



Four Keys to the Science of Success



Here's how to create your own blueprint for success.

By Michelle LaBrosse

Every January, as we look ahead to the new year, we think about our success – both personal and professional. We write down our resolutions, but what many of us fail to do is break down those resolutions and think about how we're going to make them happen.

This “how” is what's called the science of success. It's the connective tissue that begins with vision and ends with gratitude. Here are the four keys to the science of success that you can use both at work and at home:

Vision. If you don't know what success looks like, how will you get there? It sounds simple, but most people have a hard time articulating what success looks like to them.

Take a sheet of paper and answer the question for yourself: What is success for you? Does it mean working less hours and having more time for your family? Does it mean working smarter and being more effective? Does it mean going back to school for another degree or more training?

Think of your vision as your charter. It's where you want to go. It's the view from the top of the mountain. Now, let's focus on getting there.

Learning. If you look at successful people, you'll notice one consistent theme: a love of learning. People who make it to the top take great joy in learning all the way up to the summit. They'll tell you they learn more from the failures and

that it's usually a failure that opens the window to an opportunity. Sounds curious, but if you think about it, the difference is perspective: having a viewpoint based on learning. If every stone in the path up the mountain is a chance to learn something, then the journey is a rich experience.

Project Management. You have a vision with a perspective based on continuous learning. Now, the question is: how to be effective? How do you translate what you learn so it helps you get where you're going? The answer is project management — the art of getting things done.

Many people see project management as only one department's world. That's too limited a view. Project management is for everyone. After all, what is life but a series of projects? If we're living and breathing, then we're surrounded by projects. In essence, project management consists of removing barriers to speed, such as poor time management, chaotic work environments, and bureaucratic time-wasters. (For details, see “How to Get It Done,” *Nonprofit World*, Vol. 25, No. 6, www.snpo.org).

Project management gives us the knowledge and skills to be more effective. It gives us the systems to marry the vision and learning and link it all together to get results.

Gratitude. You can't turn around without seeing a book about relationship building. The “R” word is the great elixir for success. But let's take it one step further. We all have relationships of varying success, but how many of us focus on showing gratitude to others?

This isn't new-age mumbo-jumbo. It's recognizing and appealing to the most basic human emotional need: to be recognized, to be thanked, to matter to the person next to us.

Consider cultivating an attitude of gratitude in your organization by encouraging people to thank their coworkers every month with gratitude points. An attitude of gratitude is infectious. It lets people feel good both by giving and receiving.

There's a reason people thank others in acceptance speeches: They're grateful for the people, ideas, and energy that helped move them forward. They know that a major factor of their success has been gratitude.

The View from the Top. So, let's look at where we've been: You have your vision and you know where you're going. You're embracing life with a learning perspective where you see every obstacle as an opportunity. You're going to flex your project management muscle to get where you're going faster and better. Along the way, you'll take time to thank others and help other people on their journey.

You're ready to climb. Let's go! Here's to a great 2009. ■

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