

DEFINING SUCCESS

Before we proceed further, let us try to establish and define a common understanding on what success is. It is important for us to have a basic agreement on this because the compilation touches quite extensively on the topic of success. Hopefully by doing this, readers would be able to understand the concepts brought forward by the various topics and can then uniquely apply it to the situations and success expectations of the individual readers.

Ultimately, what I sincerely hope is for the readers to be able to apply any of the concepts shared in their real life if they find any of it useful in their journey to success.

In order to do that, first and foremost, readers need to have a good understanding about the contents of the compilation. The biggest challenge, I feel, is when people start to lose interest when they are unable to identify the correlation between the contents of a book and their success. Most of the time it is not because the contents of the book do not cater to the reader's needs, it is because the reader's own interpretation of the meaning of success put forward by the book makes the contents seem unrelated to the reader. If we are able to address this at an early stage, we should be able to minimise the chances of this happening.

Success means different things to different people. Everyone has their own dreams, goals and objectives. This results in various definitions of the meaning and measures of success for each of us.

There are those among us who define material gains as a measure of success; a large house, a luxurious car, top brands clothing etc.; these become the targets of material-driven individuals. There are also those who define success as attaining positions of power, being a person who leads and control, being at the top of the hierarchy. There are a million other definitions; financial freedom, contributions to society, a happy family – these are all examples of the different types of success applicable to different people.

It is common for people to have more than one definition of success. A person may want to be successful in his or her career, but at the same time wants to have a happy family. The combinations are limitless as we humans are always greedy and want the best of everything. In a way, it is actually a positive trait as it drives us to improve ourselves and strive to achieve our goals in life. The challenge is for us to balance the process and ensure that we remain on the right path while we bulldoze our way through in our efforts to achieve our goals.

But then again, is this the true meaning of success? How many times have we felt empty after achieving our goals? Are we truly happy with what we have achieved? Do we make the most out of our success?

Never sacrifice happiness for the sake of achievement.

The real key to life is to happily achieve.

Robin Sharma

To me personally, success is about happiness. What is the point of achieving something but deep inside we are not happy or the people around us who matters most are not happy? Life is too short for us to just focus on

achieving goals; we will never know if we are still going to live tomorrow. True success is achieved when we are able to balance our priorities, enjoy the journey and be happy for each moment we spent living, fulfilling our internal and social goals, for us and our loved ones.

However, a majority of us are trapped in the traditional thought that success needs to be backed up by personal achievements; a child's success is measured by their performance in school i.e. the number of 'A's scored. An adult's success is usually measured by how well they do in their career, their position in the hierarchy, and how big of a salary they earn. There are many other measures that we use to define the success of a person.

My mum used to tell us how inferior she felt compared to her classmates back in school. She had been using this as an excuse to avoid her batch's gatherings for many years. She went to one of the oldest girls school in Klang Valley; the Assunta Girls School in Petaling Jaya. Her classmates consisted of many successful people, including the famous lady Governor of Central Bank of Malaysia. She, on the other hand, was a full-time housewife; she decided to become one when my brother was about 5 years old.

But is it true that my mum was less successful than any of her classmates? True, she did not make a name for herself in the corporate world, but the fact that she was a great full-time housewife and mother made her as successful as any of her classmates. At least that is what I believe and argue with her. Despite the many challenges she faced bringing up my brother and me, both of her children turned out to be not that bad – we excelled academically and made it in our careers at a rather young age. We managed to do it because of our upbringing, which was mainly my mum's doing. So she did succeed in her role after all.

My mum's story tells us this important lesson; sometimes we are too hung up on the meaning of success, especially in the eyes of other people, that we forget the successes we have achieved that are in front of our eyes – the successes that truly matter. We should not limit ourselves to such rigid definitions of success considering how subjective its meaning is to start with. We might be envious of our friend's success in his or her career, but who knows, the same friend of ours might be equally envious of us for our success in raising our child. Hence, we should celebrate each success we achieve, big or small because what may seem insignificant to us might mean the world to others.

Rather than be too focused on achievements, we should focus on bringing happiness to ourselves and the world, especially to people who matter the most. If we cannot make them happy – our parents, spouse or children – how can we ever claim to be successful? We haven't even touch on the topic of making our Creator happy, which should actually be our highest priority.

The conventional or traditional form of success obviously comes with flaws and negative side effects. A continuous streak of success may not be the best for us as there is a high likelihood that it would give birth to a dominant negative trait – arrogance. We may think that we are already too good at what we do and there is no way we're going to lose. Such attitude stops us from chasing the critical component of continuous success – improving ourselves.

***Success is a lousy teacher.
It seduces people into thinking that they can't lose.***
Bill Gates, Founder of Microsoft

Success does not bring much meaning if it is achieved through wrong means. Besides happiness, true success is about doing good things for ourselves and the society in general. It is about championing what is right and being on

the righteous path. At the same time, it is also about refraining from and forbidding things that are wrong. Fundamentally, happiness is achieved when these two conditions are met as it brings peace and order, and creates an ideal environment for us to live in – the underlying reason why it is a fundamental and important concept in Islam.

And let there be [arising] from you a nation inviting to [all that is] good, enjoining what is right and forbidding what is wrong, and those will be the successful.

Ali Imran 3: 104

Ultimately, for Muslims, the true meaning of success is our return to Allah and the righteous path that He has set for us and for us to always try to be on track. Success to Muslims does not revolve around worldly achievements but of the hereafter. Success is determined by how we would stand in front of our Creator – in a manner that pleases or displeases Him. It all depends on what we invest in during our lifetime in this world.

But as for one who had repented, believed, and done righteousness, it is promised by Allah that he will be among the successful.

Al Qasas 28: 67

In summary, it can be said that success consists of three core components: being happy, on the righteous path in this world as well as in the hereafter. This is the basic understanding of success that is used throughout this compilation.