

SIMON ON SUCCESS

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Simon On Success

Simon says, "Let's get a couple of things out in the open so you can get them behind you. Yes, it is possible to strike it rich, to have an inspiration for an invention making you famous while it makes your fortune, and maybe even to have a sudden insight leading you to the right end of the rainbow, pot of gold and all."

Sure, some lucky ducks were born with silver spoons in their mouths. In life's great poker game, some people get better cards than others. It is enough to make you just sit down and cry.

Before you drown in your tears, though, remember your good friend Simon did say instant success is possible, if all you want is money, status, or a free ride. The odds are not in your favor but it might happen. Hanging your future on it is a bit risky; but a possibility is still a possibility. If instead, you would rather hang your future on something a little more substantial, Simon has a suggestion for your thoughtful consideration:

- Cultivate your success.

"Give me more credit than that, Simon," you say. "Like you, I didn't just come into town on a load of logs. I've been there too. I know success isn't going to just drop into my lap out of the blue. I have to work for it and am certainly willing to do whatever it takes; but where do I start? How do I cultivate success?"

Simon says, "Your success is just an attitude away."

As with most of life's important adventures, the door to your success potential unlocks with attitude, attitude, attitude; and you hold the key. Unlocking your unlimited potential rests on your fully committing to your success. For you, anything less than success is unacceptable. Coming close, a good try, nearly succeeding, and other versions of not quite making the grade just do not do. Others may be satisfied with having played a good game; but your vision for yourself does not include second place.

How do you develop the success attitude? You start by understanding if you do not expect to succeed, you are likely right. Successful people make it look easy but appearances can be very misleading. Your success is the most challenging work you ever have the opportunity to do. If you do not believe you are up to the challenge, it is all too easy to fail. What's more, you quickly see failing is far easier than succeeding. To succeed, you not only believe you have what it takes to succeed, you believe you are up to the challenge. For you, success is not merely a possibility, it is inevitable.

Your journey to success does not come with a guarantee. There certainly are pitfalls and hazards along the way. You know the potential to succeed is permanently bound to the possibility of failure. Despite the risk, you are committed to your success, keep your focus on the rewards of succeeding, know anything else is a precursor to personal disaster.

No, Simon is definitely not suggesting you ignore the risks or discount the danger. What's more, your personal success coach certainly knows it is safer for you to do only what you are supposed to do, follow the rules, and trust the world will reward you. Others depend on you to do what they want done; and you are dependent on them for everything. If this fits your vision for yourself, it may turn out just fine, assuming you hitched your horse to the right wagon. If instead, you do not see yourself spending your life pulling someone else's wagon, it is time for a new vision for your future, one putting who you are and who you will become on the same success path.

Do you see yourself on the success path? If so, you have the attitude it takes to succeed. You imagine yourself succeeding; you know you will succeed. It is the only alternative worthy of your valuable time and personal interest.

Simon says, "It is never too late for you to succeed or too soon to fail."

If you think you are too late, too old, too tired, or too busy to succeed, you are only making excuses, blowing smoke, playing mind games with yourself. I gave it my best effort and don't have any more to give," does not cut it either. That is just one more version of POOR ME and lets you know it is time for a serious attitude adjustment. You still have plenty of time to succeed but do not have any time left to fail. The only thing in your way is you. Get your get-up-and-go up and going today.

- It is not too late to succeed but is far too soon to quit.

Along your path to success, you will find three types of people. Which group you join is up to you.

- People who succeed
- People who watch others succeed
- People who pretend success does not matter

Your choice is clear-cut. Unless you commit to joining the people who succeed, you fully qualify for one of the other two groups. It does not matter whether you want to join the group; you are a member. The only thing to decide is whether you want to pretend success does not matter. Whatever your decision;

- You have plenty of time to succeed.
- Watching others succeed is a waste of time.
- Pretending success does not matter takes forever.

Simon says, "Resources are internal; opportunities are external."

At a recent success seminar, one of the world's most renowned success gurus illustrated success by telling a story about a young man who made it big. The point was he took a chance on himself: certainly an important success principle. This enterprising entrepreneur invested \$120,000 to manufacture and market an invention he came up with in college. The specifics are not important but a couple of points are. The cash was "part" of a gift he received from his uncle. The gift was given to him when he received his business degree from Harvard. Now isn't that just dandy? If you have a business degree from Harvard and a rich uncle, you can make it big. If your uncle is rich enough, you may not even need the degree.

It is easy to hear this story and miss the most important point. The young man's primary resources, the genesis of his invention, are internal. A degree from Harvard and his uncle's gift were simply opportunities to be capitalized on. If these external opportunities were taken away, the potential of his internal resources would in no way be diminished. The power of his mind, his imagination, his creativity, his persistence would all still be there for him.

Like the young entrepreneur, you can only start from where you are with what you have. Yes, a rich uncle and a degree from Harvard would come in handy; and if you happen to have either, do not miss the opportunity they afford to you. Whether you have such convenient opportunities or not, though, do not confuse your external opportunities with your internal resources.

- Everything you need to succeed is already between your ears.

If you do not succeed, the most likely reason is you do not fully appreciate the power of your mind, the potential of the internal resources you already have. That truth aside, simply valuing your gifts is not enough. Your internal resources, no matter how impressive, only lead to success when they are carefully cultivated and nurtured until they develop into services the world needs, wants, or would want if they were available.

You do not succeed just because you are smart, creative, talented, good-hearted, or just because you have a nice personality, have a positive attitude, or get along well with everyone. You succeed because you are able to convert your internal resources into services the world wants more of than it already has. The simple conclusion is obvious but too often overlooked.

You only succeed with those services you develop through expanding and enhancing your internal resources.

Inventory your internal resources and then formulate a plan to expand and enhance them. At the same time, be clear about the services you can offer and those you want to offer as your internal resources expand and get stronger. You are building a services array other people can take advantage of, offered as an opportunity for others to succeed. Once your services line is in-place and available to other people, you become an important link in the chain of success.

- You link into the services of others to expand and enhance your internal resources in ways enabling you to offer services other people link with to expand and enhance their internal resources to offer services still other people link to. . . .

Carefully cultivate your internal resources and your unique service line. They are your most valuable assets.

Be clear about why anyone might care about the services you offer. When all is said and done, they only care to the extent they believe your services significantly contribute to their personal success chain and are not more readily available to them elsewhere.

You are self-employed, the President and CEO of your personal success business, your own Director of Marketing, the world's best authority on your services. Your success is riding on how well you;

- Appreciate and cultivate your internal resources,
- Effectively link to those external opportunities available to you,
- Develop a quality services line people need/want to link with,
- Market your services to the world,
- Add to the chain of success for other people.

Simon says, "Your success depends on what you can do, not on what you cannot do."

What you cannot do may be on your list of things you want to be able to do one day; but your services line is limited to what you can already do today. You may be a good singer, a serious student of eighteenth century philosophy, a skilled whittler, an expert on baseball statistics, a competent poker player, and still not be a link in the success chains of others. What you can do does not materially add to their success and thus, does not affect yours.

You cannot and should not spend every waking moment succeeding. You need other ways to express yourself and to get away from the success game. If you do not have other interests, the absence of fullness and richness in your life sooner or later lead to your being obsessed with success. Should that happen, certain failure is just around the corner. No one can pull the success wagon 24-hours a day forever.

