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Chapter 1

The vision: what does success mean to you?

Learning outcomes

This chapter offers opportunities to:

- reflect upon the nature of success
- understand the importance of personal vision to successful outcomes
- formulate a personal definition of success
- gain insight into personal motivation, inspiration and values, and see how these assist current study
- refine your vision of the future and consider how current study contributes towards that vision.

Introduction

Everybody wants to be successful – but in their own way. We each have our own versions or definitions of what ‘success’ means, for ourselves and for others. The kinds of success characterised by Barack Obama, Angelina Jolie, Beyoncé, J. K. Rowling, Lionel Messi, Aung San Suu Kyi or Shah Rukh Khan, are all very different, but no less valuable to the people concerned.

Our concepts of success can be rather vague and open to change. This is especially the case for students – even if some objectives appear clear cut. Embarking on a programme in higher education is, typically, a time of transition – a time for leaving behind the worlds of school and family, or barriers to progression at work, or perceived gaps in knowledge. It is an exciting time, full of potential. As a student, you are exposed to new ideas, new perspectives on the world, new people and opportunities. It is likely that your horizons will be stretched, your values challenged, your ambitions changed. Anything might be possible, all kinds of paths may open up to you.

Students today expect their time in higher education to be a passport to many kinds of success apart from simply gaining a qualification:

to good grades, to the specialist skills and knowledge required for particular professional pathways, a graduate-level job, a rewarding career, leadership and management roles, financial security, new possibilities, a better lifestyle.

Competition for such opportunities is generally high – and a degree alone is unlikely to make you stand out. As a student, you will be making decisions that will have an impact on your future opportunities, such as in:

- the options you select
- the way you approach your studies
- the projects you undertake
- the way you apply your learning in work settings if you are already employed
- the skills and qualities you develop through activities you undertake outside the curriculum
- and the chances you don’t use too.

The activities in this chapter aim to sharpen your thinking about your aims, ambitions and the versions of success you most value. That, in turn, should assist you in making sound decisions that affect your future as well as motivating you to do what is needed to achieve success.

Defining success

There are many ways of looking at 'success'. Some people define success in terms of objective material criteria. (How much money, how high a position in a company, how big a house?)

However, successful athletes may win world records, even fame, without earning a great deal of money. Successful artists may measure their success by how true they are to their artistic endeavour. Others judge success by the integrity they brought to a task: the confidence that they did their best in honest ways and can live with their conscience. It used to be a sign of success to still have your own teeth at an advanced age!

In other words, 'success' is a very subjective matter. It depends on what is meaningful to you and the people around you.

Activity



Successful people

- Jot down, as quickly as you can, the first ten people you think of as 'successful'.
- Do these have anything in common?
- What makes you think of them as 'successful'?
- How do you think your list might differ from somebody else's? You could compare your list with that of a friend.

Activity



Symbols of success

- Jot down quickly the first ten things (or symbols) you associate with success.
- How important is each of those symbols to you personally? Are these things that you want very much from life?
- How do you think your list would differ from somebody else's? Compare your list with a friend's.

Activity



Spectrums of success – or knowing what you want

Below are pairs of statements, each of which relates to different points on a spectrum of opinion about success. For each statement, mark on the spectrum where you would wish your own success to lie.

For example,

	_____ x _____	
Being immensely rich	_____	Having enough to survive
Having high expectations	_____	Being content with little
Being a world expert	_____	Knowing enough to survive
Gaining higher degrees	_____	Passing part of one degree
World fame	_____	Recognition by colleagues and peers
Achieving high goals	_____	Achieving something
Seizing big opportunities	_____	Being aware of some opportunities
Winning on a world stage	_____	Taking part in any activity
A very high profile job	_____	Having some work, paid or unpaid
Being very popular	_____	Having some good friends
Being a world leader	_____	Living a quiet life
Being important on a world stage	_____	Being recognised for personal achievements
Having a close family life	_____	Escaping the family
Outstanding physical appearance and physique	_____	Minimum interest in personal appearance
Material wealth	_____	A strong spiritual life

- Is there another aspect of success which is more important to you than any of those listed above? If so, what is that?
- If you could be successful in only one area, what would that be? Why is this so important to you? What would it mean not to have this in your life?
- What do your responses tell you about your own concept of 'success'?



Reflection: Spending life your way

There is only one success – to be able to spend your life in your own way. Christopher Morley

- What would it mean for you to ‘live your life in your own way’? What would this involve?
- What, if anything, stops you from doing this?

Activity



A personal definition of success

Complete the sentence below. In doing so, consider what personal success would be in your own case. Don't worry if you find this much more difficult than you imagined. You will be asked to return to this statement later in the chapter, when you may wish to change or refine it.

For me, being successful means ...

