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## Roadblocks—12 Impediments to Success

Have you ever noticed that some people are successful at nearly everything they put their hand to? Have you ever noticed that some people fail over and over?

I know a couple of people who have a “gold thumb” for business. They are exceptionally bright, well-reasoned people. But most of the successful people I know are plodders. They work and fail, work and fail, but eventually they find success.

Whether you have a “gold thumb” or you are a plodder, if you are an achiever chances are that you plan, prepare, and implement well. When you fail chances are it is because of one of the twelve roadblocks listed below. Knowing them, confronting them, and building around them will increase your chance for success.

### **Roadblock #1: Money**

It is amazing to me the number of businesses that fail due to undercapitalization. This is not a problem exclusive to the small businessman. Any number of big divisions of large, well-respected companies launch products all the time without enough capital to reinforce their marketing, or match the spending they know will come from competitors.

Failure to have enough money to get a product to market, and hang on until it is successful wastes the money and resources you do have. Jesus said, *“For which of you, when he wants to build a tower, does not first sit down and calculate the cost, to see if he has enough to complete it? Otherwise when he has laid the foundation, and is not able to finish, all who observe it begin to ridicule him, saying, ‘This man began to build and was not able to finish.’”* (Luke 14:28-30 NAS)

### **Roadblock #2: Time**

There isn’t an engineer alive who would build a new plant without thinking of when the plant needed to be open, and work backwards in time thinking about the work needed and time required to complete each phase of the work. This kind of project management is common



among engineers but sadly, is lacking in many of our other corporate disciplines. If you don't give yourself plenty of time to complete each task, along with extra time for the inevitable snags and delays, you will be frustrated with missed deadlines.

### **Roadblock #3: Failure to Plan**

Every week in the local newspaper there is a feature highlighting a local start-up business. One question they ask these entrepreneurs is, "Did you write a business plan?" A few answer "yes", some say "they wrote the big things down", but most say "no, they worked and learned as they went".

I'm not surprised. Entrepreneurs are idea people. They get an idea and they dive right in. They don't have time to put their ideas down on paper, to plan for the growth of their businesses. When they succeed it is often because their energy and determination carries them through difficulties.

A verse in Ecclesiastes (10:10) pertains to the non-planning entrepreneur; *"If the ax is dull and its edge unsharpened, more strength is needed but skill will bring success"*. If you start chopping wood before you sharpen your ax, you can still chop wood, but it will take a lot more work, it will take longer than expected, and the results might not meet your expectations.

### **Roadblock #4: Failure to Focus**

Put a book or your iPad directly in front of your face touching your nose. Now move it away slowly. See how it comes into focus?

Sometimes when we start a project we get so immersed in the details of the job that we lose focus on the reason for the project, the vision. This happened to Martha as she prepared dinner for Jesus, *"But Martha was distracted by all the preparations that had to be made. She came to him and asked, 'Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself? Tell her to help me!'"* (Luke 10:40).

Staying focused into today's ever-changing business climate takes effort. Make sure that as the leader you stay focused and help the people around you to stay focused as well. You can help your employees stay focused by setting a good example yourself, by reminding people what it is they are working towards, and lastly, by not distracting them with side projects that do not help reach the long-term goal.

### **Roadblock #5: Procrastination**

Procrastination is the enemy of accomplishment. We tend to procrastinate most with work that we do not enjoy, or do not feel skilled enough to complete.



There are some wood moldings in my daughter's bedroom that are still waiting for a finish coat of paint. I've been procrastinating for two years. I don't really like painting, especially woodwork, especially the parts that show because I'm afraid that I won't do a good enough job.

There is a Greek proverb that goes, "The beginning is the half of every action." Getting started is often the most difficult part of any job. If you've been putting off a big project try breaking it down into manageable parts. Remember, you eat an elephant one bit at a time, and you have to start somewhere!

### **Roadblock #6: Pessimism**

If you think a job cannot be done, you're right. No one ever thinking a thing impossible accomplished the impossible.

There's a story about an assistant to Edison who confronted the genius with the fact that they had tried and failed over 10,000 times to make a light bulb. Edison replied that they now knew 10,000 things that would not work and were therefore much closer to finding a way that would work.

Many of the inventions we take for granted today were thought to be impossible just a few years ago. When my grandmother was born the Wright brothers were still tinkering and most of the electric appliances that we use every day didn't exist. The "scientists" of the day thought them to be impossible.

### **Roadblock #7: Over-Confidence**

Where procrastination stops a project before it can start, over-confidence can kill a project any time after you start. The over-confident manager refuses to listen to reason and refuses to see the reality of a situation. Solomon said, "*Do you see a man wise in his own eyes? There is more hope for a fool than for him*" (Prov. 26:12).

