moving Targets

Effective and rewarding pursuit of success requires changing your fundamental vision of what you are aiming for and how it relates to what *else* you may want now and in the future. The question is not about how to seize on the perfect balance between work and family. **Success is not a static target you choose to shoot at or not. Rather, it is an expanding landscape through which you move throughout life, picking and choosing among the many possible targets that you choose, or that choose you.**

Traversing this landscape is a sophisticated process. It requires multiple frames of reference. Like the air you breathe in and out, success is both an externally determined and internally generated standard. Some of your measures of success are unique to you, but others are dependent on the cooperation and approval of outsiders. You want to make a profit, but to do so you have to serve others so that these others recognize you as deserving reward. You want to



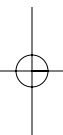
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put your customer first, but not if your customer wants you to give the product away. Jane wants to make money, play in the church choir, have children, and enjoy urban culture. Her boyfriend wants to support her in her goals *and* go hiking.

If each goal is something you have to aim for, then success is rather like a shooting gallery—various kinds of targets are always popping up from one direction or another, at different speeds and in different combinations. Hitting one gets you a score, but others are still out there, and there are always more to come. Some targets, like finishing an educational degree or enjoying a moment in the day, allow the opportunity for a straightforward win. You hit them, and you get a point. Other targets come in the form of obstacles: they may not be intrinsically important to you, but they get in the way of your aim and you've got to shoot them down in order to reach your goal. Power inside an organization can be this way: It is something you need but is not necessarily an intrinsic desire.

Many targets are simultaneously obstacles *and* goals, depending on the context. Family, for instance, can feel like an obstacle to work, but it can also be your most important goal in the larger picture. Two careers can seem the ticket to a more leisurely and affluent family life, but according to Juliet Schor's research, the demands on dual-career families have added almost an extra month of "work" to fathers' and mothers' schedules.⁵ For the 9 million-plus people in the "sandwich generation" today, caught between caring for both beloved parents and kids *and* working at careers, the desirable-obstacle target is particularly stressful.

Mark Twain's Tom Sawyer had a much simpler set of measures: "Work," said Tom, "consists of whatever a body is *obliged* to do, and play consists of whatever a body is not obliged to do." It's a comfortingly simple thought, but success with any form of achievement is not so simple. Success can turn your emotions upside down. Work you love can feel like play, and play can become real work as the new targets that come with success throw you off balance. Take, for example, the two young men fresh out of high school who started a software games business. When their business really took off, they

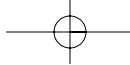


suddenly felt they had to buy into a new lifestyle to match the appearance of success. Formerly flannel-shirted slobs, according to their father, they now deferred to the way they thought wealthy dot-comers lived and were made happy: new cars, new clothes, new condos. But instead of joy, they'd taken on a set of worries about appearances, caring too much about what the house looked like rather than how to continue to have fun with their friends. Their targets of leisure had actually turned into what they felt they were "obliged to do," using Tom Sawyer's phrase.

When "Never Enough" Is the Only Good Life

One of the most classic examples of success failure rests on the problem of retreating targets. Each time you seem about to hit your mark, it moves farther away again, like the amount of money you want to make or time with your family or how much power you need. Nothing is enough. The elusive, "never enough" quality of such targets both inspires and frustrates. **To the degree these goals or targets are associated with the rewards of success, success itself becomes an elusive, frustrating target.** No matter how many times you hit the target, it moves back or gets larger, and tempts you to go for it again. Whether you keep up this pursuit will affect your ability to pursue other targets as well.

This was Jane's problem. She had wonderful targets for her future and lots of skills to hit any one of them, but they didn't line up neatly so that she could aim to hit all in one shot. She didn't *think* she was just being shallow and materialistic in finding it tough to commit to a career in music, but so far she hadn't found a solution that would give her everything she wanted. She'd tried to develop a sequence for herself that would put the organ music at bay until she could afford it, but like most live targets, this one wasn't going to sit still or stay out of sight till she had time to go for it. It kept popping up in her emotional landscape. Meanwhile, her software job was clearly a success, but one that seemed a betrayal of some parts of her makeup.



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There is a generous confusion to the complexity of Jane's moving targets, perhaps because they capture an inescapable impulse to go after a success that is essentially *true* to her sense of what is important. To paraphrase Oscar Wilde, the search for such truth is never pure, and rarely simple. You have to be prepared with more than one kind of ammunition, and you have to know how to assess what it is you really want.

You can't really do this until you abandon the idea of success as a carnival game. It's not about hitting all your targets, eliminating them, and walking out with the prize. What is sadder than the person who deliberately stops growing because they've "made it"? Or the CEO who can't make way for the next generation because being at the top of the company is the only target he or she has? How many people decide to scale back their careers in favor of family, only to feel over time that something is missing?