Do what you can do today to succeed. The danger is likely not in becoming obsessed with success. It is in letting days and weeks pass without doing your success work, without expanding and enhancing your internal resources, without focusing on improving your services line, without marketing your services to the world. Sometimes it is not easy to identify success work you can do right now; but,

- There is always something you can do.
- You always have success options and opportunities.

The critical question is not whether there is success work available to you. It is, "What am I doing right now to succeed?" If you ask yourself this question once a day, every day, and if the answer is, "Whatever I can do right now to succeed," your success is inevitable.

Simon says, "The only appropriate measure of your success is your success."

Listen in on a conversation Simon is having with a friend.

S Hey, how are things? What have you been up to?

F Oh, not much. I'm retired.

S Wow! I can't believe you are retired. You have my most sincere condolences.

F No, you have it all wrong. I am very happy now I am retired.

S Well, okay. So what's happening? What are you up to?

F I'm not really up to anything. There is plenty to occupy my time. I am enjoying doing what I want to do for a change.

S Great! Good for you. Tell me about what you want to do.

F Well, nothing special. I like to be spontaneous. I don't want to be tied down with

plans. There is always enough to keep me busy.

S I see. You are into busy work.

F I wouldn't put it quite like that.

There you go. The only problem with not having anything to do right now is if you do not take charge of your success, the busy work may just last forever. What it took for you to succeed is not the same as it takes to be successful. His friend most assuredly succeeded in the past but shows no signs of being successful as time goes on. He decided to rest on his success; and that is a shame, given what he could have potentially contributed to the success chains of other people, e. g., children or young adults who aspire to be where he has been, the work of his church or the well-being of his neighbors.

A similar track is followed by people who believe the good job they did yesterday is still a good job today, the services line they have today serves their success tomorrow. They do not bother themselves with expanding and enhancing their internal resources, improving their services line, or marketing their services to the world. They have it made, they think. They are also the people who are confused and shocked when their services are no longer needed, not wanted anymore, when they are dropped out of the success game as excess baggage not contributing to anyone's success chain. Life can sure be unfair at times, can't it?

Once you have succeeded, more of the same does not make you more successful. There is a small, new twist here. Suppose your primary service is resolving disputes. It does not matter whether your special expertise is with disputes between labor and management, your children, government agencies and private corporations, or race horses and their jockeys. You are an expert. People need your services and some even want them.

Further suppose you believe you will be more successful if you provide more of these services. You have two choices: you can provide more dispute resolution to the same people or find others who need or want the same service. Either way, you do more of the same, believing more is better, more makes you more successful.

The first approach means you provide more service to the same people, whether they need it or not. The second approach means you are serving a broader market with yesterday's skills, yesterday's knowledge, yesterday's expertise. Whether you provide too much to too few or outdated services to many, you are not succeeding. You may continue to be successful for a while; but eventually, people catch on. You may think the person you are serving today is not the sharpest knife on the rack; but you inevitably find yourself cut off at the knees one day, wondering what happened, without a clue about when it happened or why.

Simon says, "Success is reaching goals changing your life."

Your success is too important to accommodate anything else. Most everyone has smaller goals and they even reach them most of the time. For them, that is enough. Being able to pay the bills, having an adequate place to live, driving a dependable car, holding down a good job, being able to provide for their children, and perhaps a yearly vacation is about all they expect of themselves and is about all they ever have.

Limiting themselves to such timid goals works for them and for others who are not totally and unequivocally committed to success; but for you and the rest of the *creme de la creme* who will never be satisfied with mediocrity, such mundane goals are hardly worthy of being called goals. They are simply part of taking care of business while you get on with taking care of your success. You expect to use your internal resources, your potential to develop a services line taking you into realms most people can but dream about, if they are even aware of the possibility.

"But Simon," you ask, "Where are these realms, how will I have changed when I get there?" Simon can be your coach but cannot tell you either where or what those realms are for you. They are your life-changing goals, not Simon's; but there are a few truths pointing you in the right direction.

- You cannot reach goals you do not have.
- You cannot reach someone else's goals.
- Plan on where you are going before you plan on how to get there.

Goal setting starts with understanding you cannot succeed without them. Not having success goals is like jumping off a thousand foot cliff into a raging river without knowing being able to fly is sometimes more important than being able to swim. You are at a point in your life where you have never been before and your success lies ahead of you. For most people, there is no real issue in this. Their plan is to simply keep doing more of what they have been doing and then retire. For you, though, there is much more at stake.

Your interest goes far beyond merely moving into your future without too many problems or unforeseen circumstances. You expect to have a lot of both. You thrive on problems; and if there are not a few big ones on your plate today, you are losing focus. The challenge of expanding and enhancing your internal resources and improving your services line is always there, complete with problems to solve and opportunities to exploit. You are always moving into new realms and cannot anticipate everything. There are always unforeseen circumstances requiring all of your concentration and imagination. For you, big problems and new territory are integral to who you are, to what you do.

You just assume the thousand foot cliff is out there somewhere and you have to jump off

of it sooner or later; and jump off of it you do. In the meantime, you make sure you know how to swim and how to fly when the opportunity to jump presents itself to you.

What are your success goals? Nine out of ten people's response is, "To be rich, to have a million dollars." Well, okay. That would certainly change your life, assuming you do not already have a million or two laying around; and if that is your success goal, what have you done today to get yourself further down the million dollar track?

While you are contemplating your next million dollars, take time to consider other possibilities. For you, being a totally competent parent, leading a winning team, being sure your community has the highest quality schools, eliminating hunger, or writing the next best-selling novel may be more important. How you define success is up to you. They are your success goals, not someone else's. Your challenge is to;

- Develop a range of success goals, not a single win/lose success goal,
- Set success goals exceeding your reach but not your vision,
- Be clear about what success is for you, how your life is changed when you succeed,
- Be clear about what you need to do and what you do to succeed,
- Be persistent and consistent in your pursuit of your success.

Simon has some tips you may find helpful. Wherever success lies for you:

- | | |
|---------------------------|----------------------------|
| •Make something bigger | •Make it more affordable |
| •Enhance its function | •Make it more appealing |
| •Increase its flexibility | •Make it more convenient |
| •Make it more efficient | •Develop a substitute |
| •Make it more distinctive | •Do it faster |
| •Make it work differently | •Combine it with something |
| •Make it more effective | •Arrange it differently |

Simon says "Perspiration is only preparation for your success." This is a fact of success life easier to accept in principle than in practice. The problem is just because you are succeeding does not mean you are enjoying the trip.

Most people associate success with "the good life" or with "having it made." For them, people who are successful only work when they want to work; and when they do work, they only do those things they like to do. The rest of the time, which is most of the time, they do mostly whatever they want to do, whenever they want to do it. The principle is being successful makes it possible to be self-indulgent.

Success is about as far from self-indulgence as winning the Indianapolis 500 is from liking to drive. It helps to enjoy a lot of the thousand things you do to succeed; but it is very unlikely you enjoy them all and equally unlikely you enjoy even things you do like all of the time. Success is not about having fun; it is about succeeding. In the long run, this may be the single most important factor separating you from people who only dream about success.

The dreamers believe enjoying what they do is truly important. You understand your success is the only thing that matters. The ironic twist is you are having a lot more fun succeeding than the dreamers are having complaining about what they have to do in order to have time to do what they like to do. You are succeeding and by any measure, success is a lot more fun than the alternatives.

