

# Keynote Address

## You got it wrong! What success really means

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### What is Success?

Success can be defined in so many different ways. If you don't believe me, just Google "What Does Success Look Like" and see how many different opinions you get.

In my humble opinion, success ultimately comes down to how you define it in your own mind. It may be based on financial targets, career progression, work-life balance, family, health, your golf game score, or a combination of any of these plus many more variables that we don't have time to explore.

But what do I personally think it means? During my high school years, the head varsity basketball coach at Highland High School in Morrow County, OH (graduating class of 1981 was 105), Jim Schoch, was a big John Wooden fan. Coach Schoch used a lot of John Wooden methods to help motivate our basketball team...by the way, it was successful as the team won the Mid-Ohio Athletic Conference year-in and year-out, including my 3 years on the team. My experience in high school caused me to become a fan of John Wooden. You may want to Google some of his writings or better yet, read one of his books such as *Coach Wooden's Leadership Game Plan for Success: 12 Lessons for Extraordinary Performance and Personal Excellence* or *Coach Wooden's Pyramid of Success*. All are good reads and written by someone who was successful in so many different ways (professionally, family, spiritually). For those not familiar with John Wooden, he was the coach of the UCLA Bruins college basketball team for 27 years and won 10 national championships (think March Madness). Coach Wooden developed a definition of success that evolved over time.

***"Success is peace of mind that is the direct result of self-satisfaction in knowing you did your best to become the best that you are capable of becoming."***

*John Wooden*

I think this is eloquent in that it simply says success is based on self-satisfaction and peace of mind. Even more simply put, success is based on being happy!

### How do you Become Successful?

Great question and again there are lots of ideas on how you become successful, but I would challenge you that there is no secret recipe as again, success is in the eye of the beholder. But regardless, there are probably some elements that are common regardless of how you define it. Here are some thoughts from people who we all can probably agree were successful in one way or another:

*"Success is no accident. It is hard work, perseverance, learning, studying, sacrifice and most of all, love of what you are doing or learning to do." Pele*

*"There are no secrets to success. It is the result of preparation, hard work, and learning from failure." Colin Powell*

*"The price of success is hard work, dedication to the job at hand, and the determination that whether we win or lose, we have applied the best of ourselves to the task at hand." Vince Lombardi*

*"We learned about honesty and integrity - that the truth matters... that you don't take shortcuts or play by your own set of rules... and success doesn't count unless you earn it fair and square." Michelle Obama*

*"People rarely succeed unless they have fun at what they are doing." Dale Carnegie*

Coach Wooden provided a framework for accomplishing his definition of success. This framework is captured in his "Pyramid of Success" (Figure 1).

I distinctly remember Coach Schoch talking about the pyramid of success and all its attributes. He especially pointed to the block labeled "condition" just before we were told to run wind sprints for the next 30 minutes!

I am sure for all of these people there are lots of things that resulted in them being successful. I can't say for sure what variables have helped me be successful. And remember, being fulfilled and happy is really my definition of success and at least at this point in my life - I am there!! However, in thinking about my success and also looking at other successful people around me, these are some things that, in my humble opinion, are key contributors to success, regardless of how you define it.

### *Keep Good Company*

Another way to look at this is to seek out good mentors. There is little doubt in my mind that I had good mentors every step along the way in my life and career. My parents, David and Charlet Grooms. My high school Football Coach, Gus Marquis (and Coach Schoch). Dr. Kent Hoblet, currently the Dean at Mississippi State and whose career has been a blueprint for mine. Bill Taylor, the veterinarian who gave me my first DVM job. Dr. Kenny Brock who supported me in my PhD. Dr. Kent Ames, past AABP resident, extraordinary cow doc, first-rate football official and a great colleague at MSU. Bill Hoefle, small animal surgeon at ISU CVM. All of these people (as well as many others) have had a major impact on