Personal influences

Some of the definitions of success that you use were probably adopted originally to please other people – or are those you have inherited, or picked up from peers and the media. This is not necessarily a bad thing: these may be influences that you respect or that matter to you. External influences can be very valuable and help us to form our sense of who we are.

However, sometimes, we live out ideas of success that we pick up from other people, without thinking through what they really mean for us. It can be easy to lose ourselves in the values and interests presented by others, especially if we are surrounded by these for much of the time. We can ‘forget’ that there may be alternatives that are better suited to our personal circumstances, character and beliefs.

Activity



Personal ambitions

Sometimes we come up with different answers if we frame the question differently. This activity invites you to give some initial thought to your ambitions for different areas of your life. Later activities explore this in more detail.

My ambitions for my academic work are:

My ambitions for my professional life or career are:

My ambitions for my personal life are:

As so much personal investment is likely to be involved in working towards your concept of success, it is worth considering how your own view of success has been influenced by others – and how far you can say ‘This is really me.’



Reflection: Personal influences

Who do you consider to be the greatest influence on your life? How far do your ideas of ‘success’ reflect the influences of that person or group?

- Look again at your responses to the above activities about success.
- What values and beliefs are associated with your responses?
- Are these influences still valuable to you or do you need to develop more independence?

Owning the influence

Your goals may have been strongly influenced by others but ultimately, when you decide to act upon them, you have made those goals your own. The important thing is to be clear that your action is a personal choice no matter who influenced it. This means recognising your own role in the action you take, rather than saying later, 'Well, I only did that because my parents/teacher/friend/children/boss, etc., wanted me to.'

Inspiration

Sometimes influences act as positive inspiration, moving us to achieve things we value. Many people have used a role model from their personal life, history or public life to inspire them.



Reflection: Inspiring people

Look back to the list of successful people you jotted down in activity 1. Do any of these inspire you? If you answered 'No', think of at least one person who does inspire you. If you answered 'Yes', which person from your list do you find most inspiring?

Consider the person that you selected as inspiring. What is it about them that most inspires you:

- What they achieved?
- Hurdles they overcame?
- Their level of skill or ability?
- Their personal qualities?
- Their effect on the lives of other people?
- Something very individual they bring to life?

In what way has that person already inspired you? In what other ways could you use that person as an inspiration towards achieving your goals?

Other sources of inspiration

Anything may be a source of inspiration. For some people, a piece of music, a rap, a poem, a painting, a postcard, a view of the sea, an episode in history, a personal event, can be inspiring. Alternatively, doing something for a cause or to bring about change can be a source of inspiration. Traditionally, artists and thinkers used to write,

paint or compose for a 'muse' – a real or a mythological person to whom they dedicated their lives or their work.

Thinking about your sources of inspiration can be like receiving a burst of energy – it can boot you back into action when your spirits are flagging, and keep you focused. Inspiration, in other words, is another tool you can use to achieve your objectives.



Reflection: Sources of personal inspiration

Consider:

- Apart from people, what has inspired you most in life? This could be a book, music, etc. What was it about this that inspired you?
- What things inspire you to feel good about life?
- What things inspire you to go beyond yourself, to do more than you thought you were capable of?
- What else would you consider to be a source of inspiration to you?



Reflection: Inspiration to succeed on your course

- What, if anything, inspired you to come on this course or to return to study?
- What inspiration can you draw upon to increase your motivation to succeed?

Values

You will probably already have noticed that thinking about personal success raises questions about values, beliefs and ethics. It is not always easy to square our desires with our values and beliefs. It can also be hard to identify what we really value – sometimes this is not possible until we are faced with a life-or-death challenge. However, if we work against our values, we are likely to experience self-conflict, which can undermine our chances of success. The following activities aim to help you identify what things you hold important relative to other things.

Activity



The Zed box (1)

Imagine that you are given a 'smart' or magical box, known as the Zed box. If you open the Zed box, you may be given the thing that you want or value most in life. (The box cannot change the past.) You have five seconds to jot down the one thing you would most want the box to give you.



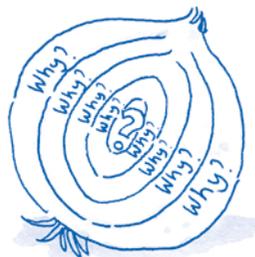
The thing I would want most is:

Layers of the onion

Knowing what we 'really' want is not easy. There are many layers to our 'wanting' and 'needing' and 'valuing', like skins on an onion. It is worth taking time to reflect on the things we value, asking why we value them, following each answer with 'And what is it about this that I value?' For example, do you value celebrity because you are excited by the lifestyle that it represents? What is it about that lifestyle that you value? Is it being in the public eye? In which case, how many other ways are there of being in the public eye? Is it about the money celebrities earn? If so, what other ways are there of earning that money? Is it because famous people seem to gain recognition? If so, are there other ways of gaining recognition that you would value as much or more? Is it really popularity that you are seeking? Keep going until you run out of questions.

