How do you become successful in your chosen career? Mike Higgins outlines the steps you can take to develop your confidence and improve your performance

GROW YOUR OWN SUCCESS

Each person’s career is an individual journey. The decisions you have made since you were young about what to study, which job to go into and how you perform your role are highly idiosyncratic. However, one of the best ways of learning about success is to copy others. Watch how a successful person performs a task and then do what they do.

Often, though, it is the more subtle things that get copied that are more interesting. For example, it can be instructive to see how a person supports someone going through a difficult time, or the way they calm an angry patient.

To learn how to be successful, try the following:

› Identify a person who will be your role model. It should be someone you admire, doing things you want to learn from. Spend some time with them possibly in a shadowing exercise, read their writing or see them speak. If you could borrow a skill from them, what would it be?

› Develop confidence in what you do. People often talk about confidence as a light that is either on or off, you either have it or you do not. I see confidence more as a leaky bucket. You undertake a project that has a degree of success and this pours a cup of water into the leaky bucket. At the same time, water or confidence is slowly draining away. To maintain confidence, continue to do things you are good at. For example, speaking in public may be difficult when you first do it, but the more exposure you get to groups, the easier it becomes. This can give you confidence in other areas. What activities make you feel more confident? How can you arrange to do these activities regularly?

› Obtain feedback. This can be tough to take in sometimes. At its best, feedback will focus on what you could do differently for a better outcome. At its worst, it can feel as though you are being criticised, which may leave you deflated and possibly demotivated. If you can, separate the ‘things I can do differently next time’ from the emotion that accompanies it. Write the required changes down. The emotion is likely to fade but you can revisit your notes to remind you of the areas that need improvement. But remember, you can acknowledge but not necessarily agree with feedback.

› Success is often attributed to a single person – the Olympic athlete or the bestselling author. Yet there is usually an extended team supporting this person, acting as the springboard for their success. Think about your own career: who plays the supporting roles, enabling you to succeed? Are there areas where you feel help is lacking? Who could you invite to be part of your support crew?

› Finally, practise resilience. Successful people are not necessarily the brightest or the best, but they will be good at taking risks, trying new ventures and sometimes failing. Their ability to learn from failure and move on to the next challenge may be what marks them out for success NS

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RESOURCES

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