There are two additional elements separating you from the dreamers. First, they save their personal best for those things they think really matter. Second, they adjust their level of effort to how important they think something is. The result is most of what they do does not reflect their best work. It is more enjoyable or at least not as unpleasant for them that way.

For you, though, a different standard operates. Your self-discipline rules are:

- "If what I am doing does not warrant my personal best, I am probably doing the wrong thing."
- "I do whatever I am doing as if it were the most important thing I have ever done."

You have likely heard the story about the self-made-man.

"I am a self-made-man."

"It does look like after all these years you would have gotten better at it. The next time, you may want to consider out-sourcing the job."

Since you cannot out-source your success, everything you do matters, nothing you do is unimportant. You are working for you; nothing but your best effort will ever do. Your success deserves no less than your best, the first time, on time, every time, with everything, no exceptions, no excuses.

Simon says, "Success is never absolute."

Your success is a function of the people who have helped you succeed and, in turn, of the people you help succeed. It works like this.

- Successful people have developed services lines you link into to expand and enrich your internal resources. Call those opportunities you link to **input (I)**.
- You in turn mix the input with your internal resources to develop your services line. Call that **through-put (T)**.
- Your services line, in turn, is success input for others. Call that **output (O)**.

Think of the input as the raw materials for your success business. The through-put is what you add to the value of the input. If the input plus the through-put does not exceed the value of the input, then you are not adding any value.

For example, if you spend your life doing only what you learned how to do in school, you are not adding any value. You are simply taking the input and using it, as is. If you do most everything exactly the same way you did it last year, you are not adding any value. If you are only teaching your children the same things you were taught, you are not adding any value.

Here is the success equation, the formula letting you know whether you are succeeding.

$$\bullet \text{Success} = \mathbf{O} - (\mathbf{I} + \mathbf{T})$$

Your success is relative to the opportunities you have had and to how much you have added to those opportunities. Consider these three people and ask yourself who is the most successful, using the success equation.

- A young woman drops out of school to care for her disabled father. By the time she is twenty-years-old, she has two children and the continuing responsibility for her father. She attends classes at the community college and gets a secretarial job. She now cares for her father, is taking care of her children, does work with her church, and spends most days counting her pennies and feeling exhausted.
- A young woman from a working-class family finishes college, using scholarships and part-time work to finance her education. After college, she works as a social worker and pursues her interest in becoming a writer. Although she has not had a book published yet, she works on it daily. For now, she is still living with her parents to save money and focuses her energy on women's issues through her writing.

- A third young woman from a well-to-do family graduates from a prestigious law school and is developing a good practice with a large law firm. Her plan is to make as much money as she can so she can continue living the good life and financially support and help with programs for abused children.

Apply the success equation to each woman. Who is the most successful? Who has added the most value to the opportunities she has had?

Success is not a matter of where you are or how much you have. It is a matter of how far you have come and how far you plan to go, how much your output exceeds the value of the input. The extent of your success is only limited by how much you will add to the opportunities available to you, how much your success business adds to the success of other people.

As you evaluate the balance sheet for your success business, keep in mind no one is interested in what you cannot or will not do for them. They are interested only in what you will do to add to their success. Your success business must add to its raw materials in ways increasing the value of the output for other people. It is not a matter of what you think is important. What actually makes a positive difference for other people is the only valid measure of your success; so find ways to tell people yes, ways to increase their success. This is the touch point, the place where you succeed together.

Simon says, "You can help people succeed but you cannot prevent their failure."

Now that you are familiar with the success equation, Simon's words are particularly cogent. Whether your concern is for your teenager, your significant other, someone you supervise, your best customer, a friend, or refugees in a third-world country, their success is not and cannot be your responsibility.

You can and do provide all the opportunities you can, the best output of which you are capable. You assure they have the best raw materials available as input to their individual success businesses. That input includes your good-will, your encouragement, your patience, your persistence. They have the finest opportunities you are able to put out there for them. How they use those opportunities to expand and enrich their internal resources is a product of their attitudes, their determination, their innate abilities, their commitment to success, their capacity to capitalize on the opportunities at hand. It is somewhat like the old poem:

You can lead a horse to water,

But you can't make it drink;

You can lead a fool to knowledge,

But you can't make him think.

You can do what you can do; but you cannot make it happen. No one can operate your success business for you; and you cannot do it for anyone else, no matter how much you at times may wish you could.

- Success is always personal.

As you work to provide opportunities for other people to succeed, do not make promises you cannot keep but do keep the promises you make.

- You cannot promise to do whatever it takes for people to succeed. You can promise to provide those opportunities you can provide to facilitate their success.
- You cannot promise to hang-in-there, giving it your best effort forever. You can promise to stick with it so long as they are giving it their best effort.
- You cannot promise you will keep trying whether they make progress or not. You can promise to keep working with them until they succeed or it becomes clear to you they either will not or cannot succeed.
- You cannot promise to do someone else's success work. You can promise to help them succeed.

Although most people understand and accept these facts of success life, some do not. They try to make their success your responsibility and their lack of success your fault. They do not see any other explanations when they do not succeed. It does not fit into their view of things that success is a day-by-day process and they are always fully in-charge of their success. They cannot delegate it to you or to anyone else; and they cannot look to you or to anyone else as the source of their lack of progress, although they still try to make someone else their scapegoat. For you, though, the rules are simple:

- Do not take on other people's success problems as if they were yours.
- Do not expect anyone else to take on your success problems as if they were theirs.
- Your lack of success is never someone else's fault.

Simon says, "Communicate for success."

As you personally attend to your success business, effective success chaining requires

productive communication with everyone you link to for input and with everyone who links to you. Importantly, communicating for success is not something totally different than normal conversation. It is, rather, simply normal conversation and a little more.

When you are having a simple conversation, neither you nor the other person has an agenda beyond expanding your relationship a little, enjoying each others company, and sharing whatever comes to mind. When you are communicating for success, one or both of you has an agenda beyond simple conversation. That agenda always includes, at a minimum, expecting the other person to do something, either while you are communicating or later. It may be as simple as letting you know what they think about something, giving you the benefit of their knowledge and experience, providing some new information, doing something you have asked them to do, or getting back with you later when you have more time. It may be very complex, e. g., developing a contract, working out the final plans for a big event, or planning for world peace. Whether the agenda is simple or complex, that agenda is the primary difference between simple conversation and success communication.

An interesting characteristic distinguishing the most successful people from others is they communicate for success regularly but seldom just have simple conversations. Whether they have another agenda or not, they always have a personal success agenda. They are continuously scanning for new information, looking for innovative ways to think about things, searching for unusual perspectives, developing potentially beneficial relationships, and seeking out opportunities to expand and enhance their success business. They never miss a chance to work on their success.

If you would like to make communicating for success so habitual you seldom do anything else, follow Simon's rules for making every conversation a success communication opportunity.

- Never waste anyone's time.

Whenever you initiate communication with anyone, be up-front about your explicit agenda. You might say, "I want to talk with you about X. I think it will take about Y minutes. My goal is Z. Do you have time for this now, assuming you are interested?" If they agree to the time, stick to your agenda and to the time limits they agreed to. If they want to take more time, say, "I am open to continuing this conversation but want to respect your schedule. May I put you in charge of how much more time we take? I have at least twenty more minutes."