Sometimes it is easier to aim for the surface of things (money, power, celebrity) rather than looking at what is creating a need for such things.

Whether those things are good or bad in their own right is a value judgement – and may depend on the circumstances. It is worth remembering that we need very little in order to survive.



Activity



The Zed box (2)

However, the Zed box is 'smart' and magical: it can read your most secret wishes. It may give you what you wish in your heart, even if you are not aware yet that this is something you want. For example, you may think you want to be a football champion but deep down wish to be an artist, travel the world, or take up a caring role. The Zed box would know that and would give you that opportunity rather than making you a football star. The choice the Zed box makes may come as a shock to you. You have one minute to jot down an answer to the following questions:

1 What would you most fear that the Zed box decided you really wanted?

2 What do you most fear the Zed box would take away from you, thinking it knew best?

You may have found this activity difficult if you have not spent time thinking about what you feel you *ought* to do with your life as well as what you *want* to do with your life. You may find it useful to reflect upon this over some time or on a long walk. Consider:

- What do I want to do with my life?
- What do I feel I ought to do with my life?
- What are the key characteristics of the lives of people who inspire me?



Reflection: Core values

- What is at the 'core of the onion' for you? What is really driving you towards the things that you want?
- How far are your values being shaped by your wants and needs (for yourself, others or the world)?

Activity



Personal values 1

What I most value is ...	Important to me <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	What I most value is ...	Important to me <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
1 A good car	<input type="checkbox"/>	23 Leaving something for posterity	<input type="checkbox"/>
2 Challenge	<input type="checkbox"/>	24 Making a difference to the world	<input type="checkbox"/>
3 Contributing to society	<input type="checkbox"/>	25 Money	<input type="checkbox"/>
4 Feeling I am in control of my life	<input type="checkbox"/>	26 New experiences	<input type="checkbox"/>
5 Creativity	<input type="checkbox"/>	27 Personal qualities such as kindness	<input type="checkbox"/>
6 Fairness	<input type="checkbox"/>	28 Physical appearance	<input type="checkbox"/>
7 Fame and celebrity	<input type="checkbox"/>	29 Popularity	<input type="checkbox"/>
8 Family and home life	<input type="checkbox"/>	30 Good-quality possessions	<input type="checkbox"/>
9 Friendship	<input type="checkbox"/>	31 Power	<input type="checkbox"/>
10 Having a good time	<input type="checkbox"/>	32 Being needed	<input type="checkbox"/>
11 Health	<input type="checkbox"/>	33 Security	<input type="checkbox"/>
12 Help received from others	<input type="checkbox"/>	34 A feeling of self-worth	<input type="checkbox"/>
13 Helping others	<input type="checkbox"/>	35 Social Life	<input type="checkbox"/>
14 Honesty	<input type="checkbox"/>	36 Solitude	<input type="checkbox"/>
15 A big house	<input type="checkbox"/>	37 Spiritual life	<input type="checkbox"/>
16 Independence	<input type="checkbox"/>	38 Sporting ability	<input type="checkbox"/>
17 Influence	<input type="checkbox"/>	39 Being wanted	<input type="checkbox"/>
18 Integrity	<input type="checkbox"/>	40 Other things: <i>(state what)</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>
19 Intellectual abilities	<input type="checkbox"/>		
20 A good job or career	<input type="checkbox"/>		
21 Justice	<input type="checkbox"/>		
22 Leadership and authority	<input type="checkbox"/>		

Activity



Personal values 2

Select the ten items you value most and list these in order of importance, where 1 is the most important, 2 for the next in importance, and so on.

1		6	
2		7	
3		8	
4		9	
5		10	

Consider the top ten items that you valued. What themes can you identify? For example, do your choices suggest you place a high value on any of the following:

- personal qualities (character)
- control over something
- people
- material objects
- power and influence
- mind and body
- personal recognition.

Are you comfortable with your responses or do you feel you 'ought to' value other things? If so, what does this response tell you about yourself?



Reflection: Put to the test?

Identify a time when your values were put to the test. In your reflective journal, jot down:

- What happened?
- What did you find out about yourself on that occasion?
- What did you learn about your personal values from that occasion?

Life qualities

The following quotation refers to a number of qualities that one person, Gordon H. Taggart, wished to develop in his life.

I wish I were honest enough to admit all my shortcomings:

- brilliant enough to accept flattery without it making me arrogant
- tall enough to tower above deceit
- strong enough to reassure love
- brave enough to welcome criticism
- compassionate enough to understand human frailties
- wise enough to recognise my mistakes
- humble enough to appreciate greatness
- staunch enough to stand by my friends
- human enough to be thankful of my neighbour.

