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# 15 Personality Traits of the Most Successful People

There's no single formula for success but these traits are the core DNA of every successful person.



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We all have our own definition of success. For many of us it's measured primarily in terms of money and wealth, but there are clearly other important aspects of success. Some people value the freedom to spend their time as they want, others value the ability to help those in need. Yet, whatever the metric, there are a core set of personality traits that are common to all successful people.

I've seen these traits first-hand in a diverse set of successful people I've worked with and known over the years, from billionaires to budding entrepreneurs. Each one was very different and yet they all shared much of the same DNA when it came to the traits that made them successful. Take a look and see how many of these are reflected in your own behaviors. I'd venture a guess it's more than just a few. By the way my favorite is #15. When I think of the greatest success stories, from Disney, to Oprah, to Jobs it is this trait that most allowed them to overcome the past and build the future.

1. **A Need to Compete**--I've yet to meet a successful person who does not have a

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deeply rooted competitive streak. Being successful is fundamentally about needing to win; the reasons vary, but the determination doesn't. Successful people obsess over creative ways to get a leg up on their competition. And they hate losing with an abiding passion. People often confuse this with work ethic. But working hard isn't the objective. It's the competitive drive to do more than anyone else in pursuit of your dream that paves the pathway to success.

2. **The Capacity to Let go**--There is an important corollary to #1 above. I don't care how successful you are, holding onto the past or your latest mistake will only serve to slow you down. Successful people are not anchored by the past. They learn from it--fast--and move on to a bigger challenge.
3. **A Passion for Improvement**--Successful people are perpetually trying to improve themselves. They are their worst critics--never satisfied; always striving to be better. The person they most need to best is themselves.
4. **Obsessive Attention to Detail**--Yeah, this one drives everyone who surrounds a successful person crazy. But it also drives excellence. This seems to fly in the face of the popular mantra, "Don't sweat the small stuff," but most successful people got there by doing just that when they were the ones doing the small stuff.
5. **Keeping an Inventory of Accomplishment**--Successful people keep track of their achievements, not because they necessarily want to put them on display, although many do, but because it reminds them, and those around them, of how overcoming the impossible is often just a matter of dogged perseverance.
6. **Compulsively Working their Network**--One of the most consistently common traits of successful people is their ability to relentlessly work their network. All success is built on a network of human connections that need to be nurtured and reinforced.
7. **Rewarding Themselves**--When you're running at full throttle you need to take time to take care of yourself. Emotionally and physically. That may be as simple as a short meditation or a full-on workout, a hobby that indulges you, a philanthropic contribution, or a spontaneous getaway. Whatever it is, the purpose is to avoid burnout, stay centered, and remind yourself of why you're making the sacrifices you're making.
8. **Being Grateful**--I recall doing a series of interviews with space shuttle astronauts, incredibly successful people who had every right to be arrogant, and yet they were the most incredibly grateful people I'd ever met. They realized how fortunate they were to be where they were, and weren't shy about sharing it.
9. **Not Wavering in a Crisis**--One of the greatest determinants of success is the ability to keep your head in a firestorm. Successful people do not lose their sense of purpose or direction in a crisis, and by doing so create a reliable compass setting for those around them.
10. **Striving for Authenticity**--It's nearly impossible to achieve any degree of success without being trustworthy. For successful people being authentic means that they are clear in expressing their opinions and consistently truthful and transparent. You don't have to agree with them but you'll never be confused about where they stand.

11. **Taking Responsibility**--Inevitably even the most brilliant successes will falter. Owning the failure is a trait that not only engenders trust but also demonstrates to others that failure is not something to be hidden or passed on to the next person in line.
12. **Advocating for Their Customers**--Even the most hard-nosed and callous CEOs become models of charm and deference when they are in front of their customers. They realize that the only reason they are where they are is because of the loyalty of their customers.
13. **Discounting the Praise of Others**--Successful people find that their jokes get funnier and the number of people who agree with them rises exponentially. I've sat in conference rooms with CEOs and EVPs of F500 companies who are treated like deities. Successful people do not let it get to their head. They realize that agreement does not constitute infallibility.
14. **A Desire to Give Back**--One of the most rewarding things about achieving any degree of success is the opportunity to encourage and motivate others. Successful people realize that they have the power to help others increase their confidence in themselves. In doing so they create life-long loyalty that comes back many times over. Personally, nothing has amazed me as much and been as fulfilling as the support I've received from colleagues I've helped find their own success.
15. **Refusing to be Defined by Their Failures**--Nobody is 100% successful. Success is a net positive outcome that always includes an abundance of failure, experimentation, and learning. Scientists tell us that the universe itself exists only because there was an incredibly slight margin of matter over antimatter, amazingly just one particle per billion; it took a lot of destruction to create what's left. If you fear failure, then, by definition, you are avoiding success. Get over it; the universe leans towards success!

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