

## 6 Simple Steps to Achieving Massive Career Success

I read recently that 70% of the workforce is disengaged at work. This is an appalling and distressing statistic for a variety of reasons. Besides the lost productivity to our society at large, there are apparently millions of people who are professionally unhappy and not living up to their full potential.

If you are reading this, and are one of the 70%, here is a quick six-step program to get yourself back on track, aligned with your potential, and flourishing again in your career. If you are one of the lucky 30%, these six-steps will give your career strategy a tune-up or possibly validate what you are already doing day-to-day.

### **Step 1: Know Thyself**

Sounds simple, but most people I meet don't really spend too much time living the "self-examined life", and this hurts them in their careers.

Let's be honest: most of us "fall into" our jobs, and are driven by financial need and what is dictated to us daily by our employers and the market. Nevertheless, no matter how busy we are, all of us should be able to pause and recalibrate from time to time to make sure that our gifts and personal strengths are aligned with our daily responsibilities. This is the first step, and the most essential step, because if you are not in touch with your strengths, and not aligned professionally with what fulfills you, you will never be able to break out and achieve massive success in life.

I always encourage anybody who feels stuck in their career to ask themselves a few simple questions and the simplest of all is this: if you had a million dollars per year in

income, what projects or tasks would you gravitate towards, and what sorts of responsibilities would you avoid? Invariably, the first response is: “Well, I wouldn’t work”. But if we get past that, and assume that after a year or so of lying fallow, you wanted to reengage with the world and with society or even with your current job, how would you go about that? This should give you an indication of your natural career path. You can then start envisioning yourself on this path.

I would also strongly encourage folks reading this to explore many of the various personality tests available at no cost. These tests are very helpful at identifying your psychological archetype, and with a knowledge of that, you will have a broader view of all the professional roles that you are best suited for. Another way of saying this is that knowledge of your archetype helps you understand your life’s purpose, and that if you align your unique life purpose with your career, you cannot fail to achieve success.

## **Step 2: Define Your Vision and Your Goals**

When a man does not know what harbor he is sailing for, no wind is the right wind. If you are lucky enough to have achieved knowledge of your archetype, you will still be drifting aimlessly unless you define a vision or a goal. Why do people fail at this? Most don’t know who they are (Step #1), but those who do tend to be afraid of locking into a vision, and setting sail for it (for fear that they will have to shift course once they acquire new information or their circumstances change). Consequently, they stay in reactive mode forever, never seizing their own futures.

You don’t need a 30 year plan, and you don’t have to stick to it with inflexible rigidity to be successful. So start by developing a vision of where you want to be and what you want to be doing in six months or twelve months or twenty-four months. Build your vision out in phases, gradually, and be willing to shift gears once your goals

change, or the market changes. Nobody can achieve anything in life without first envisioning it – so you absolutely must define where you want to be, even if a part of you knows that the goal will change before you ever achieve it.

### **Step 3: Understand Your Market**

You know your archetype, and you've envisioned some solid short term and long term goals for yourself. Now comes the strategic part.

How big is the market that you are going to be serving in this future state? Who are your competitors? How are you going to differentiate yourself in this space? You've really got to spend some time with these questions before diving into a personal branding strategy, as the specifics of your strategy will be contingent upon the answers. Take heart: anybody who has ever built a business has had to go through this as well, and there is a ton of literature out there on how to go about it. An easy read to get started would be Reid Hoffman's "The Start-Up of You", which puts this sort of business plan thinking into the context of one's own individual career advancement.

### **Step 4: Use Social Media to Brand Yourself**

The primary reason that people fail at personal branding is that they do not brand themselves in the context of a vision or a plan. That's why defining yourself (or branding yourself) in social media is Step #4, and should only take place once you have: 1) achieved self-awareness about your archetype (i.e., "knowing what you want to do when you grow up"), 2) defined a clear vision for where you want to be and what you want to be doing, and 3) understood the future market within which you will be functioning.

Using LinkedIn as an example, your social brand consists of three major components: your title or career path descriptor, your summary, and your work experience.

There are many ways to tell the story of your work experience, so don't approach that until you have settled on a career path descriptor (your top line). I use the term "career path descriptor" because most people make the mistake of using their job title in that field. But your top line belongs to you, not your employer, and it should define yourself within the context of where you want to go and where you want to be. It's the first thing that people are going to see, and it's got to have an almost magnetic attractive force that pulls the right opportunities and relationships to you. Think of it as a magnet that helps attract your future vision, or the front end of a heat seeking missile.

Your summary is simply a more elaborate version of your top line. But it should not be a mini-CV. If you are lucky enough to get your reader down to your summary, you don't want to blind them with too much verbiage. Keep it short and simple. Frame your summary as if it were a personal mission statement: who you are and where you are going. Make sure it differentiates you. And keep it written in value centric terms to the reader (i.e., "what's in it for them").

If you are able to successfully align your top line and your summary with your career visions and goals, your next step is to make sure that the arc of your work experience supports the overall narrative. You should also make sure, when describing your work history, that you speak in quantitative terms (wherever possible) and also in terms of business value (e.g., increasing revenue, reducing costs, mitigating risks).

## **Step 5: Grow Your Network**

The longer I live the more conscious I am that all success comes from relationships. Relationships are at the root of everything. Capital, Knowledge, and Relationships are all indispensable to the success of any enterprise, but give me enough good relationships and I can acquire the other two.

If you are looking for a job, you need relationships. If you are trying to hire people, you need relationships. If you are looking for business partners, you need relationships. There is no part of a successful career or business that doesn't hinge on this.

Intentional networking is Step #5, because you have to define your vision and hone your personal brand first. If you don't, you won't know whom you should be networking with, or why, and the folks in your network won't understand what your potential value is to them, or why they should be in your world. Without a clear brand, networking is just garbage in/garbage out.

The good news is that once you define your vision and your brand, you can start brainstorming all of the various types of people and relationships that you will need in order to achieve your future goals. Using LinkedIn as an example (again!), you will have no problem identifying potentially valuable contacts for your network, and if your brand is clear, and the value to your contacts is equally clear, you should have a high probability of getting these individuals to accept your invitations. What you do with this network once you acquire it is Step #6.

## Step 6: Share, Contribute, and Publish

With over 450 million users, LinkedIn is the largest publishing platform in the world. Why are most people not taking advantage of this incredibly powerful tool? Because they haven't gone through Steps 1-5. Indeed, if you've gotten this far (identifying your purpose, defining a vision/goal, analyzing your market, branding yourself accordingly, and building a useful network) why would you not want to project your identity and your value into the world on a mass scale?

Whatever you do, do not treat LinkedIn like Facebook. Your LinkedIn profile is a precision weapon: it's a heat seeking missile, not a family scrapbook. Your articles should project your professional expertise and reinforce what differentiates you in your market space. Use it wisely.

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