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LEADERS & SUCCESS

IBD'S 10 SECRETS TO SUCCESS

Investor's Business Daily has spent years analyzing leaders and successful people in all walks of life. Most have 10 traits that, when combined, can turn dreams into reality. Each day, we highlight one.

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DECIDE UPON YOUR TRUE DREAMS AND GOALS: Write down your specific goals and develop a plan to reach them.

Are You Result-Oriented?

You are judged by your results. But it's is what goes on before—and even after—you get those results that fuels success.

To get the applause, you've got to stay motivated even when nobody's looking

recently, several chief executives from around the country agreed to talk openly about the behind-the-scenes actions and mind-sets that have helped them meet their objectives.

Any of them will tell you that companies usually don't get from vision to victory by accident.

Here's a breakdown of their thoughts, and a few specific techniques that might help you accomplish your aims:

Look forward and back. "I'm much more interested in feedback and follow-up analysis than I am in the goals themselves," said Glenn Argenbright, CEO of Saflink Corp.

"A failed project with successful execution is incredibly helpful in that it shows management what not to do in the future and assist in refining future objectives and programs."

On the other hand, Argenbright added, "Poor follow-through, even on a successful project, gives management very little to build upon. Why was it successful? How can we repeat that success?"

It's also vital to figure out a good, easily replicated system for setting benchmarks and measuring performance.

"A consistent approach to objectives," Argenbright said, "fosters a culture of trust, creativity and enthusiasm."

Cast roles. Sara Gould, CEO of the Ms. Foundation for Women, has embraced a method for building accountability that she picked up from management coach Sheila Collins.

The letters A, S, C, I, O might look like alphabet soup to you. But they can help project leaders stay clear about roles and responsibilities.

Here's how it works: Draw five columns on a sheet of paper. At the top of each column, write one of the letters. In the appropriate columns, jot down the names of those who'll be accountable for the project (A), those who'll support it (S), those who'll need to be consulted (C), those who'll need to be informed (I), and those who'll OK it (O).

Some of the roles might overlap, but the chart helps leaders delegate and track who's doing what. "It also helps with the problem of nobody thinking they're accountable, so therefore it doesn't get done," Gould explained.

Think success, not failure. Sound obvious, right? But Robert W. MacDonald, who retired in 2002 as CEO of Allianz Life Insurance Co. of North America, says far too many thriving companies stop worrying about getting better, and then get bent on just not getting behind. "If the object is to avoid failure," he said, "then failure may actually be induced."

Paint your vision red. The language of business can become stale, but don't let that infect your feelings about your objectives.

Your enthusiasm is a vital ingredient in your company's success. "Your vision is not academic and stodgy," said David Becker, CEO of Philippe Becker Design Inc. "It's bright, panoramic and in Technicolor—so loud you can smell it."

Amy Alexander