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Essay #1

## **What is Being Successful?**

If a bookstore is a place where you can find a publication about certain topics, it is also a place to take the pulse of our society. Indeed, by just getting a look at the shelves, one can know what subjects sell the most. It is interesting to see that many “how-to” books discuss ways of walking the yellow brick road of success. Of course, none of them describe the same method, so there is a small chance in taking the right book that fits our personality. However, what is the meaning of success? Why do so many people need to succeed in something? We can define the success as a target on which we focus and it is related to a personal fulfillment. Since it is a relative notion, the question that arises is what elements show that one was, is or will be successful. Because this notion is so big, we can file it in two general divisions: a material success and a personal one, and try to demonstrate which of them is the most important.

Material success can be defined as a success we can quantify. It is connected for example to graduate, everything related with money and goods, climbing the social ladder, and so forth.

One of the first keys of success is a good education. In fact, it is easy to understand that it is the basis for material accomplishments. Attempting to enter a prestigious university, having good grades are the primary elements that guarantee a worthy and well-paying job. Being an engineer from M.I.T., a lawyer from Harvard, graduated an M.B.A. from Berkeley... can open many doors. It is the first step of success. However, we know that only a few people are able to become one of these happy-few. It is for this reason why these certificates are so attractive. For those who can not afford the tuition to study in these universities or because they never have been a valedictorian (like most of us!), there are other parallel roads.

The simpler way to count your success is money and everything that is related with it. Geniuses are not the only individuals who can earn money. Being clever may sometimes be enough. There are many ways to gain money. If one works well and hard, one can expect a promotion. This is the most common method to succeed: climbing the ladder of responsibilities inside a company. Thanks to one's experience, age and sometimes luck, one can begin his career as a clerk and finish it at the head of a department. It takes years, but it is usual. You can also create a company, or participating in the growth of it by holding stock options and shares. When these shares are high quoted in the Stock Exchange, you can sell them at the highest price. This is the base of billionaires in the Silicon Valley like Bill Gates, Steve Jobs and many others. Betting for a quick fortune with this method is risky. It is like Lottery in which one has a little chance to win. Some other people want to prove to the other that they have succeeded. It is not a matter to be the richest person in the world and do nothing with all that money, but to show they are successful. Being a landlord is a common example. Indeed, the most showy is to build your own

building with your name on it. It is a fashion to show your power. The Rockefeller Center in New York is a good illustration. Because he created an empire, the story of Rockefeller is representative of what many people want: climbing the social ladder and being part of an elite.

As the skyscrapers of the Rockefeller Center are very high, we can easily figure out how high was the social class of that man! Being part of an elite may be a personal achievement for people who have grown in modest conditions. The dream of the middle class is to be part of an upper one. Showing the signs of the success is their manner to indicate that they are deserving individuals. These signs of material success are usually a big car (and more than one), a big house in a ritzy area, being a member of a select golf club, etc. Possessing these signs comfort the successful person in its standing and tell the other that one belongs to an elite.

As we have seen, material success can be quantified and shown to everybody. It is an easy mark to focus when someone wants to succeed. But this kind of material and “objective” success is very different from personal success which is more subjective.

Because personal success is dramatically different from material success, it can not be quantified with the same method.

Defining this notion of success is far more difficult. It can take many different forms and sometimes can not be shared with others. The first aspect is that success brings a kind of satisfaction. Above all, it is a personal fulfillment. As we have seen above, material success can give satisfaction, but personal accomplishment completes this need too. For example, raising a family, closing gaps of knowledge, helping people in charitable institutions, developing relationships, all reveal different concepts of success. One can find happiness by just succeeding

in these topics instead of pushing for more money. For example, the Robin William's film Mrs. Doubtfire show a man, divorced from his wife, who is ready to do everything to spend more times with his children. So he decided to disguise himself as a housemaid and work for his ex-wife without attracting her attention. He realized his dreams, but it was his own one. We can agree or disagree with his attitude. However, it is hard to say if he totally or partly succeeded because he broke the law to achieve his goal. In fact, there is no method to give an accurate definition of personal success. Its subjectivity makes evident it has to be understood in a certain way to estimate its importance.

Material success is visible. Personal success is designed by our own vision. It belongs to our privacy, then it reveals our personality. Indeed, personal success can not be shared with the same manner that material success does. It unveils that we are capable of doing something. It applies to the sentimental, spiritual topics and to the political sphere too. What about Martin Luther King and Mahatma Gandhi? They were motivated by political and spiritual ideals; one for the equality of rights, the other for freedom and peace. They have done so much without any material goods that we can state they succeeded. Personal success can not be considered as a minor way to succeed in life. Therefore, taking care of the achievement of one's private life and individual feelings may be prestigious too. One must be as motivated as possible, with the same force as material success, if one wants to complete its goal.

Success is not a simple target at which we gaze. It is a reflection of our personality. It answers the question of what we want to do with our life. Although it has two faces, a material and a personal one, we can not oppose them. Actually, they are tied. For example, Orson Wells'

film Citizen Kane shows a rich and powerful man who built an empire with his successful newspapers. When he was dying, in his palace called Xanadu, his last word was “Rosebud”. The film drives the spectator to explain what was finally important for him. “Rosebud” was the name of a small toboggan he never played with when he was a child. This man had the opportunity to do everything, but could not do one thing, play with this toy. Succeeding in life is a personal fulfillment when you accomplish both of these notions. One completes the other, and could be a road to happiness.