

ROAD SIGNS FOR SUCCESS

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Introduction

You are about to start a journey and this book will serve as your map. You will find 99 “road signs” in its pages. Each road sign contains a principle or a fundamental law that will guide you on your journey. These signs will guide you on the road to reaching your full potential.

You’ll find that these same road signs have guided successful people from all walks of life from the beginning of time to the present. These principles were discovered and followed by great philosophers such as Socrates and Ralph Waldo Emerson; great statesmen such as Thomas Jefferson and Winston Churchill; great businessmen such as Thomas Watson and Sam Walton; great athletes such as Satchel Paige and Wayne Gretzky; and great clergymen such as John Wesley and Norman Vincent Peale. These principles have withstood the test of time.

It’s been said that success is a journey — not a destination. You will experience a new excitement in your life if you challenge yourself to follow these time-proven principles as you read the pages of this book.

You will discover that ordinary people like you and me can accomplish the extraordinary if we’ll simply follow the signs — *Road Signs For Success*.

*“An inspired vision can turn
your worst nightmare into a
dream come true.”*

— Jim Whitt



A bank was having “people” problems and I was asked to sit in on a meeting to discuss what the problem might be. It seems that their employees were making “dumb, bone-headed mistakes” according to the president.

I asked if they had a mission statement. Only one to satisfy the regulators I was told. Could any of the officers tell me the mission or vision of the bank? No. This really miffed the president. He told me in no uncertain terms that every employee of the bank knew what the mission was. “What is it?” I asked. “To kiss the customer’s lips until they’re chapped,” snapped the president.

I had to restrain myself from laughing. I doubt that if I interviewed every employee that a single one would have told me that the mission of the bank was to “kiss the customer’s lips until they’re chapped.”

Since we are naturally goal-seeking beings we have to have a goal to set our sights on. In an organization we must establish a vision and values. This enables

the employees to match their vision and values with the organization. Without these two critical elements the daily activities of the employees are not going to be in congruence with the vision and values of the organization. The result is inner turmoil — within the organization and the individuals who work there.

If, however, the vision and values of the organization are clearly defined and shared, then employees can match their daily activities to the vision and values. The result — inner peace — for the individuals and the organization.

I use this example in my seminars: Imagine your organization is a vehicle. You're driving and one of your employees taps you on the shoulder and asks, "Where are we going?" "I don't know," you reply. "Besides, it really doesn't matter." We can expect the "dumb, bone-headed mistakes" the bank president described if we don't tell our people where we are going. He just didn't get it. He wasn't getting the results from the employees that he wanted because they didn't know what the mission was. He was expecting them to travel a road with no map or road signs.

I share three "road signs" with the seminar participants that will guide them down the road to organizational success — purpose, principle and perseverance. Purpose establishes the destination. People are not motivated without a purpose. Principle defines values. What values do they esteem as critical to their success? Perseverance — people can overcome the obstacles encountered on their road to success only if they know where they are going.

*“Is it the bell that rings,
Is it the hammer that rings,
Or is it the meeting of the
two that rings?”*

— Old Japanese Poem



Independence — and apple pie. We pride ourselves on being individualists, independent and self-reliant. To achieve individual success, we can be independent but to achieve success as an organization or as a country we must go beyond independence.

Stephen Covey, in his book *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*, says there are three levels of maturity. Here's my paraphrase of each: (1) Dependence — we are totally dependent from conception through early childhood. (2) Independence — we learn self-reliance. (3) Interdependence — we must learn to cooperate with others.

Dr. W. Edwards Deming, the father of the Japanese industrial revolution describes it like this: "An orchestra is judged by listeners, not so much by illustrious players, but by the way they work together. The conductor, as manager, begets cooperation between the players, as a system, every player to

support the others.” That’s a good example of interdependence — the parts working together for the good of the whole.

If an orchestra is judged by its listeners then a business is judged by its customers, an association by its members and a country by its citizens. And like an orchestra, it is team work, not star performances, that determine how we are judged.

How can we achieve interdependence within an organization? We just need the sense of a goose. By flying in a “V” formation, geese add over 70% flying range as opposed to winging it on their own. The lead goose and each succeeding goose creates an uplift for the bird immediately behind each time they flap their wings. The lead goose rotates back in the formation when it tires and another bird takes its place. And when a bird is wounded or sick, two geese accompany it to the ground until it dies or is able to fly again. That’s interdependence.

“Is it the bell that rings, is it the hammer that rings, or is it the meeting of the two that rings? The Liberty Bell is in Philadelphia, the city of brotherly love. It is a symbol of our independence as a nation and a reminder — a reminder that freedom only rings as a result of our interdependence — our ability to work together for the common good. All we need is the sense of a goose.

*“Don’t part company
with your ideals. They are
anchors in a storm.”*

— Arnold Glasgrow



Remember in the 1990s when we discovered members of congress bounced personal checks and didn't pay their tabs at the congressional restaurant? No wonder we can't balance our country's budget and we have a national deficit that staggers the mind. In 1961 we actually had a budget surplus. What happened? Somewhere along the way we parted company with our ideals.

