



Genius File #11 – Taking Charge of Your Own Success In Life.

By

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Who's In Charge? Most likely, if you struggle with being successful or satisfied with what you do eight hours a day, it isn't you. The problem with many people who struggle to be successful is a belief system that makes them dependent on their company - to tell them how to be successful, what talents to develop, what skills to possess.

If you depend on the company to tell you how to succeed then before you can become more successful you need to examine your own belief system about who's in charge of your own success. The first question isn't, "How do I succeed?" The question you must ask yourself is, "Who is in charge of my success?"

Unfortunately many people have a belief that the company or the outside world has more control than they do over their life. There is a term in psychology called *locus of control* and it speaks to a belief about whether the outcomes of our actions are contingent on what we do or on events outside of our personal control.

The Genius Study found that the most successful people believe that they have control over their life and destiny. They have an internal locus of control. The study also found that less successful people tended to have the opposite, an external locus of control. Many of the latter share a common belief that the company knows best how to specifically fulfill a role in order to be successful.

While we may not have much control over a great many problems we might face (e.g., accidents, natural disasters, downsizing), how we *respond* to such events is very much in our control. Having an internal locus of control means believing that you can make a difference in how your life turns out. It means believing

that you do have a lot of influence over how successful you are, and it means you believe that you are the best one to know how best to fulfill a role.

The really crucial area where you must have that personal control is in how authentic you are in your work. Letting others tell you what natural talents you should have, what should motivate you or how you should behave naturally will never deliver great performance. The most successful people in the study were those who took charge of their own success, and their own paths to it.

In other words, when it comes to how they go about getting things done, or which direction they take to achieve an objective, the most successful people had an extremely honed self-awareness for their own natural talents, skills and gifts and they make sure that *how* they go about getting something done is well aligned with those talents, skills and motivations. What they don't do is allow others, who don't understand their own natural skill set as well, to tell them how to be successful.

This is why it is crucial that you start to believe in your own ability to control your life, your performance and your success. You must stop depending primarily on the “one best way” according to others, and create your own best way (a “my best way”). Perhaps your best way is not very far from theirs. Perhaps your best way is just a minor tweak on their best way, but it is your tweak, not theirs, and as such it will be more effective because it factors in your self-knowledge and your own talents.

Taking charge of your success and level of authenticity doesn't have to involve radical change or a revolution to overthrow your manager or even quitting your job necessarily. Sometimes it just means focusing more of your efforts in areas where you get *in the flow*, and always looking for ways to outsource any responsibilities or duties that prevent you from being in the flow.

Of course, if your role never puts you in the flow then it is probably such an inauthentic role for you that you may never reach your highest levels of performance. If this is the case then your best bet may indeed be to quit, but most of the time little changes can make a huge difference.

We all have many titles in life (e.g., husband/wife, father/mother, employee, friend, etc.) but in order to really take charge of your life you need to add one more. That new title is called the SEO or, Self Executive Officer, which simply means that you will be the boss of your own life from now on.

Former Chief Marketing Officer for PepsiCo Inc, Michael Lorelli, talks about taking charge of your own destiny when he describes the culture at PepsiCo. Michael says, “It was a cultural phrase at PepsiCo to say ‘it's easier to ask for forgiveness than permission.’ The culture supported being independent, taking risks and not looking to management to guide every action.”

Being your own SEO means getting rid of your legacy of dependence, taking control of your own path to achieving your goals and doing what “feels” right

even if it isn't the traditional way. Sometimes it even means doing what feels right even if it's not what your company has told you to do.

A great example of someone who got rid of his dependence on management to tell him how to succeed, and who became his own SEO, is Rowan. Rowan was one of the most persuasive people I've ever known. When they say "he could sell ice to Eskimo's" this is the guy they were talking about. As good as Rowan was at selling, though, he absolutely stunk at being organized, even though this was an important aspect of his role.

It wasn't that he was lazy or had a bad attitude about self-improving. It was simply a fact that based on how his mind naturally saw things and made decisions, he truly wasn't very good at being organized or seeing details very well. As a result he was constantly losing his paper work, missing appointments or showing up without the proper equipment. It was holding him back from succeeding in his role.

So one day Rowan decided it was up to him to be in charge of how he succeeded. He asked his manager if he could get some help in his weaker area by outsourcing some of his organizational duties. Rowan asked if perhaps he didn't have to fill out so many reports or maybe he could get some assistance from the sales manager's regional secretary.

Unfortunately his manager said, "no", but instead of living with that decision - and allowing someone else to be in charge of his personal success - Rowan decided to take his success into his own hands and become his own SEO.

Without asking his manager, Rowan worked out a deal with a secretary in the office to help him with his organization woes, in return for a small share of his commissions.

Would it have been ideal for his manager to see the benefits of freeing Rowan up to do what he did best and help him create a more authentic role? Of course it would have. Did his manager do this, no. Why didn't he, who knows for sure.

The key point is that Rowan didn't allow his manager's poor decision to hinder his success. He found a way around his obstacles and while he spent some of his own money to do it, it paid him a lot more in sales in the end.

Two years later, after his sales manager quit, Rowan - who was now one of the top reps in the company - let his new manager know all about the unauthorized contract with the office secretary. The new, more enlightened, manager was able to see the value in the relationship and the only change he insisted on was that his regional assistant take over the responsibilities, instead of the office secretary, and that she do this at the company's expense instead of it coming out of Rowan's commissions.

If, as you read this story, you are thinking that what Rowan did was totally wrong - if you are thinking that he should have been fired - then perhaps you should step back and look at just how much of that legacy belief you bring to

the table. If your first thought is that Rowan didn't follow directions, cheated, was lazy or incompetent, you are thinking like an old world manager. When you look at it from a different vantage point, however, what really happened?

Regardless of whether or not Rowan followed directions, he took action to correct a problem that was inhibiting his success. Regardless of who took action, the rep was freed up to focus on what he did best, was able to get in the flow much more often and ended up making a lot more money for himself and his employer. At the simplest level, what he did made him happier and made the company roughly \$650,000 more in sales. Outside of not doing as he was told, what did he do wrong?

Think of a time when you knew that another route was the better way to go, but your company didn't agree. What did you do? Can you think of a time when you didn't become your own SEO and as a result, your success was limited?

If you had gone ahead and done what you thought should be done, and it worked, what would the benefits have been versus the fact that you didn't follow directions?

Remember, if you are to be more successful, more fulfilled or simply happier and reward in what you do and how you do it, then the question you must ask yourself is, "Who is in charge of my success?"

The Genius Files is a series of educational articles crafted from lessons learned in the recently concluded Genius Project (a seven-year, 197,000, twenty-three country study of what drives individual excellence in the new knowledge worker economy).

The Genius Project is the foundational research behind the latest book from Innermetrix Inc Founder and CEO Jay Niblick titled, *What's Your Genius – How the Best Think for Success*.

To view the entire Genius series, or to learn more about how you can uncover your own genius, please visit <http://www.whatsyourgenius.com>.