

What it takes to succeed

Written by Julie Desmond
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Sweat? Sacrifice? Compromise? What is the real secret to success? Theories abound, but the answer is probably all of the above. According to those who know, success seems to be a combination of many factors, with sweat, sacrifice and compromise heading up the list.

Success requires sweat. Two kinds: the perspiration of day after day of hard work and the sweaty palms of fear, anxiety and worry. Thanks to air conditioned offices and good morning hygiene, most people don't leave their work stations literally sweating at the end of the day. However, the satisfied feeling of having invested a whole day's time and attention and energy to a project or assignment has the same effect as a long run or heavy lifting; there is pain and relief at the same time, a sort of natural high because you've accomplished something.

Those sweaty palms are actually another sign of success. Anxiety is a healthy emotion that leads people to double check their work, think carefully through plans and ask better questions. Total confidence is totally useless. The only certainties in life are supposed to be death and taxes, and these days even death is something that can be reversed. Assuming you know less than you should, that nervous feeling can lead you to discover new, better information. Anxiety channeled into motivation separates those who want to succeed from those who do. Sacrifice is another secret to many people's success. The word conflagration comes to mind. It refers to a large fire that causes extensive damage. To succeed in one area, you might have to burn down some other parts of your life. The people who hold you back, for example, or the way that you live might have to change. If you enjoy late nights at the club, a hangover might keep you from accomplishing much in the morning. Cutting back your social life to weekends only will feel like a sacrifice, like you're burning down your social network and destroying the potential for fun in your life. However, the sacrifice pays off as you reach your goals and see a more positive end result.

Compromise? Yes and no. Compromising values or integrity makes no sense to those who are successful. Every white lie, every greedy transaction requires a cover story which can quickly become so complicated that it stands in the way of achievement. Long term success requires compromising for a cause; flexibility, accommodation, assuming reasonable risk... these are all effective ways to find middle ground with others and with yourself so that you can continue to move toward your goals.

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Research shows that it takes ten thousand hours of practice to become an expert at anything. Ten thousand sweaty hours, sacrificing other activities and compromising to keep moving forward. The road to success is not easy, but after ten thousand hours, you will be glad you took the trip.

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