Gordon H. Taggart



Reflection: Life qualities

- Which of the qualities identified by Taggart do you most value?
- Which do you make a conscious effort to develop?
- Which three of these qualities would be of most relevance in achieving your goals or vision?

Activity



Feeling Valued: Compliments

Our values are also reflected in what we want others to think about us- such as the comments we do or don't want made about us and the compliments that we treasure.

What three compliments do you most want to hear from other people?

1

2

3



Reflection: Valued compliments

In your reflective journal, jot down:

- What do these suggest about what you value?
- What do you do to make it possible to receive such compliments?

Vision

It helps to get to the top of a mountain if we have seen the pinnacle and know where we are headed.

This does not necessarily mean that we should have very clear life goals, with every detail planned out. Successful people seem to be characterised by not having very rigid life plans (Taylor and Humphrey, 2002).

However, it is important to have a vision of the general direction in which we are going, the kind of life we want to lead, and the levels of personal investment we want to make in different kinds of activity. It is this vision that keeps us going when the inevitable unexpected setbacks occur. If we are assembling a bookcase or doing a jigsaw puzzle, it helps to have the picture before us of what we want to achieve, so that we can see the end goal as a realistic possibility. A vision of what we want to achieve is even more important when we are undertaking a project that lasts for several years, such as working towards a degree or a career.

Ambitions

An obvious starting place is to clarify your current sense of what your ambitions might be. Some people have very clearly formed ambitions and goals by the time they enter university. However, many students have given little thought to what they want after university. It is not necessary to have clearly defined goals, but it is useful to start clarifying personal ambitions, so that you can check both how important these really are to you – and how far you are working towards what matters to you.

The dream

Dream lofty dreams, and as you dream so shall you become. Your vision is the promise of what you shall at last unveil.

John Ruskin

When we are young, we are often told to stop day-dreaming. However, many great inventors and scientists attribute success to the combination of their analytical work with the inspiration that came through dreams or day-dreams.

Activity



The dream

This activity is linked to the activity, 'The Long-Term Vision', page 35.

First, undertake an activity that uses up any surplus energy and leaves you alert and awake. Taking a walk or doing housework is ideal, but any moderately strenuous activity will do. This will get the blood flowing to your brain (so you think better) but work off excess adrenalin (so you are open to being creative rather than defensive).

Then, find a comfortable seat where you will not be disturbed. Read the quotation by Ruskin (above) a few times and let your mind wander over what this means for you.

- What dreams have other people had for you (if any)?
- What are the dreams and ambitions of people you know well?
- How are your dreams different from those of people around you?

Your 'dream' does not have to be the same as anyone else's, and it does not need to be well defined. It may be something as simple as 'happiness'.

Clarifying the dream

To gain a clearer view of the 'dream', come back to the 'Dream' activity and repeat it from the beginning once you have undertaken the 'Vision' exercise below.

You may find that the more analytical nature of the 'Vision' activity focuses the mind. Let go of particular details when you return to the 'Dream' activity.

Your mind will automatically play with the ideas you had and feed them back, either straight away or at some time in the future. However, as our relaxed brain likes to play with images and metaphors, it may return the ideas to you in a way that is hard to recognise at first.

Whatever images come to mind on this second occasion, however unexpected, hold them in mind for a few days, and see what emerges.

The long-term vision

For the activity on pp. 35–6, imagine yourself travelling forward into the future, to a time approximately 10 or 20 years from now. This activity is not about laying down a rigid plan

for your future but, rather, is to help you form a general idea of what you would like to experience, as far as you can tell now. The aim is to gain a sense of the type of life you want, so that you can make the right kinds of choices to achieve it.

Activity



The Long-Term Vision

Ten years from now, I see myself ...

Aspect	Write your own vision of this aspect below	How important is this aspect to me?
Living in which part of the world?		
Living in what kind of place (city, town, village, countryside, by the sea, etc.)?		
Considering the most important things in my life to be ...		
Solitary? Or surrounded by people?		
Working with colleagues who are ... artistic? intellectual? practical? caring? down-to-earth? active? thoughtful? kind?		
Working to stress levels which are ... Pressurised? Reasonable? Very low level?		
Enjoying privacy? Public attention? Celebrity?		
Working 20, 30, 40, 50, 60, 80, 100 hours a week?		
Taking a lead? Being a good second in command? Happy to be part of a team? One of a large crowd?		
Wanting to 'get by' unnoticed? Gaining reasonable recognition for my work? Being top management? World-famous?		

Activity: The Long-Term Vision *(continued)*

Ten years from now, I see myself ...