Even those who've been decisive about what they want are forced to reconsider from time to time. We call this the "wince factor"—that feeling that although you willingly chose to turn your back on some target, you wince when you see someone else hit it and think, "I could have done that, too." Just because you turned your back on something, it does not mean this prize will conveniently disappear, never popping up to tempt you again. **You have to be prepared for these moments with a sense of enough. You have to be able to recognize the full range of your criteria around the good life to evaluate how any one activity really fits into that framework.**

Where Do You Set Your Targets?

What is the good life to *you*?

- How will your success look if you achieve this life, even if imperfectly?
- Which targets will you go after?
- Which targets do you want your organization to pursue?

- Will your goals be driven by a deep sense of needing to make a contribution and needing to express your most creative talents?
- If you score high on actions but fail to meet your aesthetic needs, will this really feel like success?
- How will you approach the inevitable costs either course demands—costs on your attention, costs on your ability to achieve your other desires?

Too many people don't allow themselves the time to think these questions through. Many businesses favor new hires who never hesitate in their drive to achieve, and then wonder why the organization fails to reach greatness.

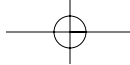
You could go for the simple solution: You could simply try to make your multiple desires conform or defer to One Big Goal, such as money. But this won't get you the things that money ultimately represents in your eyes: self-esteem, control, freedom, belonging, admiration, happiness. One big goal will not erase the prospect of multiple targets, nor will it prevent the multiple dissatisfactions of not hitting them squarely. One big goal, such as maximized shareholder value, will not build the kind of organization or relationships with the public that mark the kind of success that lasts.

Alternatively, you could conceive of success as a long-term process of multiple choice and change, one in which you fulfill your own deepest drives and receive some measure of reward from external sources. We call this latter ideal *enduring success*, enduring because it does and gives things that having lasting value.

An Overarching Target: Enduring Success

What is *real*, enduring success? The most succinct definition we could muster, given the personalized nature of the concept, is:

Enduring success is the collection of activities that will be viewed affirmatively by you and those you care about—now, throughout your life, and beyond.

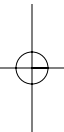


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To get there, you need to regularly cultivate episodes that give value on the many measures you and those you care about consider important. Some of these fortunate or meaningful moments will last longer than others in the eyes of the world, but their *value* to you and society will be, without question, part of the fabric of what you consider a good life. What you get and put into success will be worth it.

Forms of the enduring can be as grand as the Constitution of the United States or as personalized as the lasting satisfaction you received on the day you graduated from college. It can even be about a yard sale, as we will see later in this book. Episodes of enduring success come in many forms and sizes: a long-established business that continues to create new and fulfilling products and jobs; parenting that results in thriving children who can find their own success; an experience that so stretches your sense of what you can do and who you can be that you never forget it. It is the combination of achievement, pleasure, and growth that marks that unforgettable first step of a child. It lasts, but you also need to address new targets. Who would be satisfied if this were the only success their child experienced? Enduring success doesn't get rid of the paradoxical challenges that changing targets impose; in fact, it thrives on movement and growth.

In some ways, enduring success is very similar to the definition of entrepreneurship that we use at Harvard Business School: the pursuit of opportunity beyond resources you apparently control. Success is essentially about bringing to accomplishment the goals shaped by your changing awareness of new opportunity through the wise marshalling of your resources. Creative dissatisfaction has its place, but today's culture of envy threatens to take the dissatisfaction too far—stressing novelty and personal reinvention without the flip side. It skips from target to target without ever experiencing lasting satisfaction, lasting contribution. For the latter, you need to have a sense of *enough*—which is, after all, the original definition of satisfaction, from the Latin root, “to make or do enough.”



Being Prepared for the Right Opportunities

Whatever your parameters of success may be, as long as they involve growth and your own emotional engagement, they will inevitably involve moving targets. One of the greatest difficulties today—especially for successful people—is in finding a satisfying level for any one goal. Sheer stoicism or a philosophy of simplicity can be an exhausting and insufficient approach to this task. **For lasting success in business or in life, you need the skills to manage the sum of your targets effectively.** You need to anticipate and adapt to instability in its many forms with a strategy that captures achievable goals you can savor forever. This is an approach we saw operating in the high achievers who seem to “get it all” on many levels, and which is confirmed by a rich body of theoretical research on appetite and will. While we don’t believe in simple formulas or a one-size-fits-all metaphor, a few ground rules will help you develop this capacity more fully in yourself and in your organization:

- *See the big picture and be prepared to embrace the irreducible variety of what you seek from success:* You have to approach the multiple parts of your conception of the good life as part of a coherent but rich and growing pattern. There is no end point, but the moving targets can be more easily selected when you know how they “fit” into basic categories of aspiration around success: Happiness, Achievement, Significance, and Legacy. (These categories will be presented in greater detail in Part Two of this book.) The mere act of labeling and sorting your needs gives you a much greater sense of control.
- *Order your aspirations:* When your environment is chaotic, you have to *order* this mix. Ordering the components of success helps determine what is really enough for each. Save the rest of your energy for something else. You don’t have to take every activity to the max to ensure it satisfies your criteria of success. You don’t have to plan a trip around the world after retirement to relax. Sometimes simply understanding that your attraction to the here and now may

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allow you to experience a moment of rest and pleasure that adds to your happiness quotient makes it easier to put down the problem-solving of achievement for the moment.

