

HOW TO ACHIEVE *Success* IN AN ESTHETICS PRACTICE

BY DOUGLAS PRESTON

IF THERE IS ONE WORD THAT HAS BEEN MORE overused and misunderstood in career coaching and training over the last 20 years, "success" would be it. We have heard it used in motivational lectures, read about it in business testimonials and seen the idea applied to every positive story on career or personal achievement. "He is really successful." "She is wildly successful!" "They are a very successful company."

This vague word sounds as flat and ordinary as when someone answers the question "How are you doing?" with the standard response of "Fine," "Good" or even "Great!" What exactly does fine, good or great actually mean? When we say fine, do we simply mean something other than awful? Does good suggest that things are okay for now, but they

could or should be a lot better? Can "great" mean we don't want to tell someone how we are really feeling? Of course it can—or not. The point is that a single word used to describe a particular status can be loaded with or emptied of what is actually happening—the true details of the situation.

For professional estheticians (or any type of working professionals for that matter), the hoped for outcome of career success is a virtual given. Of course we want to be successful! Yes, we plan to achieve success! Sure, I know my business will succeed! These are all wonderful thoughts, and exciting feelings go with them. But what is success to the individual, and how does one know when it's been achieved? In other words, what precisely are we aiming for when the idea of success is

the target? It is important to have a clear picture of what we are trying to accomplish in an esthetics career if any realistic plan for getting there can be conceived.

In my experience of more than 20 years coaching estheticians and spa owners in business growth, I have seen that one overriding feature most closely determines whether or not one is successful in a career. It is the way individuals feel about what they have done and/or are still doing. Here are a few examples to help illustrate what I mean:

1. A spa magazine showcases a day spa chain that's been in business for 15 years and has 10 locations and five more planned. Is this a successful business?

2. In a press release, you read that a skin care professional has just been appointed to be director of sales for a major treatment product line. Is this a clear example of business success?

3. You attend a spa tradeshow class presented by an industry expert speaking to a packed room. Is he or she a successful career person?

Now, the answer to these scenarios may seem obvious in conventional terms. How could one have achieved what they have and not consider themselves a success? Well, look at it this way:

Example 1: How much debt is this company in? What are the responsibilities of managing all of those locations and people? What are the risks for ownership if the economy turns sour again? Are they making any profit or just spending all of the income on expansion?

Example 2: Will this esthetician perform as well as a sales director as she did when she was simply selling products in her own practice? Is she capable of motivating and managing a team of sales professionals? If the job requires frequent travel, does her family situation comfortably allow for the time away? Does she really want to spend so much time in airports and business hotels?

Example 3: Does the fact that someone has managed to gain enough expertise to train others mean that they are making a great living from their work? And does a great speech automatically produce more business for the speaker?

The only way to know whether or not the details in these examples have led to success is by personally interviewing the people involved and asking how each one of them personally feels about them. The great steel tycoon of the last century, Andrew Carnegie, often laid awake at night in his Scottish castle worrying about whether or not he was successful. You wonder how a man who had achieved so much could possibly doubt his success. One reason for that doubt is that Carnegie, for all his money, fame and power, could not precisely define the true meaning of success; therefore, he could not feel it. Achievement and success are not necessarily the same thing. Achievement brings certain results; success is measured in terms of how those achievements are valued by those that accomplished them. Clearly, only the individual can determine whether or not they have arrived at career success; they cannot be told that they have and then expected to believe it.

The same might be said for the idea of failure. If things haven't gone quite as well as planned in a business or career, does that mean that one has failed at it? There are countless stories about great business achievers that at times did not achieve the goals they hoped for. Yet, to the positive-minded professional, setbacks are nothing more than opportunities to learn and improve in the next attempt to succeed. Only those that give up may qualify for the title of failure, and even then, abandoning one plan for a better one is a form of success in itself. It is only the way one interprets their circumstances that determines whether success or failure has been the outcome of their efforts.

With a clear understanding of the details of your own success story, you can properly plan and execute the correct actions that will make your dream a reality.

Assuming that you entered the skin care profession with the hope of achieving your own success in it, how will you know if and when you have arrived there? I use the following method with every career-mentoring client I work with, one that you might find extremely beneficial when creating your own professional growth planning.

Under the categories below, list as many details as possible that are important to you in your career progress:

1. My esthetics work. Which services do I want to perform as a career esthetician?

And which tasks do I NOT want to do in my work?

How will I feel if I have achieved my goal? (Try to avoid using words like "good" or "great." Instead, use words that more closely reflect the emotions and feelings you desire, such as positive, happy, enthusiastic, proud, etc.)

2. My business. This is what I want my role within my business to be like (i.e., independent esthetician, spa or skin care clinic owner, product retailer, educator, speaker or writer).

How will I feel if I have achieved my goal?

3. This is what I do NOT want my role to entail (i.e., managing employees, heavy management responsibilities, preoccupation with finances and numbers, duties that prevent me from performing client services).

How will I feel if I have achieved my goal?

4. Personal income: How much money do I want to earn, and by when?

What income is NOT acceptable to me?

How will I feel if I have achieved my goal?

5. My life. What personal rewards and satisfaction will a career in professional esthetics provide for me? (i.e., a sense of pride and accomplishment, a positive example for my chil-

continues

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dren, an independent lifestyle, financial security, peace of mind)

What would NOT be a desirable outcome? How will achieving my goals make me feel? With a clear understanding of the details of your own success story, you can properly plan and execute the correct actions that will make your dream a reality. Nothing will prove more valuable in shaping your career. Without this understanding, one faces a future derived from random decisions and reactions that have no real direc-

tion. In other words, you are not likely to be thrilled with where you end up. Vision and planning is vital, whether you are designing a home, creating a holiday dinner party or looking ahead to a great career. The rest is simply a dedication to your goals and the hard work they will require of you. You will learn as you go along, and though many of your original ideas may (and probably will) change, the new ones will benefit from the time and focus you put into the originals.

Always remember this: Never allow anyone else to attempt to define the idea of success for you—not your parents, your spouse, your fellow professionals or even the examples you read and hear about. Your success will always be solely defined in the terms that matter to you. Pleasing someone else may, in fact, be your goal, but it will never offer you the real satisfaction of following your own heart's desires.

Of course, you still need the technical methods and skills to make your esthetics practice a quality product for your customers and clients, but those tools won't lead to a great career when the details for your direction have been neglected. Plan for your success first, and then experience the success from your planning! ■

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