Aspect	Write your own vision of this aspect below	How important is this aspect to me?
Based mostly in an office? On the road? In the field?		
Working for myself? Working for a large company? Working for a small company?		
Doing work which is very varied? Very routine? Predictable?		
Likely to stay in the same job for years? Changing job occasionally?		
Living with a large/small/minimal family. With strong/weak/some family connections?		
Considering my work to be central/important/not very important in my life?		
My contribution to my community or society will be through ...		
My time outside work will be spent doing ...		
My friends will be the kinds of people who ...		
I will be the kind of person who ...		
My main achievements in life are likely to be ...		
Other important aspects of my vision of the future are ...		
The main influences, inspirations and values on this vision of my future derive from ...		

Draw on your vision

Look again at the third column of the activity, *How important is this aspect to me?* (pp. 35–6). Consider what this tells you about the kind of lifestyle and career that you are likely to enjoy?

If you found it difficult to answer many of the questions on pages 35–6, this suggests either that you are very flexible or that you need to spend more time thinking through what sort of things you want from life. This will help you to make certain decisions about programme options, work experience, extracurricular activities and early job applications.

Rethinking the dream

- Be open to ‘rethinking the dream’ – you can change your mind!
- Create opportunities to reconsider your life journey in the light of your experience and reflections.

Return now to p. 34 and complete ‘The Dream’ again.



Reflection: Using the vision and the dream

- In what ways can you make use of the ‘Vision’ or ‘Dream’ that emerged through these activities to motivate you further?
- In what ways do your current study and extracurricular activities help take you forward towards your ‘Vision’?

a Goals

The long-term vision gives us a sense of how well we know ourselves and a goal at which we can aim. To help identify the goals you wish to achieve from your time as a student, complete the table on page 38, ‘What do I want to gain from my time at university/college?’

Deferred gratification

Some people are very good at ‘deferring gratification’: that is, at making personal sacrifices in order to achieve a goal many years down the line. They usually have a very clear vision of what they want to achieve.

However, it is not easy to ‘defer gratification’ unless there are lots of small successes along the route. It is difficult to put effort and energy into study, work, research or exercise if we do not have mini-goals, or milestones towards which we are working. Success at these spurs us on to greater triumphs. If we are not successful, this can also be valuable, providing time to take stock and re-evaluate how important something really is to us.

Create milestones

Smaller goals or targets enable us to experience success along the way and test us in the short term. For example, we can:

- perform in concerts whilst training to become a professional musician
- put on exhibitions if we wish to be an artist
- publish material if we want to be a writer
- make a speech at a wedding if we are likely to work in the public eye
- take on voluntary work to develop skills in preparation for paid employment.

Assessed coursework and exams offer the experience of ‘being tested’ and can develop a range of qualities that go with such ‘testing’.

Set short-term goals

Once you have given thought to what you wish to gain from your studies, use the activity on page 39, ‘Short-term goals’, to set some interim milestones for yourself. These will help to provide a focus in the weeks and months ahead. They will also help you to monitor whether you are on track to achieve your longer-term goals.



On the table below, indicate with a ✓ if the item is something that you want to gain from your time at university. Put more than one tick if you feel this is very important. ✓✓✓

Go through the items you ticked and rate them in order of importance (1 for the most important, 2 for the next in importance, and so on).

From my time at university I want to:	Important to me?	Order of importance	From my time at university I want to:	Important to me?	Order of importance
'Get the piece of paper' (the qualification)			Develop technical skills		
Achieve a good classification of degree			Develop a wide range of skills		
Gain a deeper understanding of my specialist subject			Work with a wider range of people		
Enhance my thinking ability			Develop problem-solving skills		
Broaden my mind			Develop people skills		
Stretch myself intellectually			Try out new things		
Know myself better			Develop a broader set of interests		
Learn to believe in my own abilities			Gain work or volunteering experience		
Gain the confidence to speak in public			Make friends		
Experience student life			Make contacts for my career		
Enhance my career opportunities			Take on positions of responsibility		
Be able to get a well-paid job			Other things:		



Select the three items to which you gave the highest ratings (page 38). Consider what short-term goals you can set in order to give yourself an initial taste of success. You may need several short-term goals for each item you select. These goals are 'milestones' along the road to success. Copy this table and keep it where it will remind you to complete the goal. See p. 176 for an alternative action plan.

Item	Short-term goals	When I will do this	How will I know I have achieved this?
1	a		
	b		
	c		
2	a		
	b		
	c		
3	a		
	b		
	c		

Putting in the time

The most likely route to success is putting in the hours required to achieve it. There is a wealth of research that indicates that what separates high achievers from others is the amount of time they spend in becoming expert at what they do.

This is true even of apparent 'geniuses' or protégés; it has been claimed that the most successful, from Mozart to the Beatles, tend to devote around 10,000 hours to fine-tuning their craft. You may not have 10,000 hours as a student, but the general principle holds true. Even those who are successful at social and emotional skills tend to put in much more time in practising, reflecting upon and discussing these.