It is also fine to open the interaction with, "Do you have ten minutes to hang-out? I need a break and thought it would be fun to shoot the breeze with you." Just be sure hanging out really is your primary agenda and you leave in ten minutes. You always respect the other person's time, whatever your agenda.

- Communicating for success requires your full interest and attention.

Have you ever heard people say, "I was only half-listening," "I was thinking about something else," "I was distracted," or something else letting the speaker know they were not

paying attention and probably were not all that interested? Sure you have. It means they were not fully communicating, since complete communication requires both sides of the interaction: an effective communicator and an attentive listener.

- Slow down your listening to match what you are hearing; pace your analysis to what you are experiencing.

If your communication skills are normal, You can listen effectively at about 300 words a minute even though most people normally talk at only about 150 words per minute. When you are listening to someone talk, then, you are usually using only about half of your listening capacity. Another way to think about this is you are listening only about half of the time when people are talking to you. Most people use this excess capacity to think about what they are going to say or about what they think about what the speaker is saying. The problem is you cannot listen, analyze what is being said, and construct a response concurrently.

The problem gets worse. You analyze very rapidly. As you get a piece of information, you categorize it and anticipate the next piece of information. Unless the next piece varies a lot from what you anticipate, you automatically slip it into your mind where you expect it to fit. This goes on until you think you understand what is being said. Usually, you do; but you may not. You can anticipate too far ahead of the speaker and miss what is actually being said. Your understanding is but a construct of what you expected the speaker to say.

The problem compounds when you respond. You have not really heard what was said and now you respond based only on what you think the speaker said or would have said had the content been an exact match with what you anticipated.

The solution is simple but difficult. Slow your listening so you are really listening and slow your analysis so it keeps pace with what is actually being said. The key is not to anticipate what anyone is going to say until it is said and never consider your response while someone is talking.

You will know you are making progress when a speaker ends by asking, "What do you think?" and your honest response is, "Let me think about that. I was listening to what you were saying and trying to understand. I hadn't given any thought to a response or to what I want to say."

- Everyone has thoughts, ideas, and opinions worth your consideration.

Even more counter-productive than not completely listening is putting people into categories such as interesting/not interesting, worth listening to/not worth listening to, a valued potential source of ideas and information/someone who will never have any useful ideas.

Anyone might add something useful to your storehouse of information. Like other successful people, you cannot afford to miss out on any potential opportunities, no matter how unlikely they may seem at the moment.

- Withhold your ideas, thoughts, and opinions until others have had an opportunity to express theirs, until all of the good ideas are on the table.

This is a little success strategy Simon does not want you to miss out on. It capitalizes on a small quirk of human nature. Most people are eager to share their ideas and opinions but some are more reluctant. With the eager beavers, they are quick to share but also usually want to please and want to avoid conflict and tension. Given a chance, they share; but if you give out any signs you disagree or do not like what they are saying, they close off. If they continue interacting, they spend a lot of their energy trying to figure out what you think so they can shape what they say to minimize potential conflict.

For the more reluctant, their not saying anything is fine with them. They want you to talk so they do not have to. If all goes well, they do not have to talk, even when you are finished talking. Your best strategy is to let the eager beavers talk first and then encourage the more reluctant people to share their ideas and opinions. You then add your comments to the extent they contribute something new to what has already been said. However you handle this step, you do what you can to be sure no one takes their ideas, thoughts, or opinions away with them, without your having an opportunity to tuck them into your success company's inventory of things worth knowing.

- Think about what you want to say before you say it, what you want to do before you do it, what you want to happen before it happens.

Does that sound like one of your old friend Simon's little success rules you have heard before? Sure it does. Listen and learn. Think and talk. That Simon, he just keeps plugging away on some of the finer success points over and over again.

- You cannot succeed if you let your mouth get ahead of your brain.
- You cannot succeed if you let your actions get ahead of your judgment.
- You cannot succeed if you let things get out-of-hand.

At a very important level, your success is a mind game; and if you take your mind out of the game, your success is instantly jeopardized. You may say the appropriate thing, may do the right thing, may have everything turn out just fine, without giving it a second thought or even a first thought. You may be so in-tune with people and events you can play it by ear, make it up as you go along, go with the flow, fake it, wing it, or maybe even take care of your success business in your sleep. You also may believe people are too stupid to catch on or you are so smart you can get away with it. Whatever your sense of it, though, Good luck. Just know the most successful people, yes, all of them, think before they speak, think before they act, think about what they want to happen before it happens.

You are a thoughtful person who values your success too much to ever let it be jeopardized by things you can control. You always keep your mind in the game and never let your success ride on the caprice of the moment. You are far too smart to ever be that dumb. You know the simple truth is, when it comes to your success: **Either you play the game or the game plays you.**

- Separate your interests from those of other people.

This is a success strategy that serves the success super-stars very well. They know their interests are never exactly the same as those of other people and two people never have identical interests. At best, people have shared interests or perhaps reciprocal interests.

Even when people have shared interests, they still do not have quite the same interests; and those differences, no matter how slight, are potential sources of conflict, tension, and misunderstanding. Usually these differences have to do with what or why: exactly what each wants to happen or why they think as they do. If you know what the differences are, you can likely avoid the problems that may develop. Simply assume there are differences and proactively get them out in the open. Be as clear about your whats and whys as you can be and encourage the other person to do the same. Even then, attend to anything that might be a sign of interest conflict. Just remember such problems can and will come up when you least expect them, if you do not make interest recognition a continuing priority.

People with reciprocal interests include buyers and sellers, doctors and patients, supervisors and supervisees, or any other situation where two people have a reciprocal relationship. Generally, one person wants the other person to do something and the other person wants to do it or they both want something to happen for different reasons. Attend very carefully to each person's whats and whys and to whether they are really compatible enough to proceed.

- Do not agree with people just because you think they are right or argue just because you think they are wrong.

Agreeing or arguing is usually inappropriate if either the issue is unimportant or the other person has no interest in your thoughts or point of view. You want to save your agreement and disagreement for those times when it makes a difference or when your opinion is requested. Those are the times when you can have the most influence; and if you just reflexively agree or argue, your effectiveness when it matters will be lessened.

There is another time to follow Simon's advice here, though, i.e., when you want to encourage independent thinking, when you want people to be empowered to do the right thing whenever it needs done. If you normally let them know whether you agree or disagree with their ideas and plans, they tend to rely on you as someone to run their ideas by before they do things. If there is any risk or possibility of error, they are likely to go with your thoughts about it instead of doing what they think should be done. If the outcome is not good, they then put the responsibility back to you. Also, they do not learn to use their best judgment in all situations, whether you are

there to advise them or not.

Instead of encouraging independence and empowerment, you unintentionally foster dependency and uncertainty. Unless you want to make all of the decisions and do not want the person to function autonomously, sometimes it is best to keep your ideas and opinions to yourself.

- Conflict sabotages your success if it gets personal, lasts too long, or becomes destructive.

Simon certainly does not want to belabor this point; but it is important. It is yet another reason not to argue just because you disagree. It is yet another reason to find ways to tell people, "Yes," whenever you can. It is yet another reason to be a skilled and effective communicator, problem solver, and opportunity spotter.

