

The Six Components of a Champion's Success System

Champions, in all walks of life, use personal success systems to create and sustain outstanding results. These success systems guide them in becoming a champion and allow them to continue doing champion-level work across their careers and throughout their lives. There are six core components of a champion's personal and professional success system. These components are:

1. **A compelling future vision**
2. **A sharply focused purpose**
3. **A set of powerful leadership questions**
4. **A quarterly breakthrough goal**
5. **A process for gathering and developing ideas to accelerate, innovate, and improve on the journey toward the compelling future vision**
6. **A process for acknowledging, recognizing, and celebrating victories along the way**

A Compelling Future Vision

A compelling future vision is something that lifts you and the people around you to be more than you or they would otherwise be. Like a magnet, this long-term vision pulls you and your associates forward as it attracts new people and additional resources to you. Its very presence makes the best outcome possible when it may seem that only good or not-so-good results are forthcoming. There is little that is scientific about a compelling future vision. It wells up naturally from human passion, and it generates enthusiasm in those touched by it or associated with it. Having a compelling future vision can be daunting, yet it is exciting at the same time.

A compelling future vision and alignment go hand in hand. On the professional side of your life, a compelling future vision should drive the alignment of all your strategies, goals, and activities. In your personal life, however, the compelling future vision doesn't *drive* alignment, it *embraces* it. While organization's are created by humans to achieve a purpose and vision, human's are procreated to fulfill a purpose and have higher needs that are not met through one singular organization. These higher needs include; career success & contribution, health & wellness, family & relationships, pleasure & recreation, spiritual connection & growth, financial success & independence, charity & tithing, and creativity & authentic expression of oneself. Thus, in our personal life, we should seek to embrace alignment in meeting these higher needs while pursue a compelling future vision.

There are always a few critical disciplines that will go a long way in helping you achieve a compelling future vision, and appropriately enough, it's the vision itself that helps you identify which disciplines are the important ones for you or your organization. In seeking to clarify which disciplines are critical to the compelling future vision, one should start

by looking for the disciplines that will help unleash the power of the vision and create the freedom necessary to achieve it. Do not be tempted to think that your vision is different, and that there are not a critically few disciplines to be deployed to achieve it. A vision that would not require a critically few disciplines to achieve is not a vision; it is a dream!

*You will become as small as your controlling desire
Or as great as your dominant aspiration*

*--James Allen (1864-1912)
Author, As a Man Thinketh*

A Sharply Focused Purpose

A sharply focused purpose creates value in the moment while you pursue the longer-term goal of achieving a compelling future vision. Purpose is where the rubber meets the road as you engage your talents, skills, and abilities each day. When you understand your purpose and have done the hard work to sharply focus it, you can easily see the value of your daily effort – be it measurable in the form of increased commerce, new relationships, personal transformation, or synergies between people and organizations.

Done right, the process of developing a sharply focused purpose is not easy, and it is seldom finished quickly. Your purpose is only discovered through focused introspection, exploration, and testing over time.

It is as Dr. E. Gordon Gee, 14th President at The Ohio State University, experienced in deciding to return to OSU for a second term at president after leaving in 1997 for Brown and then Vanderbilt Universities. The 63 year old Gee explained that over the last several years, he would wake up at night asking himself “Why am I here?” Although, fond of his time, experiences, and relationships at Vanderbilt University, Gee sensed a disconnection with his purpose. He stated at his July 12, 2007 press conference to announce his return, “I can now sleep at night.”

As the above example demonstrates, you can be highly successful and productive but off purpose. Staying connected to purpose is a dynamic process of becoming more aware of your interests, passions, talents, and skills, as you explore ways to interact with the world. These interactions provide opportunities for you to test various expressions of your interests, passions, talents, and skills in focused ways to create value in your roles and initiatives.

*“Do not wish to be anything but what you are, and try to
be that perfectly”*

--St. Francis De Sales

In other words, a sharply focused purpose is your ultimate value creator. It provides high-level guidance and direction to your daily activities, and in so doing, cuts through the “busy-ness” in your life. It feeds your ability to live in fulfillment instead of emptiness.

A Set of Powerful Leadership Questions

It has been said that the current results, relationships, and conditions of our lives are nothing more than the sum of the decisions made to date. For babies and children, this may not be very accurate. However, with each successive year that we spend in this world, this statement most certainly rings ever more true.

We make hundreds, if not thousands, of decisions each day. These small and large decisions add up to produce results, relationships, and conditions in our lives. Some of the decisions we make have become habitual; others require conscious thought. But, in the end, it is the quality of these many decisions that determine the quality of each person's life.