High achievers and time

High achievers tend to put more time into such activities as:

- *elaboration*: working out the precise nature of a problem, task or issue
- *preparation*: making sure that they are set up for the task, with suitable space, materials, mental preparation
- *perseverance*: sticking with difficult problems and going over them time and time again, looking for clues about where they are going wrong, until they find a way of resolving the issue
- *practice and rehearsal*, going over and over their work until they are fluent in the skills.

What if I don't have the time?

There are many demands on students' time so, inevitably, choices have to be made. That is why it is important to look at your decision-making in the round, weighing up the diverse aspects of your life, your values and aims, and how much time you can give, realistically, to each. It helps if you can be clear in your own mind about the reasons underpinning your choices, and then be able to make peace with the consequences of difficult decisions.

As well as the total amount of time spent, there is also the consideration of how well you spend your time. Chapters 4 and 6 can help you deploy time more effectively.

Maintaining motivation

Success is associated with high levels of motivation. For this reason, it is useful to be clear about what is likely to motivate you the most. Each of us is motivated by different things. Below are some techniques people use to keep themselves motivated.

Setting high expectations

Success is linked to high expectations. These may take the form of very specific things which you wish to achieve, or a more general vision or ambition. If you set low expectations, you will probably achieve very little. Once you set high expectations, you need to plan accordingly, making sure you create the right opportunities for yourself. If your expectations are low, you are likely to be unprepared for opportunities that arise.

Being realistic

Little is achieved without setbacks, effort and hard work, and even moments when you feel like giving up. Although positive thinking is an asset, unrealistic thinking sets you up for failure as you will be unprepared to meet hurdles that are set in your way. Think through what setbacks you may face and make plans to deal with these. Take them in your stride as part of the natural process, rather than as disasters which mean you will fail.

Setting realistic milestones

The section above, on goals, refers to the importance of setting milestones so that you can chart your progress. The more challenging the overall goal, or the longer it takes to achieve, the more important it is to set yourself intermediate targets to check you are moving in the right direction.

Rewarding achievement

Promise yourself a reward for reaching your intermediate targets – something you would really appreciate but which is appropriate to the size of the task – and then make sure you really do take that reward when you reach the target. You can set rewards such as a break, a coffee, a special meal, a phone call to a friend, for small targets on a single day.

Harnessing support

If you feel it will be difficult to keep yourself on track, ask a friend or mentor to check at set, regular intervals that you are keeping to plan. You may work better if you set up a support group to encourage you to keep going. These can work best if you set clear targets and your support team is given a specific date on which to check whether targets have been met.

Recording success

It is easier to monitor and reward your successes if you keep a record. This can be useful for the task in hand and also in retrospect when you reflect back upon what you achieved. A record of past successes can be very motivating for future enterprises.

Activity



Sources of motivation

When the going gets tough, I am most likely to be motivated by ...

(tick all that apply to you)

- my long-term vision
- lots of short-term goals
- my values
- my belief system
- my will to win
- my sources of inspiration
- people who are close to me
- my desire to do good for others
- my desire to prove something
- achieving lots of small successes along the way
- giving myself a reward for completing a stage
- enjoyment of the activity
- finding something in the activity to interest me
- the support of other people
- having another person monitor my progress
- recording my successes

Hunting out the interest

It is much easier to succeed at a task if we find it engaging. We often react towards things we find difficult as if they were inherently boring. However, we can make something appear interesting even if, at first, we do not think it is. For example, we can make it a personal challenge to complete the task, or set up challenging time targets for each stage. Perhaps paradoxically, if we find out more than we need to know about something, we are more likely to find it interesting: feeling we have expertise can increase our interest.

The important thing is to know what kinds of motivational spurs work for you.

Personal investment: benefits, costs and commitments

Put your heart, mind, intellect and soul into even your smallest acts. This is the secret of success.

Swami Sivanandi

The person who makes a success of living is the one who sees his goal steadily and aims for it unswervingly. That is dedication. Cecil B. DeMille

You can be an ordinary athlete by getting away with less than your best. But if you want to be great, you have to give it all you've got, your everything. Duke P. Kahanamoku



Reflection: Commitment

- Do you agree with the comments quoted above?
- What, if anything, are you willing to commit to in such dedicated ways?
- What phrase would you find more motivating than those in the quotations?

For some people, success is measured by the achievement of a goal at any cost. For others, success is measured by overall outcomes. For example, the building of a new dam may be regarded as a successful outcome (it got built). On the other hand, some may view the event as a limited success or even a failure (it was built but at too great a cost financially, or to local inhabitants, or to the environment).



Identify one personal goal. Using the chart below, consider what a successful outcome would mean to you. What is it really worth to you? Write your responses in the boxes on the right.