The over-confident manager is soon humbled. Proverbs reminds us to listen to advice from others rather than doing things our own way, "*The way of a fool seems right to him, but a wise man listens to advice*" (Prov. 12:15).

### **Roadblock #8: Over-Control**

Some managers have a terrible time delegating. They like to think of themselves as good delegators, strong motivators who encourage their people to grow. But the truth is they try to control every aspect of every job their employees are working on.

Dr. James Belasco describes his controlling nature in his book, *Flight of the Buffalo*. He refers to himself as being "authoritarian" and wondering why his employees couldn't make their own



decisions. The reason? He had trained them to rely on him, rather than on their own good judgment. The company's volume and profits soared when he empowered his workers.

Moses had a similar problem. He was serving as judge for the entire nation. He spent day after day settling petty disputes among the people. Moses' father-in-law, Jethro said, *"You and these people who come to you will only wear yourselves out. The work is too heavy for you; you cannot handle it alone."* So he suggested that Moses appoint capable, trustworthy judges over tens, fifties, hundreds, and thousands and; that he teach them the decrees and laws, and show them the way to live and the duties they were to perform (Exodus 18).

As a leader you need to learn to select capable, trustworthy people and train them to do important work making their own decisions.

### **Roadblock #9: Fear of Failure**

Fear of failure often sabotages the best intended employee or entrepreneur. What do you risk by trying? You will either succeed or fail. But one thing is sure, if you do not try you have failed.

Consider professional sports. A baseball player who steps up to the plate and hits the ball one out of three times earns millions of dollars a year. But he has failed 70% of the time! A basketball player who gets a basket 50% of the time is an all-star, yet he has failed 50% of the time. Do you think these failures keep these players from trying? Not at all!

The writer of Proverbs said, *"for though a righteous man falls seven times, he rises again..."* (Prov. 24:16). In Ecclesiastes it says, *"There is no one on earth who does what is right all the time and never makes a mistake"* (Eccl. 7:20 GN). So what have you got to lose? Don't let the fear of failure keep you from trying. If you fail it will not be your first time and it certainly will not be your last.

### **Roadblock #10: Improper Skills**

An important but often overlooked area of planning is consideration of the skills that will be required to be successful.

An engineer designs a new computer and starts a new company. He doesn't know much about marketing, finance, or distribution but his product is so good he figures consumers will beat a path to his door. For a while he is right. While the company is small his determination pulls him through difficulties, but as the company grows he is no longer able to touch every aspect of his business directly and the company flounders. If he sees the problem and hires people who understand marketing, finance, and distribution chances are he will succeed. If not, he is doomed to failure.



## Roadblock #11: Poor Execution

Any job worth doing is worth doing well. Paul writes to the Colossians, *“Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men”* (Col. 3:23).

There are a million details in most work and attention to detail will often make the difference between success and failure. An O-ring costing less than a dollar failed and cost billions of dollars and the lives of eleven people when the shuttle Challenger blew up. There are O-rings in your business too. They may be customer service, finances, product quality, or cost control. But they are there. Attend to them before they blow up in your face.

## Roadblock #12: Lack of Resolve

What is it that separates achievers from those that try, fail, and quit? Resolve. Determination. The desire to see a thing through to the end. This is what separates an achiever from a non-achiever.

There are as many excuses for failure as there are people who fail; “I didn’t have enough capital”, “I didn’t think the competition would be so stiff”, “People just didn’t understand the benefits of my product”. The list goes on and on. The achiever doesn’t accept excuses for why a thing cannot be done but looks instead for a way that it can be done. They are determined not to fail. They are driven to succeed.

## One Final Thought

God called to Moses from the burning bush and said, *“I have seen the misery of my people...I have heard them cry out...I am concerned for their suffering...So I have come down to rescue them...So now go, I am sending you to Pharaoh to bring the Israelites out of Egypt* (Ex. 3).

Then the excuses start. Moses says, “Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh?” God reassures him by saying that He will be with him. Then Moses says, “What if the Israelites don’t believe me?” God reassures him again and gives Moses specific instructions for what to say to the people. Moses again says, “What if the people don’t believe me?” So God gave Moses signs to give to the people so that they would believe. Moses then says, “O Lord, I have never been eloquent.” God reassures him again saying that he will give him the words to say. Moses finally says, “O Lord, please send someone else to do it.” Finally God gets annoyed with Moses and agrees to let his brother Aaron do the talking.

We can “what if” ourselves to death and never get anything accomplished. But God’s work is too important to ignore. Let’s stop offering excuses and start making ourselves available to do His work, trusting that He will provide for us; *“God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus”* (Phil. 4:19).