“The most important question to ask on the job is not ‘What am I getting?’ The most important question to ask is ‘What am I becoming?’”

*--Jim Rohn
Author, Speaker, and Entrepreneur*

At the most fundamental level, we make our many decisions in response to the conscious and subconscious questions we ask of ourselves. Thus, to improve our decisions, we need to improve our questions. Champions possess the fundamental habit of asking, refining, and creating great questions for themselves and others.

Champions know that any set of powerful leadership questions will consist of personal, interpersonal, and organizational queries. Each type of question is critical to creating quality results, relationships, and experiences. However, it's the personal questions that must come first. One cannot make the highest quality decisions regarding interpersonal and organizational issues without first making quality personal decisions.

Asking one's self the right personal questions can be a difficult, even painful, process. But the bravery we bring to the exercise makes all the difference in the quality of life and experiences that one creates. By asking ourselves the right personal questions, we focus the mind on things that feed the creative process (our ability to create great results, relationships and conditions) instead of the things that block or destroy the creative process. I was first introduced to this concept in the early 1990's through Anthony Robbins' work. He developed a set of personal power questions that he shared in "Awaken the Giant Within," and suggested that readers consider the list twice a day – morning and night. My clients and I have found this discipline most helpful.

Still, we must remember that personal questions are just the first section of a much longer list of powerful leadership questions. We need to regard these personal questions as only the starting point of a host of other inquiries intended to guide the individual or collective

decisions we make, be they aimed at interpersonal relationships or organizational interactions.

Champions do not consider this detailed process of questioning merely time wasted, or needless process imposed, as so many of today's time-pressed leaders might. Rather, champions understand the inherent value of employing a complete set of powerful personal, interpersonal, and organizational leadership questions to guide them to their goals. I have developed a full set of these powerful leadership questions for the LEARNING to be a Champion™ system. These questions lead to better daily decision-making and assist us as we pursue a compelling future vision and achieve a sharply focused purpose.

A Quarterly Breakthrough Goal

Navigating life and organizations over time is often compared to traveling on an airplane. We must know where we are headed, have a well functioning airplane, attend to critical checklists and activities along the way, successfully take off, and land, and navigate the plane properly between take off and landing to successfully arrive at our destination. We have different perspectives and completely different critical activities when we are on or near the ground than when we are at 10,000 feet or at 50,000 feet.

The first three components of a champion's success system described above allow for success at the 50,000 foot level. The long-term, high-level focus created by these first three components is absolutely necessary, in my view, because a champion rarely sees the consequences of his or her daily questioning and decision-making without looking out some distance. When this questioning and decision-making is tied to a compelling future vision, a sharply focused purpose, and a powerful set of leadership questions, the compounded value of the effort is absolutely tremendous. I know this because I have seen it, and I have lived it. But there needs to be a mix of short-term (ground level and 10,000 foot) and long-term orientation (50,000 foot) to get from point A to point B..

Still, champions know that if the first three components represent guidance, the last three are implementation. Much of the daily and compounded personal, interpersonal, and organizational value occurs where the rubber meets the road (ground level) in short-term execution.

“Goals work. They empower you to do more for yourself, others, and, in fact, all of humanity.”

***--Mark Victor Hansen
Author, Speaker, and Master Motivator***

Compelling future visions are not achieved through the accomplishment of a long series of linear, short-term goals and tasks alone. These short-term goals and tasks are necessary, but not sufficient, components of the process for moving forward. In the short-term, we must learn to identify and pursue a major breakthrough goal in

conjunction with other linear short-term goals and tasks, if we hope to make significant leaps toward our vision.

This is especially true in our knowledge economy and the new sorts of workers we employ. No longer are results solely contingent on the physical labor of the workforce; instead, results depend on our ability to create synergistic value through knowledge, relationships, and innovation. Thus, we must deploy appropriately adjusted methods for creating different kinds of results.

Breakthrough goals are the ones that catalyze quantum leaps in your progress toward your compelling future vision. When defined appropriately, the breakthrough goals take advantage of potential synergies that exists in several areas of your life and/or organizations, and forces you and others to stretch to make them reality.

Breakthrough goals do not exist in isolation, however. Your breakthrough goal must be aligned, complimentary, and supportive of the most important incremental goals in your life and that of your organization, so as not to create any unnecessary roadblocks or challenges along the way. The breakthrough goal, on its own, will do plenty to test your mettle in addressing roadblocks and challenges.