Your goal	
Perceived personal benefits of achieving this goal?	
Perceived benefits to other people if the goal is achieved?	
What would you need to invest to achieve this goal (time, money, possible loss of self-confidence, friendship, etc.)?	
What level of such costs would you consider unacceptable?	
What costs would there be to others (time, money, possible loss of trust, etc.)?	
What level of such costs would you consider unacceptable?	
How would other people's opinion of you change if you were successful? Would this differ if the 'costs' were different?	
Would other people's opinion matter to you?	
How would your opinion of yourself change if you succeeded? Would this be different if the 'costs' were different?	
At what point would the benefits outweigh the costs for you? (Or at which point would the costs outweigh the benefits?)	

Success to some people (those who benefit from the dam) may be a loss to others. This is an extreme example, but it illustrates the point that each act is accompanied by benefits and loss. Each of us has to weigh up, for ourselves, what 'costs' we are willing to bear in order to achieve what kind of outcome. Often, we proceed without even considering the full picture – without considering what we already have, really want and value.

In planning for success, it helps to know certain things about yourself, such as:

- What you really want – 'no matter what!'
- Your assets: what you bring to the task in hand, that you are willing to 'invest' or risk. This includes such things as time, effort, money and material resources, friends and family, practice, endurance, willingness to wait or try again.
- Your limits: what sacrifices you are really prepared to make and where your limits lie. In this respect, the cost to others, the opinion of others, your values and your sense of self may all be relevant.

Ingredients of success

Taylor and Humphrey (2002) analysed interviews made with 80 UK and US business leaders, drawn from a wide range of businesses. They identified the skills and attributes which were most common amongst those who had been successful at chief executive level. Although most (91 per cent) had a degree and relevant technical skills, success was not closely linked to a level or type of knowledge: few had business degrees or outstanding technical ability.

Characteristics of successful chief executives

The Chief Executive Officers (CEOs) worked very long hours – but loved their work. They enjoyed leadership and recognition. They were noticeably self-confident, good at communicating with others and putting the interviewers at their ease. Their excellent inter-personal skills included patience and tolerance, often learned through the job itself. They were energetic, but took care to manage stress levels and stay healthy. Male directors were more sensitive to variations in their emotional lives and needed emotional stability in order to succeed. Most had a wide range of interests and part of what they brought to a company was 'breadth of vision developed from a wide range of

experience'. Most of these are self-management and people skills rather than unusual abilities or technical skills.

Attributes associated with success

The surprising outcome of Taylor and Humphrey's survey was that the range of personal skills and qualities associated with success were ones that most people could nurture. The researchers wrote: 'Board directors are not a race apart ... we found ourselves in the presence of bright, hard-working people, but not creatures from another planet. They had a variety of IQs, expertise, and backgrounds. In other words, directors are just like the rest of us – and their positions are up for grabs.' The skills and attitudes of successful people can be developed by others.

The main skills valued by the CEOs included:

- self-knowledge and self-awareness – this was especially noticeable, and the directors were frank about their skills and their shortcomings
- inter-personal skills, especially the ability to work with, and lead, teams
- problem-solving ability, using creative approaches and positive attitudes
- a desire to win, especially on behalf of the company or team
- a willingness to work very long hours and to 'do what it takes'
- emotional intelligence, especially when relating to others
- the ability to manage stress and to take care of their health
- a love of change
- confidence
- a broad range of personal interests
- readiness to seize opportunities rather than making rigid personal plans.

Many of these skills have long been recognised as essential in the caring professions. It may be surprising to find this list associated with business success. However, similar skills are likely to be required across a very wide range of professions.

Increasingly, employers expect employees to be able to work in project teams on complex problems. This requires many of the other skills listed: good people skills, emotional intelligence, self-knowledge, a positive attitude, a willingness to put the team's interests first. Negative-thinking, selfish people who lack confidence, who get easily

stressed, fear change or who are not aware of how they are coping with their own emotions, are unlikely to be a great asset to a team.

However, the qualities needed for different kinds of success may vary from the above list. Academic success requires a willingness to refine analytical thinking skills. Successful relationships may require a willingness not to work very long hours outside of the home, but are still likely to require a willingness to 'do what it takes' to

achieve a successful outcome for the relationship. High levels of success in any field tend to require long hours, hard work, practice, and a willingness to keep going towards achieving the goal even when you do not feel like it, or when you are tired or want to give up. There are few areas of life where an individual is unlikely to benefit from the characteristics associated with chief executives, as listed above.

