



Why We Need a Future-Proof Definition of Career Success

The portrayal of a successful career goes something like the following scenario. You attend a good school. You graduate and start working at a good company. Then you quickly move up the career ladder, become a manager and then director of a sizable business. You make a good salary. If you are lucky, you run even larger businesses—or become a senior executive, managing director, or CEO. And then you plateau around age 60, retiring sometime in your 60s. You accumulate some saving and assets over the years. You plan what you do after retirement, or plan to do nothing, but enjoy your savings until the lights go down.

In a nutshell, this scenario is what we sell as the definition of a successful career. It sounds pretty good, attractive, and desirable. Along the way, many people do whatever it takes to follow this blueprint, and make this outcome happen for themselves.

The Only Thing That Stays the Same Is Change

But hold on. Things have changed. Now we need a new (actually not so new, but redefined and fresher) blueprint

that is more promising and potentially more fulfilling with a view of the future.

Here is the new blueprint.

You educate yourself without a horizon in sight, no matter the school from which you have graduated. You never stop learning—not for a minute. You start working for yourself from the get go, even if you work for a company. You don't rush. You don't even concern yourself about quickly moving up the career ladder. In fact, you move carefully and strategically—but surely—learning about things deeply and comprehensively along the way. You don't manage anything or anyone; instead, you master your own knowledge and skills. You make your own salary even you work for another company, by making sure that you clearly contribute to the bottom line. You decide that number, as well as the benefits you wish to have.

You don't wait for your luck. You plan for opportunities. You build very strong relationships with the good people you work with, especially clients. You make yourself indispensable only for your clients, and no one else. You

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ensure that, as long as you live, you have something valuable to say and contribute to your community, society, industry, clients, colleagues, and partners.

The Possibilities Are Endless

The bottom line is simple: Age has become very relative. Consequently, be sure that no one tells you otherwise, as long as everyone values what you say or contribute. Consider these role models: At age 94, Charles Aznavour still sang and wrote songs. At age 89, Warren Buffet still invests in companies. At age 88, Rupert Murdoch still runs his media empire. At age 88, Coco Chanel was still working. At age 86, Ruth Bader Ginsburg still sits as a justice of the US Supreme Court.

So, if you decide to follow in their footsteps, it is very possible. If you want to admire something in another person's career success, admire their commitment to contribute. This true definition of career success is what we need to teach to aspiring talent and generations to come. We will all live longer, as long as we don't become unlucky by nature.

The only time you stop is when the lights go down.

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