“That’s what I mean by a breakthrough goal. Something that changes your life, brings you new opportunities, gets you in front of the right people, and takes every new activity, relationship, group you’re involved in to a higher level.”

*--Jack Canfield
Author, The Success Principle*

A process for gathering and developing ideas to accelerate, innovate, and improve on the journey toward the compelling future vision

Appropriately defining your breakthrough and short-term goals should provide a great opportunity for you and your organization. However, the appropriately defined breakthrough goal cannot be reached merely through adherence to your current high standards of performance. This fact, unfortunate but true, will most certainly cause tension for those committed to achieving a breakthrough goal. However, champions understand that the breakthrough goal is a stretch for themselves and others, and thus requires the creation of a process for gathering and developing ideas by which to accelerate, innovate, and improve on the journey toward the compelling vision.

Remember, these ideas are about accelerating, innovating, and improving the *value* you create in this world. They are not ideas motivated by a desire to make people work harder or faster. Ideas that exist solely to accelerate the human pace of production. or to increase the amount of linear effort made by humans, are not sustainable in the long run. Effectiveness actually decreases after progressively longer periods of linear stress

associated with productivity increases associated with accelerating human performance. All living organisms break down under increased and longer durations of stress when they are not balanced by periods of energy recovery. Human beings are at their most productive, it has been shown, when each wave of stress is followed by a period of recovery. James Loehr and Tony Schwartz discuss this concept in great detail in “The Power of Full Engagement.”

“Dream lofty dreams, and as you dream, so shall you become. Your Vision is your promise of what you shall one day be; your Ideal is the prophecy of what you shall at last unveil.”

*--James Allen (1864-1912)
Author, As a Man Thinketh*

Ideas aimed not at accelerating people but systems and processes *can* be sustained. Champions understand this, and build processes for engaging the people around them to gather and develop these ideas. They systematically and regularly encourage the people around them to note, develop, expand on, and apply these ideas. Champions see themselves as facilitators of this process and do not attach themselves to having to be the “idea person.” In fact, champions are cautious about their interactions with “idea guys/gals,” as these people crave grand recognition and rarely take ownership for implementation, where real value and results are achieved.

In assuming the facilitator’s role around ideas, champions recognize idea creation and contribution at all levels of the organization. They provide rewards for ideas that create real value for themselves as leaders and for their organization. In so doing, these champions build strong teams, each member of which is committed to a compelling future vision, and the breakthrough and incremental goals required to reach it.

A process for acknowledging, recognizing, and celebrating victories along the way

This last component is a necessary part of gathering and developing ideas to accelerate, innovate, and improve. But it is truly characteristic of champions in all their activities and endeavors, be they personal or organizational. In pursuing compelling future visions, sharply focused purposes, and breakthrough goals, the champion recognizes the need and value of celebrating not just at the end of the journey, but all along the way.

“To love what you do and feel that it matters – how could anything be more fun?”

Katherine Graham

It is as simple as this: Champions recognize the emotional and psychological value of fun. They know that everybody needs encouragement when faced with great personal and professional challenges – even they themselves, as champions! Commitment and performance are hard work, they understand, and when a period of maximal effort is

followed by acknowledgment, recognition, and celebration, the champion is not just rewarding a single effort. He or she is also motivating future efforts – whether those are the champion’s own personal efforts, or the organization’s. There may be those who think that calling someone to a podium for applause, or throwing a thank-you party is an unnecessary ritual in a competitive world, but champions have learned otherwise. Champions fully appreciate the emotional and psychological aspects of gaining commitment and fueling performance needed to achieve great goals. Thus, they attend to these aspects personally and with their relationships and organizations. And in so doing, they are investing in many future breakthroughs – their own, and those of their associates.

SUMMARY

Champions experience the results they achieve by applying the right strategies, and working hard on the appropriate initiatives, goals, and tasks. Most champions develop personal and organizational success systems within which these strategies and hard work are employed.

The LEARNING to be a Champion™ system was developed to provide the framework for people in all walks of life to engage in higher levels of doing and being. The framework allows people to systematically use the six key success components to live the life of a champion.

About the Author

Jon L. Iveson, Ph.D., The Champion’s Coach, is the founder of LEARNING to be a Champion™. He assists organizations, entrepreneurs, executives, and individuals to get clear on and pursue the champion results and relationships they truly desire. In addition, he specializes in assisting organizations to create high performance organizations and environments. If you would like more information on his advice, programs, and offerings, please visit www.learningtobeachampion.com.