You want to resolve conflict as quickly as you can, as soon as you become aware of it. Even better is to prevent or avoid conflict in the first place. If conflict is not present, it cannot be a problem.

You do not avoid conflict by capitulating when you should hang tough, by accepting things you should resist, or by going along just because it is easier. At the same time, you do not cause conflict just because you are upset, frustrated, do not like the way things are going, or hold your ground just because you do not want to back down. You think before you talk, think before you act, and think about what you want to happen before it happens. You use all of your skills to appropriately avoid conflict and to resolve it if it is unavoidable. Conflict can compromise your success and you are not going to let that happen, if you can possibly prevent it.

- Search until you find both the fact and the feeling.

This rule applies in all communication situations but is particularly important when conflict is an issue or potential issue. Conflict always involves more than a disagreement. Were that not the case, the people would just agree to disagree and life would go on. For whatever reason, both people are unable or unwilling to let go of it. If either person lets go, the conflict disappears. When neither lets go, there is conflict.

It is easy to see finding the facts is important; but fact finding is not as easy as you might think. People can disagree about whether something is a fact and disagree even more about which facts are important. They also can feel quite differently about the facts and about what should happen. One person feels a specific fact does not matter and the other feels the fact makes a critical difference.

You usually cannot resolve conflict until there is agreement on the facts and seldom resolve it without clearly understanding the feelings behind the facts, yours and those of the other person.

- Give people feedback before you give them advice.

An important goal in all success communication is to develop congruence: the point you accurately understand what the other person says and they accurately understand what you say. It is likely no surprise to you people misunderstand each other, think they are on the same page when they are not, believe they have communicated when they have not. Failure to achieve congruence is a common problem you avoid whenever you can.

Get into the habit of feeding back to people what you think they have said before you proceed with your thoughts, ideas, opinions, or advice. You then simply ask them if that is what they intended. If so, you can proceed. If not, ask them to try again, tell you one more time what they want you to know.

It takes a little more time, is a little awkward, and is not the way people usually communicate; but so what? You are not like everyone else and it is your success on the line every time you communicate. If people are bothered by that, they just have to get over it. Most people interpret your feeding back what they have said and making sure you understand as unusual interest in their ideas and opinions. Instead of being put-off by the behavior, they are flattered by the extra attention.

Feeding back what people say to you is also a good way to be sure you are slowing your listening to what you are hearing, pacing your analysis with what you are experiencing.

- Know what you want people to do with their turn once you have finished your turn.

That Simon, he certainly is into timing, timing, timing. He has saved the communication bottom-line for last. There is little point in communicating unless you want the other person to do something and no point in saying anything unless you want the other person to respond in some specific way. You do not want them to walk away as if you had not communicated and you do not want them to start reciting The Gettysburg Address as a response to everything you say. You have expectations. What do you expect as a result of the communication and what kind of response do you want when you talk? The challenge is to slow your responses enough so you not only know what you want to say before you say it but also know what you want to happen before it happens. This is important enough for another one of Simon's little success rules.

- If you do not know what you want to happen, you probably will not like what happens.

Simon says, "Your success depends on who you know but depends more on who knows you."

This is a small point but understanding the distinction is critical to your success. You know you succeed with people and do-it-yourself success is a myth.

- Your chain of success is a people helping people succeed process.
- Your personal success equation only works with people.
- Your success business depends on people who make opportunity links available to you.
- Your success depends on the people who link to your services.

You are keenly aware of how important people are to your success and have included people as the fourth component of your success mantra which you silently chant at least once a day, every day:

- Patience, Patience, Patience!
- Attitude, Attitude, Attitude!
- Timing, Timing, Timing!
- People, People, People!

The important question here is, "Which people contribute most significantly to your success?" Unfortunately, too many people believe the people who count are primarily the people they know. This little glitch is the main reason why "networking" is so often misunderstood. Naive hustlers think, if they meet enough people, they eventually succeed. "I know this Executive or that Politician, this celebrity or that leader." The problem is they confuse "knowing" with "being known."

There is some value in knowing the right people in the right places. It saves time when you determine it will serve your success for a specific person to know you. You at least know where to focus your energy as you get into a position where they know you.

For example, it helps to know your child's teacher; but research shows your child will be better served if your child's teacher knows you too. People who you know may be interested in your services; but they are more likely to link to them if they know you. Someone may have an opportunity benefiting your success business; but they are more likely to let you link to it if they know you. For now, just keep in mind who knows you is more important than who you know.

Knowing what you want, who can give it to you, and what it takes to get their cooperation extends Simon's simple idea. You do not have time to leave your success business relationships to chance. Approaching these interpersonal opportunities on a thoughtful, well-considered basis, as you do with other aspects of your success business, serves your interests very well.

Start with being clear about what you want, what you need. What specific opportunities

do you think helps you expand and enrich your internal resources, increase your ability to add value to them? The key here is adding value. An opportunity to which you will not or cannot add value is not worth the effort it takes to pursue it. For example, better understanding the air traffic control system would be interesting but likely is not something you can add value to unless you are a transportation consultant or at least doing something related to air traffic. What you want/need relates to your personal success business and to your interests.

On the other side of your success equation, what you want/need depends on your services line. People are your customers or can connect you with customers; so you want relationships adding to your marketing potential, your marketing effectiveness, or to your marketing success, e.g., people who can get you in touch with potential customers are helpful as are people who provide services your customers want/need you cannot provide.

To be sure your customers are well-served, you may want/need secretarial services, computer expertise, shipping services, tickets to the championship playoffs, or priority access to medical services. What you specifically want/need to fill out your services line or to supplement your services to better serve your customers depends on the nature of your success business. Be clear about exactly what you want/need and then figure out who can give it to you and under what conditions they will come through. They are much more likely to be there for you if they know you than they are if they are only someone you know; and when you do ask for what you want/need, another one of Simon's little rules is worth remembering:

- Do not wear out your welcome, go to the well too often, or expect more than people can comfortably give.

You understand the importance of the right people knowing you and work hard to cultivate those relationships. The question now is, "What do they know about you?" They know what they have learned from doing success business with you. On that basis, all is well. Importantly, though, they know you in other ways:

- They know many other people and they talk about you;
- They know how it feels to do business with you;
- They know if you are sincerely interested in their success or just concerned about yours.

What people know about you is, in the end, more important than their knowing you. Those who know you know you understand your success depends on your helping other people succeed. You and your success business are always a pleasure to do business with.

You know:

- You are always judged by appearances;

- How you do things is usually at least as important as what you do.
- Your reputation is, in large measure, made when you are not present.
- You do everything you do with style, all the time, every time, with everyone, on purpose.

Your success with people and especially with the people who know you is no accident. You work at it very hard, giving every opportunity you have to make a first impression your best effort; and once you have made a first impression, you work even harder to be sure who people think you are is who you are whenever and wherever your name comes up. To be sure you are as successful with keeping your reputation as you have been in making it, Simon has four tips to serve you and your reputation.

- Follow up and follow through with everyone.
- Make it easy for people to get in touch with you.
- Promptly get back with anyone who is trying to get in touch with you.
- Every deal is interpersonal groundwork for your next deal.

Simon says, "People are constants, problems are variables."

Simon is not saying people never change, are always the same. You need only hang around most anyone for a while to know people are very changeable. Were that not true, things would get very boring and most of the world's serious problems would never get solved.

