



## A Picture of Prosperity???

A friend and I sat for a cup of hot chocolate recently and, quite naturally, the conversation eventually turned to the subject of work. My friend is an exec in a company that, on paper, is clearly doing well -- rising revenue and profit, growing staff, expanding presence. We're talking good stuff here! Despite this picture of prosperity, though, there are signs and lapses and challenges that are beginning to raise red flags for some internally. However, to date, their calls for early, preventive intervention have been discounted because...this business is successful!

That conversation really has stayed with me. How sad it is to see an organization finally make it -- finally begin achieving in wonderful ways what it was established to do -- but, at the same time, be at risk of losing some (if not all) of it because it doesn't steward that success well. And, although my friend talked about this in the context of a company, individuals are not immune from experiencing bad success.

In this month's **EA Insights**, let's consider three mindsets that may cause success to be short-lived. It's our hope that this information will help you experience nothing but good success!

All the best,

*June*

June Melvin Mickens  
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## Three Signs of Bad Success

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Just read the papers, watch the news, scan magazines at the grocery store, or step back and observe what's happening around you, and you'll see it -- people or businesses that reach a level of success and then crash and burn. Why is that? Could it be possible that success isn't the good thing we've been led to believe it is?

Absolutely not! Being bold enough to dream, to set targets, and to work to reach those goals is exhilarating -- not only as you're struggling through but also as you begin to realize the fruit of your labor and sacrifice. That's what success is all about...and that's a good thing.

What, then, is behind the double-edged sword that we so often see (or have experienced ourselves)? What turns natural hard work and accomplishment into disaster? Let me offer three mindsets that are likely to result in good success turning bad.

### Mindset #1: I/We don't need counsel.

Have you ever witnessed a person who did well once and who, following that victory, thought she knew everything? Most of us have. You see, success can be a heady thing. It can give you an exaggerated sense of who you are and what you can do. Now, while believing in the skills, gifts, and opportunities you've been blessed with is

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## Quotes

*"We are very pleased to have Matt on our staff, ... His professionalism and hunger to be the best will be a great fit in the front office."*  
~Rick Adams

*"Your even-handed support and wise counsel continues to be an invaluable resource to us."*  
~Bertie Ahern

*"The light that a man receiveth by counsel from another is drier and purer than that which cometh from his own understanding and judgment, which is ever infused and drenched in his affections and customs."*  
~Francis Bacon

*"Ultimately, for them to sustain their growth and be successful in the long term, they're going to have to move in new directions[.]"*  
~Van Baker

*"It's absolutely pure stewardship, the beneficial use of what otherwise might be considered waste."*  
~Mark Bryant

*"Don't feel entitled to anything you didn't sweat and struggle for."*  
~Marian Wright Edelman

*"If we allow this kind of activity to go on, we're really endangering the long-term prosperity of our country. It's very much a stewardship issue."*  
~John Hart

*"The difference between a successful person and others is not a lack of strength, not a lack of knowledge, but rather in a lack of will."*

important, when you begin relying *solely* on your own devices, you're in for a rude awakening...sooner or later.

It's critical that every person or organization have trusted advisors. These are people who are your champions. Because they believe in you and what you're trying to accomplish, they generously extend their time, wisdom, connections, etc. to help you advance. At the same time, though, these are people who are unbiased; who, because of their distance, may see more clearly in areas where you are too entangled; and who tell you the truth, even when you'd rather not hear it.

So, it's time to push the pause button when the timeframe between wisdom sessions with trusted advisors becomes more and more lengthy, when it gets easier to disregard such counsel, or when you view anyone who contradicts your position as more of a nuisance than a help. Those are sure signs that you're the one losing perspective and that your success is being built on a foundation that's far from solid.

#### **Mindset #2: We're okay just as we are.**

Study people or organizations "on their way up," and you see a drive, a desire, a hunger to be their best, to make their mark, to accomplish their goals. What happens to some, though, once they begin meeting their targets consistently? They lose the drive that propelled them in the first place.

If you think about it, the way many people view success is skewed. Success once is not success always. Once you begin achieving your goals, it's not a given that you always will. And, that's why there are so many "flash in the pan" people and organizations. You can't rest on your laurels. Sustained success is about continually working, consistently honing your business and/or craft, and constantly setting and meeting new goals for yourself, company, or customers. The work of success is not a one-time thing; it's a way of life.

#### **Mindset #3: I/we are entitled to success.**

Whether we're thinking about the success of an individual or an organization, it's all a matter of stewardship, not entitlement. One must steward talents, resources, or whatever is of value. Success goes bad quickly when the notion of stewardship isn't taken seriously.

Stewardship means protecting what's currently entrusted to you. Think of the professional who rejects learning any new process as "the favor of the month" or who declines offers for ongoing coaching or training. Consider the business that subjects staff to horrid working conditions, poor pay, and inadequate supervision. Each of these situations reflects a failure to recognize something of current value -- a job, a workforce -- and to safeguard or make the most of it in order to leverage today's success.

Stewardship also is future-facing. It involves being constantly watchful for current skills, people, or processes that are likely to be important for the future and then investing in or building upon them. It's recognizing, as stated in Mindset #2, that you can't rest on your laurels; the way you function today may not translate well into the future. That doesn't mean that a person or business should do a complete overhaul every couple of years. (That's clearly not wise.) Instead, moving forward successfully requires a continual assessment of skills, people, processes, etc.; the ongoing enhancement of what currently is a part of the arsenal; and the strategic acquisition of missing pieces. Such an approach takes the stewardship of what one has today, adds to it care for those assets that support effective movement into the future, and combines them with new assets that become essential along the way.

Yes, bad success is an oxymoron. But, it doesn't have to be a reality for any person or business with the right mindset.

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~Vince Lombardi

*"Some successful kids are so driven they have in mind what they want to achieve and that is more important to them than hanging out[.]"*

~Dan Mullen

*"Hopefully, this gives us some confidence to try to get better, that's the biggest thing. We've had pretty good success when we run our offense properly."*

~Jerry Sloan

*"We're positive with the inroads we're making. We have good success, good focus. Hope it continues."*

~Pete Smith

*"At this particular juncture I think what you want is as much honest counsel as you can get."*

~Tony Snow

*"I think we have a hungry team of guys, who want to be successful. So we'll do whatever it takes and work as hard as we must to do it. And I think we're talented, and that makes it even more exciting."*

~Michael Strahan

*"Hunger is the handmaid of genius."*

~Mark Twain

*"I don't want to let my guard down and feel too comfortable. If you become complacent, you start feeling entitled. \*\*\*I'm ready to [do] whatever I gotta do to make sure that I do the best possible job at whatever wonderful opportunities I've been handed"*

~Mark Wahlberg

*"[W]e come together...and try to iron out some of the things we were deficient in.... I think we are going to continue to improve and ... be successful"*

~Jerry Zavagin

## About Executive Advantage

At **Executive Advantage**, we are committed to providing results-based business and management consulting, leadership development, and coaching support. We partner with business leaders to build healthy, well-functioning organizations, where goals are met and people thrive. We also partner with individuals to create professional (and personal) lives with clearer direction, improved results, and greater balance.

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