

Conversations on Success

Introduction. . .

David Wright (Wright)

Today we are speaking with Paul Meshanko. Paul is a business owner, author and speaker who knows how to help people thrive, not just survive, in a climate of constant change. He knows that it is not what people think that determines their success or failure in life but how they think. After twelve years in sales and new product development for a Fortune 50 company, Paul opened the Ohio office of Edge Learning Institute, a world-renowned corporate leadership and training organization. Paul uses familiar situations, concrete research and a broad knowledge of many topics to deliver exciting presentations that not only educate but inspire as well as entertain.

Paul, welcome to *Conversations on Success!*

Paul Meshanko (Meshanko)

Thank you David!

Excerpt from the book...

Wright

Paul, just what is your definition of success and how can you measure it?

Meshanko

Everybody has their own definition of success and, proven or not, their own recipe for achieving it. There are a few ingredients that ought to be included in everybody's recipe. We should always start with a clear understanding of what's truly important to us. This includes both an up to date assessment of our core personal values and recognition of others, such as family and friends, who may also have a stake in what we do. This kind of insight or awareness typically comes from personal reflection or, for some people, meditation and prayer. It doesn't take long, but it does require taking ourselves off of the hamster wheel of life long enough to give it the attention it deserves.

The second ingredient of success is developing the discipline to spend our time and our efforts in a manner consistent with those people and things we think are important. There's an old saying that goes, "*If you don't know where you're going, any road will get you there*". Knowing what's really important to you and then consistently allocating your time accordingly is critical. It's a

simple strategy on the surface, but it's far from easy. Given the distractions that most of us face each day, it's easy to drift away from doing the things that really create value for us.

There's a third ingredient that's often overlooked, but is just as important. That's developing healthy self esteem for ourselves. When people feel unconditional warm regard and acceptance of themselves, they gain confidence to better deal with life's inevitable challenges. They also find it easier to give themselves permission to compete not with others, but with their own best self. It's amazing to me just how many people go through their entire lives feeling poorly about themselves because they never quite stack up to the images they see on television. Whether it's material wealth, athletic ability, good looks or professional success, focusing on these superficial indicators typically robs us of true enjoyment and satisfaction as we go through life.

You asked about measuring success and that's an easy one! There's only one sure way to measure whether or not you're on the right road - your road - to success. Look at the goals you're working on. If you're moving in the right direction, the goals that you're making progress on day by day, week by week and month by month will be in close alignment with your aspirations and core values. If they're not, it's time to rethink what you're doing.

Wright

What, in your opinion, prevents most people from achieving success?

Meshanko

A lack of honest and undistracted reflection is the single biggest culprit. We seem to live in a culture that increasingly devalues time for reflection. The busier we are, the better. It's almost as if we wear exhaustion and being perpetually busy as a badge of honor! Some of us even try to keep our kids' schedules booked for three months in advance. This way of living leaves very little time for reflection. When we don't take time to think about what's really important to us, we usually latch on to what others think is important to fill the void, and that's where trouble begins. We end up giving permission to complete strangers – advertisers, television and movie producers, and fashion magazine authors – to tell us what we should aspire to and how we should live our lives.

If you listen to all the images that are blasted at us from the media, images about the cars we should drive, the kind of houses we should live in, the kind of clothes we should wear and what we should do for entertainment, it becomes increasingly difficult for most people just to have a honest conversation with themselves about what really is important. And while it may be convenient to let the media (or anyone else) dictate what should be important to us, we do so at

our own peril. Everybody has an agenda. My advice? Build in at least 30 minutes every week to have a “conversation on success” with yourself. These are the most important conversations you’ll ever have.

Wright

Is there a certain way of thinking that successful people just seem to be born with?

Meshanko

In some cases, yes. More often though, I find that it’s something they’ve learned very early on, either from their parents or other mentors and role models. Either way, there are three patterns of thinking that I see successful people continuously demonstrating. The first is a very high level of personal awareness - these are people who know what’s really important to them and they also know what they’re willing to give to get it. Second, these people have an uncanny ability to stay focused on what they want to achieve and how they’re going to get it. Rather than dwelling on obstacles and problems, they focus on opportunities and solutions. Perennial low achievers will moan that they weren’t born that way and they just can’t think like that. Baloney! Even if you weren’t born that way, you can teach yourself to think that way. It’s not always easy, but it can be done.

The third pattern that I see with “naturally successful” people is arguably the most important. It’s the ability to maintain a positive attitude - even when things don’t go well. In fact there’s been a lot of research on this topic by Daniel Goleman, a Harvard Ph.D., detailed in his books on emotional intelligence¹. Part of his definition of what emotional intelligence includes is what I already alluded to - the ability to manage our emotions and stay positive, even during times of adversity. Again, even if you weren’t born this way, it’s a skill set and behavior pattern that you can learn.

Wright

So you’re saying that even if you don’t think this way naturally, or if you used to, but lost it somewhere along the way, you can you learn or develop these ways of thinking?

Meshanko

Absolutely! One of my favorite quotes is from a fellow named Albert E.N. Grey and he said, “*The only difference between successful people and unsuccessful people is, successful people have developed a habit of doing things that unsuccessful people don’t like to do*”. And one of those things that most people don’t like to do is be honest with themselves. The first step in changing how you think is to be willing to acknowledge what attitudes and behaviors typically get in your

¹ *Emotional Intelligence: Why it Matters More than IQ*, Daniel Goleman, 1995, Bantam Books.

way and then start to figure out which ones might be more appropriate to give you better results. You can't change the way you think by rationalizing away our bad behaviors and making excuses for yourself.

Once you've identified the new attitudes and behaviors you want, then you have to change your self talk. That means changing the actual words you use with yourself as you go through the day. It's like re-writing your own advertising campaign. Rather than beating yourself up when you fall short or make mistakes, you learn to say, "Next time I'll do better". Rather than saying, "I can't do that", you develop the habit of saying, "I haven't learned how yet, but I bet I can". If you fail to challenge your negative dialogue with yourself, it's been my experience that there's very little chance that you'll ever be able to change our attitudes and behaviors.

If you would like to read the entire book with Paul's complete interview as well as interviews with Jack Canfield, John Christensen and Joe Calloway, please log on to www.paulmeshanko.com and click on books link.

Conversations on Success is available online for **\$23.95** (including shipping and handling) and will be shipped within 24 hours from time of order.

