



BEYOND BUSINESS RESULTS ACHIEVING SUSTAINABLE SUCCESS

Julie Rosenberg

How do you understand the meaning of success both in business and in life?

I've spent a long time pondering this question. I'm a pediatric oncologist who has worked in the pharmaceutical industry for the past 13 years. My focus has been on developing new drugs to treat patients with cancer. It's been a challenging but highly rewarding professional mission. During this current phase of my career, I've lead key drug development programs and had the privilege of participating in the tremendous progress that has been made in the fight against cancer. My work has helped to ensure improved patient access to key medications which will ultimately lessen the cancer burden in a rapidly changing, globalized world.

At each of the four pharmaceutical companies in which I have served as a leader, the key expectation has been for me to be high performing; it has been of the utmost importance that I work with accuracy and with urgency in order to achieve business results. In response to this focus on tasks and results, I adapted accordingly. I learned to tackle my expansive daily to-do list with speed and efficiency. I worked with my teams to ensure that we would maintain focus, solve problems, sustain productivity, manage and diversify risk, and create innovations to achieve company results. And by all accounts, I was successful. I led my teams effectively by creating a collaborative and trusting team atmosphere. I hit my targets. I got my results. I was promoted and ascended the ranks, albeit more slowly than I desired.



What might surprise people looking at me from the outside is that not until recently did I consider myself successful. I think that's because my idea of success varied over time, so I had difficulty defining what success truly meant to me. At times, I thought success was strictly synonymous with achieving results. At other times, I equated it with power and money. At still other times, I considered success to be the level of influence my actions had over the environment around me. In addition to having a definition of success that changed over time (and we all know how hard it is to hit a moving target), I also tended to focus less on my achievements and more on my dissatisfaction in my career. As a woman in a very male-dominated organizational culture, reaching the high-level promotional opportunities to which I aspired meant breaking through the old boys' club—not an easy task. I'd often look at the men at the top and think to myself, "I will never be successful if I don't get to the C-suite." My frustration caused by the gender imbalances I saw was understandable, but my negativity prevented me from flourishing.

Then things shifted for me when I became fully committed to my yoga practice. You may think, *Yoga? That's crazy, especially coming from a corporate executive.* But it's true: Yoga has completely changed my corporate life for the better.

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For most of my career, I focused on my next professional opportunity rather than on my present situation. I was committed to serving patients and to helping my company meet its goals; I was always looking down the line to what was coming next. What I was not fully committed to was the process of my own development—the learning and growth that builds a career by helping you to become a better version of yourself. I was smart, poised, well-trained and committed, but I was also resistant to change, angry at my boss (thinking that, after all, I should have been chosen for his role), easily upset when encountering obstacles, and fearful of failure.

Over the past 16 years, the practice of yoga has helped me to enhance my awareness of the present moment and to root my consciousness directly in it. The Vietnamese Buddhist monk, author, and poet Thích Nhất Hạnh says, “Life is available only in the present moment.” When I became more focused on the present, I was finally able to commit to the process and the journey of my life. I became humbler, more open-minded, more disciplined, and more reflective—all imperatives of effective leadership. I shifted my focus away from “What’s next for me” and more on what was in front of me. I began to look at new ways of doing things, to try new strategies, and to think differently. Shifting my focus also meant that instead of just being focused on results, I was able to engage in a process of change and personal transformation that made me a better person and a stronger leader—something that had the added benefit of positioning me for my next organizational opportunity. I wound up achieving more than I could have even imagined before.

I have come to the realization that all successful people I admire share one key trait: they embrace change and transformation. Success is about learning and assimilating what you could not have known beforehand. It’s about knowing the *why* as to something works or fails, and being able to learn and grow—whether the outcome is positive or negative. It’s about becoming resilient so that you can keep going and bounce back quickly when obstacles get in your way. It’s about embracing the failures and allowing them to be stepping-stones to ultimate success.

I've found that, in order to truly achieve success, it's necessary to do these ten key things:

- 1. Define success for yourself and believe that it's possible for you.** Success is a very personal thing, as what drives one person may be radically different for another. But in order to achieve it, it's important to first define it. My definition of success is not about achieving massive results or making the most money; it's about finding my purpose in life and being able to leave an enduring legacy, having made a positive difference on the lives of others around the world. And once you have defined success, it is important to believe that you can achieve it. I trust that success is possible for me, and so it is.
- 2. Define your vision.** Your vision must be aligned with every cell of your body. It should be an expression of your talents and should be self-initiated and self-maintained. Your vision statement should clearly and concisely communicate your aspirations and goals. It will also serve as a guide for your life and provide the direction necessary to chart the course of your days and years to come.
- 3. Decide what you want to achieve.** When you jump from one opportunity to another, you may lose direction. Obstacles will get in your way; secondary priorities will inevitably pop up and be a distraction. What matters most is not what the obstacles are, but how you see and react to them. Making sure that you have clear goals in mind will help keep you on your path when the going gets tough.
- 4. Act like the person you want to become.** The person you are today has created the results you are currently experiencing. Achieving different results requires thinking and acting differently. William James, the American philosopher and psychologist, wrote, "If you want a quality, act as if you already had it." A more modern way of saying this is the old adage "fake it 'til you make it." You'll be surprised by the power of positive thinking in this way.

