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Many people will tell you that success is a matter of being in the right place at the right time. Some will say that successful people are just lucky--that good fortune falls into their laps. Some may even attribute success to their ancestors or their genes--that they inherited a position of success. And there's some who insist people cheat--that they falsify their résumé or embellish their experience to get that high-paying job (eventually karma gets those people). No matter how you define success, you create or maintain it by making better choices and can lose it all with one bad choice.

Some people may have succeeded initially because of luck, but luck is not something you can bank on. You can't rely on luck to get you where you want to be. Being in the right place at the right time, and family inheritance all may help, of course, but the reality is this: many people may be in the right place at the right time, may have had good fortune come their way, or were born into a wealthy family; yet, they've never experienced success. Others face nothing but adversity their whole lives but still manage to become successful.

Take a look at the successful people you know in your office, your neighborhood, your city, or your family. Without exception, their success has been created by their choices. It's not about luck, the conditions, or even the impact of their guardian angels.

Even though successful people experience some common traits, in reality, there really isn't an enormous difference between highly successful people and those who are not so successful.

Do you think the salesperson who earns \$250,000 a year is five times

smarter or better than the salesperson who earns \$50,000 a year? Does the \$250,000-a-year salesperson work five times as hard? Of course not!

Most people are within 10 percent of the same IQ. Most people work about the same number of hours, the same number of days per week. So what's the difference?

Successful people make choices others don't like to make--and by doing things differently, they make choices that improve their success.

Successful people have just as hard a time making difficult choices as everyone else. The difference is that they persevere. They realize there is often great reward for those difficult choices. Their personal goals and professional goals are so vivid in their minds that they realize the result they will accomplish is well worth the price of a difficult choice.

Regardless of how you personally define it, success is ultimately realized by people who make more good choices and recover quickly from their bad choices. Our personal and professional success depends on repeating good choices, day in and day out, and avoiding repetition of bad choices.

Most choices that help create success are never recognized by others. There are:

1) *Personal Choices.* These choices mold character. These character choices are internal choices known only to the person making them. They include accepting responsibility, commitment, values, and integrity. They are personal choices that we make deep within ourselves and that eventually mold our life.

2) *Action Choices.* These choices will lead you toward success. They help you move beyond simply talking the talk and toward getting things done. They

are the catalyst for moving forward. They include the choices of sticking to the objective long enough to win, being enthusiastic about work and life, and attacking and conquering difficult issues. At the end of the day it means you actually accomplished or completed something.

3) *Investment Choices.* I'm not referring to the stock market or a get-rich-quick scheme. The important investment choices I'm referencing are about investing in people who will make your life better. You cannot be successful in the long term without investing in relationships, seeking the truth, accepting constructive criticism, and giving back to others. (If you invest in the wrong people, your life will take a turn in the wrong direction or will become unproductive.)

The best choices are rarely the easiest. Making good choices is a never-ending challenge. It requires hard work and daily diligence. Life requires that we choose between alternatives every hour of the day, every day of our lives. Making good choices requires constant focus and attention.

Bad choices that seemed so right at the time sometimes turn out to be major impediments to our lives. Divorce statistics and the number of businesses that have closed are continuing examples of this. Our daily challenge is to live our character, action, and investment choices so naturally that we begin making the best choices almost subconsciously. This requires patience, honest reflection, adaptation, and commitment.

Making choices is a privilege, one that gives us freedom we should never take for granted. Making good choices can help you be more successful right now.

~ The End ~