The people you deal with through your success business have some characteristics that stay fairly stable over time. Traits not changing much include things like attitudes, approaches to doing business, interpersonal style, beliefs, values, general mood and demeanor, cooperativeness, and most everything else mattering in the context of your success. This is enough of a fact of life you are well-served by simply assuming people are constants, they are not going to change, at least not much in any ways making any difference for you.

Making this assumption puts you onto the right track with people and problems: you will,

- Deal with people and work on problems.

If the people change in positive ways, all the better; but you are not counting on it and are not investing much time in trying to get them to change. You want to see what people are doing right, since you likely can get them to do more of whatever it is; but you cannot concern yourself much with what they are doing wrong. You might get them to do less of it but not a lot less any

time soon. Your goal is to encourage people to do more of what they are already doing right, with the hope they will have less time and energy for doing things wrong. If you are very successful with this approach, the right things will become so habitual the wrong things gradually just drop away, although it can take years, if you have the free time to devote to the task.

If your time is more limited and you do not have years to get significant problems solved, be clear about;

- What people are doing,
- What you want them to do,
- What the difference has to do with your success.

If you know exactly what you want people to do and they are doing it, you are on a success roll. If instead, there are things you want them to do which they are not doing, you have a problem. Your first step is to carefully analyze whether the things they are not doing actually have anything material to do with your success. You may be surprised to find out at least some of the things you have on the list are not affecting your success one way or the other. They would be nice but are not necessary. Your goal here is to determine specifically what you "have to" have done you want someone to do.

Focus on your to-do list of things people are not doing that really need done and then personally ask them to do them. It is easy to overlook the fact you usually do not get what you do not ask for.

If they say, "No," then ask them why they will not do what you want them to do. They likely will be happy to tell you; and when they do, you have a problem you can actually solve. You can either work out whatever is keeping them from doing what you need done or figure out some other way to get it done. Just remember it has to get done; it was a "have to have" kind of thing.

Now that people have done what you wanted them to do or you have developed an alternative source for what you need, what comes next? Too often, less successful people are at somewhat of a loss at this point. They have spent so much energy getting what they wanted, they have not thought through what they will do now they have it. They have gotten so task oriented they have lost track of their goal.

You say this could never happen to you. Simon, your sensitive success coach, just wants to point out to you it can and does happen to everyone at times. It can happen to you too. Your best preventative is to be sure you know what you will do after people have done what you want them to do and then make sure you remind yourself about what you will do next, at least once a day, every day. Your success goals are too important to ever let them slip your mind.

Simon says, "Once you step up to the plate, you are the batter."

It does not matter who thinks you should not be the batter, are not the right person for the job, are not qualified, are not worthy. Your success is on the line; and it is time for you to add another line to your success mantra:

- Focus, Focus, Focus!

Do not let fear of failure, opinions of others, unsolicited criticism, or childish ridicule get in the way of your success. You are at the plate; your success is riding on this swing of the bat. This is your current best chance to get it right and you may not get another chance. Even if you do, this is the only opportunity you will have to get it right, the first time, on time.

It does not make any difference whether anyone else understands this is the most important thing you have ever done or if they can see why you think it is such a big deal. They do not get it. This is your success work and demands your personal best. You cannot afford to fail with what you are doing right now. Maybe you are talking with one person or a thousand, doing something you have done a hundred times before or something you are doing for the very first time, something requiring all of your knowledge and skills or something simple and uncomplicated. Whatever your immediate challenge, it is time for you to do it, and do it you do, no exceptions, no excuses. What's more, you do not expect people to wait around until you get it right, until you succeed. You expect to get it right the first time, on time, and simply assume others expect you to get it right too.

Simon has some advice for you, though, as you consider your swing. This comes straight from your personal success coach and you will do well to listen and learn. To be forewarned is to be prepared.

- Have a healthy skepticism for what can go wrong.

You plan to succeed. You always believe you are going to get a hit; but in the best of times, you cannot connect 100% of the time. There are just too many variables for you to completely control or always predict exactly how they are all going to play out; and since you cannot,

- Know in advance what you will do if it does not work out.

Just as you swing, knowing what can happen and feeling prepared, you cross the invisible line preventing most people from reaching their goals, from stepping up to the plate and taking their swing at success. You know exactly what they know; but in situations where you confidently swing for the center field fence, they sit down and watch someone else succeed.

What is the source of their misgiving? What keeps them from crossing the invisible

success line?

- They do not want to proceed until circumstances are more ideal.
- They wait until conditions are more favorable.
- They sit this one out and hope for better weather next time.

Good for them, if that is their orientation to their success. For you, though, succeeding means accepting some risk. You are certainly not going to step up to the plate in a hurricane or hang in there with a hundred miles per hour fast ball with your eyes closed; but you are not going to wait for a sunny day in July either. What you know others may not is,

- You never experience the exact conditions you think you need to succeed.

Although conditions are never ideal, you have done your success groundwork and are prepared to bat. You trust your intuition and believe you are able to handle most anything. You are as ready as you will ever be. The moment is at hand and you most assuredly swing the bat, take your turn at success.

Simon says, "Expand your thinking to prevent closing your mind."

It is no secret stuff happens, things can go wrong, and sooner or later, you are going to find yourself up that old creek without a paddle. Plan on it, my friend. What's worse, the only way out will be up that thousand foot cliff you were prepared to jump off the top of when you took those flying lessons.

"But Simon," you say, "I cannot solve a problem I did not know about. I new there was a chance I might lose my paddle when I started up that creek; but that cliff, well, it was just suddenly there and I certainly had not planned on that. Life just moved that monster squarely into the path to my success and that is the end of that."

Life surely does have a way of biting you on the backside when you are least expecting it. Some days you get the bear and some days the bear gets you; and that cliff is definitely the bear that is getting you today. Life can undeniably be a bear now and then, a thousand foot monster standing between you and success, an obstacle so wide you cannot see its edges, so high you cannot see its top. It is totally eclipsing your future.

Coach knows. He has been there before. You are rightfully discouraged. You are totally bummed-out and definitely not in any mood for another one of Simon's little rules; but try this one anyway. You never know. It might be just what the doctor ordered.

- You cannot come up with a creative solution until you have creatively defined the problem.

Start by asking, "If this is not an insurmountable barrier to my success, then what is it?"

The answer is it is a problem to be solved. Since a problem is the difference between how things are and how you want them to be, your challenge is defining and then reducing the difference. Your problem is not the thousand foot cliff. What is it, then?

- "I want to reach my goals."
- "I cannot paddle on up the creek since I am without a paddle."
- "There is a thousand foot cliff between me and success."

"Okay, Simon" you say, "There is my problem. I am completely stymied."

No, a good try but you do not quite get it yet. Your problem is you want to reach your goals and have not yet figured out how. You tried paddling your own canoe and it did not work out quite the way you had expected. Coach will not chastise you for not having a healthy skepticism for what might go wrong nor for not knowing what you would do if it did not work out; but you are well-served to consider Simon's little rules the next time you head up the creek.

- You want to reach your goals.
- You do not know how to get there from where you are.
- Your problem is reducing the difference between what you know and what you need to know to reach your goals.

There you go. You have one of those frustrating, nasty knowledge deficits. Your internal resources have left you a little short for the moment. What to do? Either dig around in your internal resource bank to see if you can come up with something or call someone who can give you a knowledge opportunity.

