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**AMY VETTER**

## Defining Personal Success

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**Amy Vetter, CPA** • Nov. 12, 2018

What does success mean to you? Do you have a picture-perfect vision of what that success will look like? Have you talked about your goals with others?

More often than not, our goals are something tangible. At one point in my life, making partner in my firm was the ultimate goal — the epitome of success I'd been working toward my entire life. However; I found throughout my career, I have pivoted into new areas that inspire me, while not walking away from the expertise I have gained along the way.

Given that we spend a large portion of our lives dealing with numbers, it can be hard to break away from the idea that our goals in life don't have to be based on metrics, values, and numbers. Instead, we can start thinking about success more holistically, stepping back from the day to day and imagining what that looks like for ourselves.

**Big Think** discusses Arianna Huffington's ideas on redefining what it means to be successful. "The foundation of her Thrive philosophy is that success is measured in so much more than the acquisition of money and power," they note. Indeed, Huffington rates well-being, wisdom, wonder, and giving among the traits by which we should measure success.

I'd add that aligning with your personal purpose, fulfilling your goals, and measuring how well you influence and collaborate with others are equally important measures of authentic success.

## **There's no one way to be successful**

If you've ever had the feeling that no matter how "successful" you become, you don't feel personally fulfilled, it's important to reexamine that idea of success. Odds are, you've been measuring success based on some arbitrary marker—a title, an income level, a net worth, etc.—instead of defining success in terms of what's actually meaningful for you.

The disconnect between the way we're told to think about success and what provides with authentic fulfilment is why even people who appear to be on top of the world can suffer from a lack of happiness. In fact, [studies have shown](#) that CEOs are roughly twice as likely to suffer from depression as the average American. When even the people who are extremely successful by any traditional metric aren't happy in their careers, that's a sure sign that our idea of success is broken.

## **Defining your own success**

To be able to feel confident in your success, you need to first develop an idea of what that looks like. To do this, I recommend asking yourself three very important questions.

**What's my personal purpose?** Realizing your personal purpose is the first step to reaching authentic success, though you'll need to seriously reflect before you come up with an answer. Without purpose, you'll be at the mercy of another person's goal, and you won't feel fulfilled no matter how much financial success or power you attain through your work. To take this idea to the next level, figure out what you're doing today to become aligned with that purpose. If you sense a misalignment, more time and energy needs to be allocated toward your personal goals.

**Do I have a positive influence on others?** Community is everything. Success without connection is difficult to measure and sustain. Having a positive impact on others with your work is vital to feeling authentic success. You have the capacity to teach and support others in their growth, which makes your success all the sweeter. Very few of us are capable of going it totally alone. Luckily, we don't have to.

**Could I become a better collaborator?** Making your personal purpose a larger part of your everyday life is one thing. When you can reach your goals while also working

alongside people with knowledge, talents, and skills outside your wheelhouse, it contributes to your personal and professional growth as well. Be honest with yourself about your weaknesses. That way, you can bring people on that allow you to focus on your strengths, which is a great benefit to you and your business. If you're the average of the people closest to you, find success by surrounding yourself with people who build you up and enhance your creative energy.

## **Now it's your turn**

I challenge you to question the status quo and the traditional ideas of success. If you've reached a point in your career where you finally feel you've "made it," how do you describe it? What are the key indicators? If you've not taken into account your personal purpose, your influence, and your ability to collaborate with others, it could be time to start questioning what authentic success looks like for your unique personal fulfillment and begin the process today. We can provide ourselves these moments of reflection — we don't need someone to do this for us. It's up to us to schedule time to check in with ourselves and ensure we are staying on track.

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