5. **Give up your attachment to old habits.** The Buddhist principle of non-attachment is often thought of as surrendering a desire for material things, but it's more than that. Non-attachment is a state of mind. It means not depending on anything outside of yourself—whether things or people or ideas—for happiness. It stems from deep consideration of the conditions of human existence, and it requires a reassessment of how we operate in the world. For example, a person who is attached to the outcome of his actions suffers as a result of those attachments. He performs actions solely concentrating on outcome; he is elated by success and devastated by failure. But he lacks the ability to find true happiness within himself. I learned the skills of non-attachment through my practice of yoga. Through practicing non-attachment, I now experience an even-mindedness whatever the outcome of my efforts, which can be an incredible asset in a high-pressure career.

6. **Use your leadership skills to motivate and develop others.** The greatest leaders are those who include everyone in their sphere of influence by recognizing each person's greatest value. To be one of these leaders, look beyond the obvious and see others with insight and compassion. Make employees feel like integral members of the team and the entire company. They will naturally rise to the occasion and their own leadership capabilities will emerge.

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- 7. Learn to manage discomfort.** The most successful leaders know that the key to success is not in avoiding falling or failing, but in learning from their mistakes and moving forward. So expect setbacks and embrace the discomfort of new experiences and of acquiring new skills and habits that will support your success. It will make you a stronger and more resilient person and leader.
- 8. Focus on getting better every day.** Instead of trying to make radical changes in a short timeframe, make small daily improvements that will gradually lead to the change you want. As with anything, we get better when we practice, and this simple habit will have a profound impact on your results in the long run.
- 9. Stay the course until you learn what you need to learn.** The only way to get better at anything is doing it over and over again until you improve. And yet the fact of the modern business world is that we have become job hoppers. The average person changes jobs twelve times during his or her career. Many workers spend five years or less in every job, so they may devote more time and energy transitioning from one job to another than improving at the actual job. If you feel the need to jump ship, make sure that you clearly understand why and make sure that you are not just running from yourself. (Enhancing your skill of non-attachment—Practice #5—will help to ensure non-reactive decision-making.) Sometimes it may be worth it to stick it out by staying in place just a little bit longer.
- 10. Take care of your health.** Workplace stress levels are at critical levels and they continue to climb. The American Institute of Stress (AIS) has reported that 80% of us feel stress on the job and nearly half of those evaluated say they need help in managing it. In the face of intense pressure to meet performance expectations, it remains imperative for leaders to take care of themselves first so that they can best serve others. (This is similar to the principle of putting on one's own oxygen mask first on an airplane.) Think before you burn the candle at both ends of the day, skip meals, overeat, sleep less than 7 hours per night, or

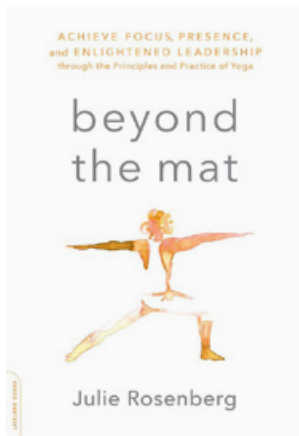
consider yourself too busy to exercise. Remember, you are responsible and accountable for your own life. Your life is an experience of your own creation, and you won't be helpful to anyone else until you are 100% present.

As leaders, we often bury ourselves in our work, but to what end? Working harder and putting in longer hours does not necessarily correlate with success. It just correlates with busyness. To have a truly happy and successful life, it's important to have a sense of perspective. Those who are happy in both business and life are those who are grateful for the world they live in. Too often we think about what we don't have, and we constantly compare ourselves to others. Stop for a moment and focus on what you do have. Studies have shown that a regular gratitude practice can have a dramatic impact on your outlook, as well as significant and long-lasting positive effects on your life.

It may seem daunting to make such changes, but you'll likely discover that the first step is the hardest. Once you change your mindset, you're well on your way. **It's within your grasp to make a decision to become happy, healthy, fulfilled, and to constantly become a better version of yourself, which will pay enormous dividends both at work and in the rest of your life.** 📖



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About the author

Julie Rosenberg is a physician executive who has worked in a variety of leadership roles in the pharmaceutical industry. She has actively practiced yoga for more than fifteen years and has completed both 200-hour and 500-hour teacher trainings. Dr. Rosenberg teaches yoga primarily “beyond the mat,” helping individuals and groups to apply the principles and practice of yoga to their daily lives and to support their overall health and well-being, to achieve success, and to become more effective leaders. She lives in Connecticut and Florida. Find out more on the web at www.julierosenbergmd.com.

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