"What do you mean, call someone? Did you forget I am up a creek without a paddle? How do you expect me to call someone from here?"

Use your cellular phone. Surely you did not go up that creek by yourself without your cellular phone, did you? You said you took a chance on losing your paddle; so you did at least plan on how you would call for help if it actually happened, didn't you? You do understand it is possible to get yourself so far into the muck it would even test a success super-star to get out, don't you?

You are right. Even Simon needs to be reminded of his own little rules now and again. You can only start from where you are with what you have; and you have a serious problem to solve.

If Simon were a certified success guru instead of someone like you who is doing the best he can with what he has, he would have an amazingly clever solution to get you up-and-over any thousand foot cliff, past any monster standing in your way. You would be shocked by its simplicity and humbled by Simon's display of instant brilliance; but alas, Simon knows as do you there are no free lunches and no easy fixes for difficult problems. Your success is serious business and succeeding is very challenging work. Your coach is too committed to your success to mislead you or give you hope you will find a magic button. It is just you and your growing success business vs. the universe. The truth of it is, in the final analysis,

- Your success depends on continuous invention.

Have you ever thought of yourself as an inventor? If you have not been one before, your success depends on your being one now. You need an invention to reach your goals in spite of losing your paddle and in the face of that thousand foot cliff. You need to invent a solution to your problem.

Initiate the inventing process by linking what you do not know about the problem with what you do know. Coach will use your thousand foot cliff to illustrate; but you can plug in any serious problem needing an invented solution. Just keep at it until you have exhausted all of the knows/don't knows you can generate.

- You know you are up the creek without a paddle. You do not know how to get further up the creek without a paddle.
- You do know there is a thousand foot cliff between you and success. You do not know how to get from where you are to where you want to go with a thousand foot cliff in the way.

You now have two good inventor's questions to ponder.

- How do you get further up a creek without a paddle?
- How do you get from here to there when you do not have any obvious way to get past the cliff?

Probably you have thought of an answer or two to the questions already. It does not matter at this point whether the answers are reasonable or not. Expand your thinking. Any possibility you can imagine goes on your answer list. You are becoming an inventor. You no longer have problems; you have questions and possible inventions.

Next, link what you do know about the problem with what you would like to know. For the "would like to know" part, you will add new points but it is fine to use the "do not knows" from earlier too.

- You do know you are up a creek.
- You do know you do not have a paddle.
- You do know a thousand foot cliff is blocking your way.
- You do know how to get on up the creek is certainly not obvious.
- You do know you likely cannot get around, over, or through that thousand foot cliff.
- You want to know what your immediate choices are, understanding there is always something you can do.
- You want to know what the hidden opportunities are in the current situation, understanding there are unexploited opportunities in every situation.

You do something, using what you know or want to know. If you cannot find an opportunity, you invent one. You let your thinking expand to take in more information, more possibilities. It is time to identify differences instead of looking for similarities, time to force your mind to diverge before allowing it to converge.

Your mind wants to make sense of the world so it rushes to put things into categories, give pieces of this and that familiar names, and group current experiences with experiences you have had before. The mental process is reliable enough and efficient enough events smoothly transition from one to another fairly flawlessly. The little differences and small aberrations go unnoticed.

When you are inventing, the natural mental process has to be overridden. The natural process quietly forces experience into pre-defined niches whether they quite fit or not. Two objects not quite the same are both called chairs. The experience you are having with one person is pigeonholed as just like the one you had a year ago with someone else. Your perceptions are conditioned to see what you expect instead of exactly what is in front of you. Your thinking and experience converge significantly with what you have thought and done before; and if you think and do like you have always thought and done, becoming an inventor is not possible. Instead of converging, Force your thinking to expand, your mind to diverge. You are looking for the novel, the unique, the unusual, the element you have never thought about or experienced before. Importantly,

- Never discard your ideas, since the ones you discard are more likely to be novel and divergent than those you keep.

- Occasionally try a new approach to a problem, even if you know the old approach works, just to avoid getting in the habit of always doing things the same way.
- Give new names to familiar things, use other labels that fit as well as the one you usually use, e. g., the object with four legs is a posterior elevation stabilizer.
- Identify at least one new twist to every situation, since there is something you have never experienced in every situation.

Mental exercise is just as important as physical exercise. When you let your mind get out of shape, you are not up to being an inventor. You may still force out an original thought or two once in a while but do not stand a chance when circumstances call for a fast, one-hundred-thought-dash. You experience mental collapse after only a few hesitant thoughts. Invention is a sport for well-conditioned, well-trained mental athletes; and recreational thinkers just cannot make the grade.

Have you warmed up? Have you done your mental stretching exercises? Are you ready for a good mind-run? If so,

- Try redefining the problem, since there are always alternative ways of understanding the challenge.

You have previously defined your problem as having your path to success blocked by a thousand foot cliff. The problem is compounded by your being up the creek without a paddle. Suppose, alternatively, the actual situation is you were just exploring that particular creek to see if success was up that way and it was not. You are not disappointed or frustrated. You merely wanted to check it out. As for the paddle, you do not need it anymore anyway while you drift back down the creek to find another branch in your success river. Also, since you have a range of success goals and not a single win/lose success goal, that thousand foot cliff is not blocking you from anything. You are simply not going to succeed quite as quickly as you had imagined, at least not up that creek.

Redefining the problem has an extra benefit here. It puts you back onto your success track. It is there you suddenly remember your problem has nothing to do with creeks, paddles, or thousand foot cliffs. It has to do with your success and whether you have the mental muscle to come up with an invention creative enough to succeed.

Simon says, "Your success depends on your ability to deal with change and with the unexpected."

Your experience with that thousand foot cliff is likely sufficient to remind you being

prepared to deal with the unexpected is critical to your success. Your ability to deal with change is, perhaps, even more important, since the unexpected is simply one example of change. In little and big ways, things are changing all the time and handling the change is certainly not optional. You deal with it whether you want to or not; and how well you deal with it is at the essence of whether you succeed or fail. Recall that bear you either get or it gets you? Much of the time, that bear's name is Change.

It is probably not going to surprise you to now learn Simon also has a few little rules for dealing with change. First,

- You have to be aware of change before you can deal with change.

This surely sounds like another one of those no-brainers. If you do not know about something, you cannot deal with it; but be careful not to look at the obvious and jump to the wrong conclusion. Change is continuous and much easier to miss than you might think. Most change is not noticed, at least not while it is happening. You notice something has changed but not it is changing.

If you only become aware of change after things have changed, you are always reacting, adjusting, and trying to catch up. You cannot be proactive from a reactive position. Knowing this means you give high priority to being aware of change while things are changing. This starts by assuming change is always a here-and-now, dynamic condition. Sometimes the pace is faster and sometimes it is slower, but it never stops. If you do not know that, you have not been paying nearly enough attention.

To move from a reactive position to a proactive position, here is Simon's next little rule.

- It takes change to deal with change.

Just as change is continuous, you must continuously change to proactively deal with it.

- If you are just the same as you have always been or are slow to change, you are already behind and falling further back.
- If you cannot see what is different about today as compared to yesterday, events are passing you by.
- If you are frustrated and confused by what is going on around you much of the time, you are likely using yesterday's map to figure out where you are today.
- If you think things are changing too fast, you are probably moving too slow.