I looked up ideal in the dictionary. One definition particularly got my attention: "A conception of something in its most excellent form." The ideals that this country were founded on were concepts such as self-reliance, free enterprise, the golden rule and pay as you go. Worthy ideals.

We didn't get in the shape we're in overnight. It has taken years, over 200 to be more precise. If we don't like what's going on in Washington we merely have to look in the mirror to point the finger at who to blame.

It's not that we deliberately set out to part with our ideals. It happened so slowly we didn't even notice. They simply eroded. It's much like a little creek on a farm we owned. That creek used to flow and have water in it all the time. But over the years, beginning back when this part of the country was first being farmed, erosion slowly set in. Wind and rain have washed the dirt into that creek until over the years it began silting in. This process was greatly accelerated during the dust bowl years of the thirties.

Today no water runs at all except after a thunderstorm. Then water will wash down into that old creek bed and pool below a small concrete bridge that was built by the Works Progress Administration in the thirties. And there, after several days, it becomes stagnant. It becomes stagnant because it is no longer moving forward. And that's what happens to us — we become stagnant when we are no longer moving forward. Like the creek that no longer flows, our ideals erode into a state of stagnation.

Don't part company with your ideals. They are anchors in a storm. Let's throw out our anchors. If we do, the storm will pass but our ideals will remain.

*“The secret to making dreams
come true? Curiosity, confidence,
courage and constancy.”*

— Walt Disney



It could be said that Walt Disney lived in a fairy tale world or more accurately created one for us to live in. His secret to making dreams come true? Curiosity, confidence, courage and constancy. This twentieth century pioneer shared these same remarkable traits with a pioneer from the fifteenth century, Christopher Columbus.

Curiosity is said to be what killed the cat — but better to die curious than to live in ignorance. Curiosity is what fuels the fire of invention and creativity. Curiosity is natural. As children we ask why — only to be told by adults not to ask so many questions. A few brave souls keep asking however and with their curiosity comes discovery.

Columbus just had to know what lay across the ocean. He suffered a great deal of ridicule in his pursuit and even today, 500 years later, people still miss the point of what he accomplished.

Is confidence a prerequisite for success or is it a result of experiencing success? A little of both I believe. Confidence is like yeast — it causes the bread to rise. Without yeast it goes flat. Confidence is the yeast of ambition. Confidence requires faith in a positive outcome. Why would anyone set sail in three ships for the edge of a flat world? Confidence that it was round.

It isn't enough to have curiosity and confidence. Once you've set sail the obstacles begin to mount and fear sets in. You have to be courageous to look the worst in the eye and not blink. This is where you separate the men from the boys. Columbus risked mutiny and yet kept sailing west.

Constancy should be at the top of the list. In my study of individual and organizational success, purpose is the common thread. Anyone who makes dreams come true has a purpose and remains constant to that purpose. That was true for Columbus, it was true for Walt Disney and it's true for you and me. History holds a place for people with a purpose.

"The secret to making dreams come true? Curiosity, confidence, courage and constancy." In 1492 Columbus sailed the ocean blue — and did something people said couldn't be done. He discovered a new world. Nearly five centuries later Walt Disney used the same formula to do something people said couldn't be done — create a new world. Disneyland — a place where dreams come true.

*“God will not look you over for
medals, degrees or
diplomas but for scars.”*

— Elbert Hubbard



In his book, *Man's Search for Meaning*, Viktor Frankl wrote about his experiences as a prisoner in a Nazi concentration camp during World War II. Dr. Frankl, a psychiatrist, had developed a theory he called logotherapy. At the core of this theory is the belief that man's primary motivational force is his search for meaning.

As a Jew in Austria prior to World War II he saw thousands of German Jews being shipped to concentration camps. He had the opportunity to flee Austria with his wife before the Nazis annexed the country but it meant that he would have to leave his mother and father behind. He also reasoned that if his theory of logotherapy were valid then he must prove it to himself. He elected to remain in Austria.

Eventually he and the rest of his family were incarcerated in concentration camps. Millions died in the gas chambers. He was the sole survivor of his

family. The survivors endured suffering that we cannot imagine in our worst nightmares.

It's hard to imagine that anything positive could come from this morbid experience. But Dr. Frankl did learn something essential to his work. He learned that others may control our lives but they cannot control our attitude. He also learned that the survivors of the death camps were those who had something of importance in their life that made it worth living.

The scars of Dr. Frankl's suffering provided the critical evidence essential to substantiate his theory of logotherapy. Scars are the evidence that the wounds have healed — many patients and fellow psychiatrists have benefitted from his scars.

All of us have experiences in life that wound us. Perhaps, like Dr. Frankl, the scars that come as the result of our wounds and healing will benefit others. In this, there is meaning.

“God will not look you over for medals, degrees or diplomas but for scars.” Those scars are reminders that wounds do heal.