Taking an inventory not only helps you see if you are putting too much effort into things that are already satisfied by something else, it helps you rebalance the parts of your picture that are “thin” in a timely way. Labeling the “type” your goals represent helps you understand more deeply what it is you most want from the many opportunities around you. It helps you understand when a supposedly terrific job offer is wrong and what you should be aiming for instead.

- *View the targets as opportunities rather than threats:* Moving targets are in fact a powerful resource in the landscape of aspiration. A strategy that simply tries to dispose of your desires actually cuts you off from the potential to increase your felt experience of the good life. When you hit these targets, that success must be savored in the here and now. **This can only be achieved by knowing what specific kind of satisfaction you can and cannot expect from a given category of activity.**

There is a pragmatic aspect to immediate fulfillment as well. According to decision experts, when you actively *engage* in the possibilities that life offers, you not only grow, you acquire good predictive powers.⁶ You are more prepared to address not only your aspirations but those targets that are forced upon you, like attending to a grown child who was just diagnosed with cancer on the day you thought you were going to nail down a new business deal or suddenly refocusing your customer service strategy in the aftermath of the market crash or figuring out a solution to a demanding and ethically questionable accounting proposition from your key investor.

A Brief Illustration in Real Time

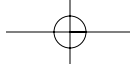
This approach to moving targets is the difference between putting out a fire and creating a new source of energy. We saw it in the long-term decisions around diversity that were made by current PepsiCo chairman, Steven Reinemund.

Early in his career as president of Pizza Hut, a big target suddenly blocked his way. Reinemund's division became the subject of a bitter lawsuit by a franchisee and attracted public criticism by the Hispanic community. He could have simply concentrated on disposing of this litigation, making his only target winning the case. Driven by his own values, however, Reinemund was uncomfortable with the "enemy" attitude this seemed to be engendering. He met at length with his critics, face to face and with the help of Ron Harrison. He became more aware of a broad horizon of issues that the Hispanic community was facing, and quickly saw that many of them were relevant to the future of a company like PepsiCo. In this process, his overall goal was transformed. Instead of simply focusing on settlement of the legal problem, he radically recalibrated his targets around diversity.

That was the beginning of a comprehensive series of decisions by Reinemund and others that have increased PepsiCo's employment and marketing to Hispanics, consulting on special health and nutrition issues among the Hispanic community, and expanding its operations in Spanish-speaking countries. These efforts have been part of a substantial commitment to many other kinds of diversity and inclusion at PepsiCo. Reinemund's decision to expand the targets at his company has not only led to positive business results but to the creation of a very different and richer profile of success for PepsiCo. In 2003, the company was acclaimed by a number of organizations for its minority record, from appearing in the #9 slot of *Fortune* magazine's minority employer list to being honored by the Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law.

Understanding Your Own Landscape of Success

The models in this book will help you understand the nature of *your* values and desires amidst the turmoil of today's moving targets, and provide a coherent framework for making choices that are both controlled and expansive of your own life profile. They will help you understand what measures to apply to these problems, and over



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what time frame. They will give you the baseline to determine what rewards will make the sacrifices and costs worth it. They will also help you anticipate and manage a constructive openness to your next set of moving targets.

But, like Jane, you have to be prepared to make choices. You have to be prepared to anticipate costs as an inevitable part of the process and something over which you have some control. You can do this if you know how to select the targets that are right for you now, and for the you who expands in experience and capability over a lifetime. Few of these problems have one-step solutions. Enduring success means seeking goals in a way that allows you to hit your targets and move on to the next set. The secret is in knowing the basic dynamics of the kinds of targets you associate with enduring success, and in being able to define *just enough* for each one.

As Henry Thoreau asked in *Walden*, “Why should we be in such desperate haste to succeed, and in such desperate enterprises?”

Quick Points: Stress! Excess! Success?

Why conventional success advice is failing us:

- We have too many choices.
- Our targets shift and escalate as more choices and obstacles appear.
- Enduring success is not just about “me.”
- Enduring success is not one simple thing: It is the collection of four kinds of activities that will be viewed affirmatively by you and those you care about—now, throughout your life, and beyond.