Simon Says, "Square up to your personal monkey bridge and then just

do it."

Your old friend Simon tells this story from his youth. "The monkey bridge loomed monstrously between us and success. If perchance you do not know about monkey bridges, picture and learn."

Jim and I were twelve and had our sights on being Eagle Scouts. Back then, you could not get there without a hiking merit badge; and that only came a few miles after a mandatory twenty mile hike.

The monster hike day started early and was going well for the first five or six miles; and then came the monster hill. Twelve-year-old boys like to refer to most anything as monsters, e. g., monster sandwiches, monster hits into left field, and monster anything else meeting their varying standard for big. But the monster hill really was a monster.

Jim and I just sat there for a while, saying things like, "There's the monster hill," and "It's a monster sure enough."

This went on for a while when I asked, "How are we ever going to get all the way up that monster?"

Without a second thought and with the certainty of all twelve-year-olds, Jim said, "We are going to just do it;" and do it we did.

Things went fine for a few more miles until it started to rain. The further we hiked, the more it rained, and the more soaked we got. Even that was not all that bad until we were about half way across a field and up to our canteens in mud. Between us and the trail into the woods was a creek, nearly out of its banks and rushing south, if you know what I mean.

I asked Jim, "How do we get across this monster creek?"

His approach had not changed. "We just do it;" and do it we did.

A few miles along the path into the woods, we suddenly understood not all monsters are created equal. There it was: the monster monkey bridge looming terrifyingly between us and our goal.

A rope was stretched across a ravine, with two more ropes stretched side-by-side above the first. The only way across, the only path to our success was to walk the bottom rope while holding on to the other two. If the picture is not clear, just think of the monkey bridge as the mother of all monsters.

Well, suffice it to say we were both brought up short and forced to seriously consider our

options. Whatever our choices, neither of us was going to be the first to just sit down and cry. Perhaps our best strategy would be to trudge back through the mud and see if we could get away with simply telling everyone we had hiked twenty miles.

Jim flinched first. "How can we ever get across this monster? We are going to die."

My barely contained terror was about to consume me; but I said it anyway. "We are going to just do it;" and do it we did.

Simon says, "Success is a matter of PRIDE."

Learning about PRIDE came for Simon sometime after the mother of all monkey bridges. It did not come as a revelation or sudden insight but rather as a growing understanding of the process of getting on with getting on.

PRIDE starts with **P**reparation. To successfully cross life's monkey bridges, be prepared. This means you read and learn about monkey bridges, talk to people who have crossed them before you, and practice every day as you face life's challenges and opportunities.

Preparation combines with **R**esponsibility as you begin to master your monkey bridges. The key is to accept them as yours. They are your responsibility, not someone else's. You cannot expect others to move them out of your way or cross them for you. More to the point, not crossing them or trying to convince people you have when you have not is to fail the challenge, to miss the opportunity, to surrender to the monster.

Imagining is the next element of PRIDE. You are prepared, you have accepted personal responsibility. Now imagine success. You see yourself across the monkey bridge. But remember, for Jim and I, getting across the ravine was not the final success we had in mind. That was only the current barrier to our success. Success was being Eagle Scouts. What is success for you? That is the outcome you must imagine as you stand at the brink of your monkey bridge. That image is the one drawing you forward.

As you imagine success, you must imagine failure too. What would it be like if you do not cross the monkey bridge, if you are not up to the challenge, if you do not succeed? Just as your image of success draws you forward, the image of failure keeps you from falling back.

Add **D**etermination to your developing PRIDE. Crossing your monkey bridge is not an "if you feel like it" kind of thing. It is not something you do when you get time or if something else does not interfere. It is there now and determination is the extra push you must have. It is the "Just do it," making the difference between success and failure.

Eagerness completes your recipe for PRIDE. If it is time to do it, then do it. You are

prepared, you have accepted responsibility, you have imagined success and imagined failure, and you are determined to succeed. Now get on with getting on. Just do it, with eagerness, with all the gusto you have in you. Anything less runs the risk of not giving it your best; and not giving each of your monkey bridges your best is the surest way to failure.

Life's monkey bridges are many and varied, standing as monsters in the path to your success. Your challenge and opportunity is to approach each one with PRIDE and then reach down deep inside for the strength and confidence to just do it; and do it you will, as you pursue your success.

POSTSCRIPT:

As you go forth now to apply what you have learned every day in every way, Simon has one last story for you. Perhaps it will bring a smile and maybe even a gentle thought about those little things enriching your life along your path to excellence.

I'm sitting here watching our puppy bark at his reflection in the window in the door to the back yard. His goal is to get outside but he has a problem. There is a guard dog on the other side of the window, staying right with him, bark for bark, preventing his exit. He first runs up to the other dog, tries to get past him, then backs away to analyze and evaluate. They go back-and-forth like this for a few minutes until pup is distracted by some unseen and unheard temptation in the kitchen.

Dumb, dumb dog. That is certainly not anything you would ever find me doing: barking at my shadow in the window. I'm sure you never behave like that either. After all, we are mature, responsible adults who can distinguish reality from our reflections in the window. The things frightening us are definitely there and justify our fear. The barriers to our success are substantial and not products of our imaginations or in anyway self-made.

There is that puppy again. What is he up to this time? He is running around in circles, jumping up and changing directions, yipping at only he knows what, and having himself a right good time. He is having way too much fun. That pup makes three minutes of silliness seem like a day at the circus. There is no point to it. He is just running around like a . . . well, like a puppy.

There comes that pup again. What is he up to this time? He has been in the bathroom and now he is in the living room, proudly pulling the TP along behind him. Do I get upset with him, laugh at his antics, or just sit back and appreciate his cleverness? How did he manage to pull the TP out of the bathroom, down the steps, around three corners, and into the living room in one piece? Maybe I try it just to see if I am at least as clever as a pup; but alas, someone might see me. After all, I'm a responsible, mature adult who has his image to consider.

Wonder when we lost our puppy's view of the world? Maybe the pup knew it was his

reflection in the window or maybe not. It likely does not matter either way. He is now playing the same game with me. Run up very close, bark, and then scoot back, just out of reach. Do it again, and then again. Woops, there he goes. He is off to other more interesting activities. No, he wasn't distracted after all. He simply tired of the game. For him, every situation has the potential for fun be it seeing his reflection in the window, taking time to run around in circles, or indulging in the great TP pull.

Look at him, lying in my favorite chair where he is not supposed to be, just resting it seems. I'll bet he is not there because he is tired, though. He is conserving his energy for his next escapade.

That pup may have something to teach us, not that he cares whether we learn the lesson or not. He is only being a pup, doing puppy stuff. Still, the lesson is there. If we are open to it, we learn the lessons of puppy power.

- Puppy power is recognizing our reflection in the window and giving it a good bark, knowing if we shake it off and walk away, it will walk away too.
- Puppy power is stopping for three minutes of pure fun, time to run around in circles and jump for joy.
- Puppy power is finding out if we really can pull the TP through the house in one continuous pull.
- Puppy power is stopping to rest, not because we are tired but so we will have the energy we will need for our next adventure.

I'll be dog gone if that's not one smart pup. Hot dog! my friend; here's to puppy power. Your old friend Simon says, "You likely cannot achieve success without it."