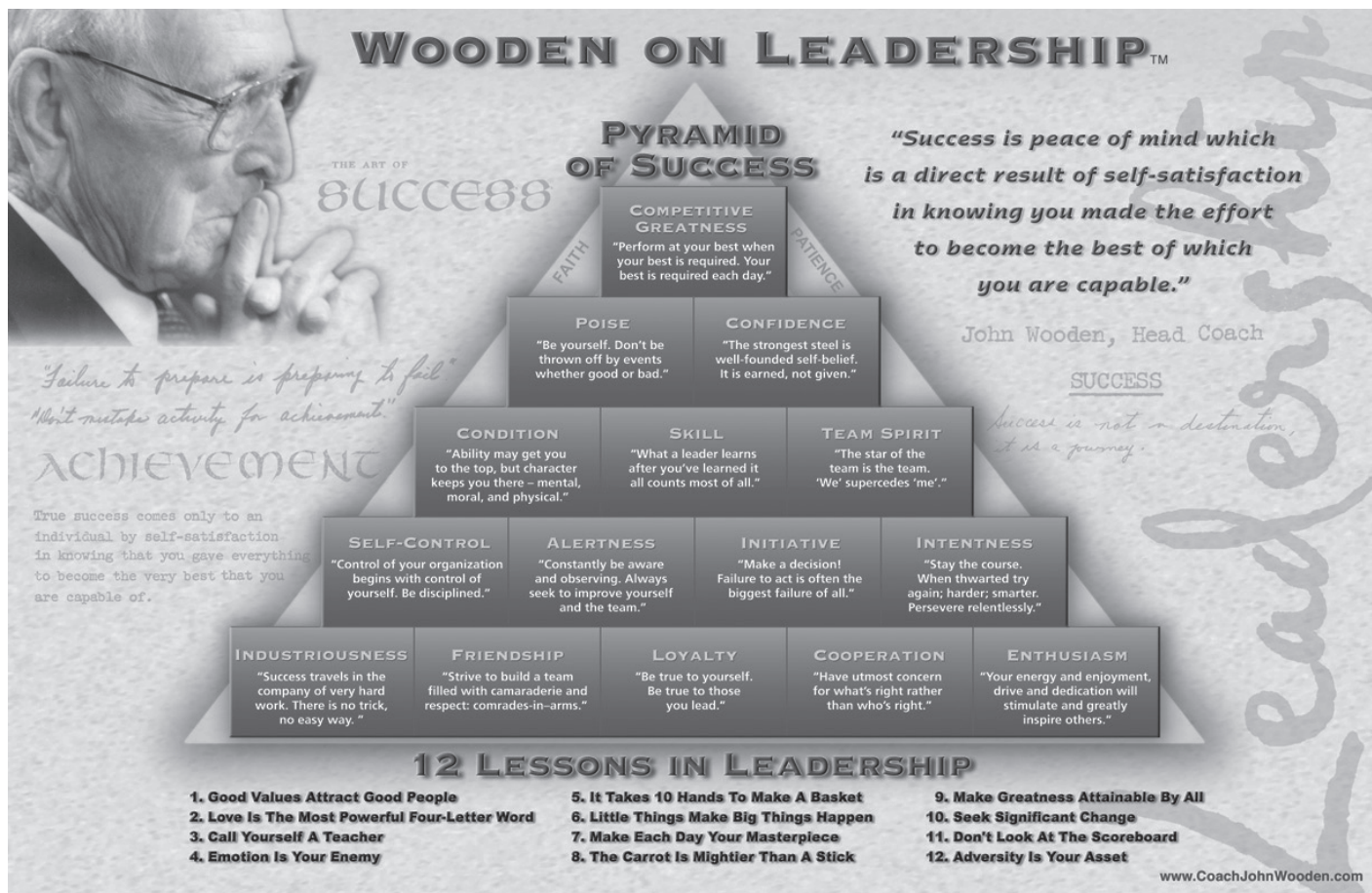


Figure 1. Coach Wooden’s Pyramid of Success. (Reprinted with permission of Coach John Wooden, www.CoachWooden.com.)

my life that has helped me to be fulfilled and happy. I think seeking out good mentors is essential. I am not sure who said this originally, but I heard it from Dr. Jessica Juarez, an assistant professor at ISU CVM ... “you should seek out people (mentors) that have had expert careers, not experts in their career.” I think this hits the nail on the head. Sometimes the best mentors are not necessarily the “top dog”. Work hard at finding good mentors who have had successful careers that align with where you want to go. Be picky, because their advice and direction is crucial to your success... a.k.a happiness.

**Integrity and Accountability**

Nothing in my mind means more than your integrity. If you don’t feel good about what you do and the decisions you make, how can you find happiness?? a.k.a success. Someone once said, “success without integrity is failure”. Part of integrity is accountability. To have integrity, you must be able to hold yourself accountable for your own failures. Integrity and accountability are 2 things we can control. The title of this talk, “You Got it Wrong”, is based on a true story where I was accused of getting it wrong, which I did; realizing I had gotten it wrong, which I did; and then holding myself account-

able for getting it wrong, which I did; and the consequences... unfortunately, to hear the story, you will need to/would have needed to be at the 2019 AABP Annual Conference or just ask me personally if you catch me on the street!!

**Work Ethic**

I firmly believe that success (that results in happiness) comes with hard work. Now, hard work does not have to mean 80 hr days, or working every Saturday for the past 32 yrs (true story – and he was on his third wife), or missing your kids growing up. There has to be a balance or there will be no happiness and there will be no success. My definition of work ethic includes the knowledge that you must have work/life balance, or all the hard work will result in failure, i.e. you not being happy or fulfilled.

**You Have to Have Fun**

Nobody has convinced me that you can be successful if you are not having fun getting there. Now this does not mean it’s fun every second of every day of every year. But in general, if you enjoy what you are doing, you will in all likelihood feel fulfilled and become successful. Oprah Winfrey once said

“Passion is energy. Feel the power that comes from focusing on what excites you.” To be successful, make sure you are doing something that you enjoy and is fun.

#### *Have BIG Goals*

Growing up, one of my BIG goals was to be an NFL quarterback. Bernie Kosar, quarterback of the Cleveland Browns, was my hero and I wanted to be just like him. So that was my goal. It was aspirational and not reality (there was a talent

issue). But it set the stage to have BIG goals to strive for. And even though all of them were not met and still are not met, they are the driver that keeps me motivated to move forward and most importantly, continue to be successful a.k.a happy.

So my secret to success? Have goals, BIG goals, surround yourself by good people, have high integrity and when things don't work, hold yourself accountable, work hard, and have fun. Do these things and it's hard not to be successful.... and HAPPY!