



The Main Ingredient

Is there one attribute that will make you successful? And if so, how do you develop it?

By Robert Wilson

Think about people you know who are successful. What is it that makes them big achievers? What traits do you associate with them?

When I ask people this question, I frequently hear the following ingredients: courage, perseverance, enthusiasm, discipline, confidence, decisiveness, self-reliance, responsibility, focus, ambition, and optimism.

All of these are certainly traits of successful people, but which is the overriding characteristic? Which one is the main ingredient for success?

None of the above!

The one ingredient that makes the cake is simply your belief that you will succeed. It's called self-efficacy. Your belief in your ability to achieve what you seek is the biggest part of actually getting there. The best part is that self-efficacy is a trait that can be acquired at any age.

We acquire self-efficacy in four ways. The first is cumulative. With each success, we add a new layer of confidence in ourselves.

The second way is through observation. When we see someone simi-

Doubt is a silent killer.

lar to ourselves succeed, we realize that we can too.

The third way is controlled by our attitude. A positive attitude enhances our belief in our abilities.

The fourth way is from the encouragement of others who believe in us. This is where you as an effective manager can help people succeed. Tell them that you believe they can meet their goals and you'll help them believe it too.

What's the biggest enemy of self-efficacy? Doubt. We transmit feelings of doubt to others through subtleties in our body language, facial expression, and voice. Worse than that, we communicate it to ourselves, and it seeps into our performance. Doubt is the de-motivator and all too often prevents us from even trying.

We all suffer doubt occasionally, and its cure is always the same: proof. Proof that we are indeed talented enough to do what we set out to do. A proof doesn't need to be big to eliminate doubt. A series of little proofs can be just as effective.

I keep a journal—a log—of accomplishments—both small and large, because they all add up to reasons

for believing in my abilities. It's especially important to log the little ones, because they're so easy to forget or overlook, and yet they carry tremendous weight when it comes to giving ourselves confidence.

Sometimes proof comes to us by comparing ourselves to others. Simply ask yourself, "Out of all the people who have ever lived, how many have attained what I want?" The sheer numbers alone will often be all the proof you need.

When all else fails, fall back on faith. Some of the most successful people in the world had absolutely no proof that they could achieve their dreams. All they had was a strong desire and a belief in themselves. As Martin Luther King, Jr., once said, "Take the first step in faith. You don't have to see the whole staircase, just take the first step." ■

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Nonprofit World • Volume 29, Number 6, November/December 2011. Published by the Society for Nonprofit Organizations P.O. Box 510354, Livonia, Michigan 48151 734-451-3582 • www.snpo.org

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