Activity



Self-evaluation of personal qualities associated with success

	Good	Wish to improve	Not relevant to me	See chapter
Self-knowledge and self-awareness	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	1 and 2
Problem-solving ability	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	6 and 7
A creative approach	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	7
Positive attitude	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	4
People skills	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	5
Team working	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	5
Leadership	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	5
Negotiating skills	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	5
A desire to succeed	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	1
A willingness to 'do what it takes'	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	4 and 6
Emotional intelligence	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	4 and 5
The ability to manage personal stress	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	4
The ability to cope with and/or promote change	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	4
Self-confidence	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	4 and 5
A broad range of personal interests	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	1
Self-knowledge (reflection, self-analysis)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	1, 2 and 3
Risk management	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	6
Ability to cope with uncertainty	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	4



The goal or ambition analysed here is:

To achieve this goal or ambition, the following attributes will probably be needed:

Attribute	Highly relevant	May be relevant	Not relevant	Don't know
Self-knowledge and self-awareness	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Problem-solving ability	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
A creative approach	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Positive attitude	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
People skills	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Team working	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Leadership	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Negotiating skills	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
A desire to succeed	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
A willingness to 'do what it takes'	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Emotional intelligence	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The ability to manage personal stress	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The ability to cope with and/or promote change	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Self-confidence	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
A broad range of personal interests	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Good health	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Self-knowledge (reflection, self-analysis)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Risk management	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Ability to cope with uncertainty	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Other skills needed to achieve this goal or ambition:

1

2

3

Personal qualities needed to achieve this goal or ambition:

1

2

3

Any other attributes needed to achieve this goal or ambition:

1

2

3

Where are you now? Self-evaluation of personal qualities associated with success

On the chart above (p. 45), identify whether each of the personal qualities associated with success are ones that you already possess, or wish to develop or are not relevant. The final column of the activity indicates where in the book you can find out more about this skill or aspect.

Skills and qualities needed to achieve your goals

It is worth comparing the list of the attributes associated with successful outcomes at chief executive level with the attributes you regard as necessary to achieving your goals and ambitions. You may find that your personal goals call for a very particular set of skills and qualities. However, it is important to think through all the kinds of situations and problems that you may have to address in order to achieve your goals. What qualities would help you in those circumstances?

Is there a good skills 'match'?

At this point, it is useful to compare the attributes that you identified as necessary for achieving a successful outcome of your goal (p. 44) with the attributes you ascribed yourself in the activity on p. 45. Is there a good match? If not, which skills and qualities will require further development? What will you do to develop these?

If you added further skills, goals and attributes to your list, which of these would benefit from being further developed whilst at university? What will you do to develop these?

Breadth of vision and experience

In the section on successful CEOs above, Taylor and Humphrey (2002) identified 'breadth of vision developed from a wide range of experience' as an important characteristic of successful people. It is easy to see why this would be the case. Experience gained from many different settings brings you into contact with a more diverse range of people. This provides opportunities for learning about people, developing inter-personal skills and networking. Each context provides knowledge, skills, opportunities to develop personal qualities, as well as new perspectives and information.



Reflection: Extending experience

In your reflective journal, jot some thoughts on the following questions.

- In what ways do you already have a breadth of experience drawn from different contexts?
- In relation to your current goals and career aspirations, what opportunities are open to you for extending your breadth of experience? Consider, for example, your job, work experience, travel, taking on a position of responsibility, joining a student society, community or voluntary work, sporting activity, mentoring schemes, etc.
- What opportunities are offered through the curriculum for designing a personal programme that extends your range of skills and experience?

Congruence

'Congruence' refers to consistency in our thoughts, actions, behaviours and beliefs. It is about all our energies flowing in the same direction. It takes less effort to achieve goals if there is a high level of congruence between the different factors that influence, inspire and support those goals. If you are struggling to see the way towards success, it is worth checking whether there is a high level of congruence (or a 'good fit') amongst the following:

- your vision
- your motivation
- the 'influences' you value
- your sources of inspiration
- your short-term goals, targets or milestones
- your values and beliefs
- the attitudes of the people around you
- your means and resources
- your current situation.

In particular, it is worth checking that your 'vision' is still relevant to you. New experiences can change your vision, either reinforcing it, modifying it, or making it irrelevant.



Are your vision, ambitions, values and inspiration in alignment? Where might there be sources of internal conflict that could be undermining your efforts? On the chart below, jot down a response to the questions, using the space boxes.

Goal (e.g. what I want to achieve from my time at university)?	
What is my vision of success in relation to this goal? What would success look like?	
How does this goal fit into a bigger 'vision' for my life and my longer-term ambitions?	
What motivates me to pursue this goal – what do I want to gain from achieving this goal?	
What has influenced me, perhaps over many years, in forming this goal?	
What inspiration can I call upon to help me achieve this goal?	
What are my short-term goals? How do these support my main goal?	
How does this goal fit with my beliefs and values?	
How do the attitudes of people around me support me in working towards my current goal?	
What resources do I have, to support me towards my current goal?	
What else in my current situation supports or undermines me in working towards my goals?	
Conclusions	

'Goal inertia'

If you have 'vision inertia' or 'goal inertia', you continue to work towards a vision that may seem appealing but, in reality, no longer inspires or motivates you – there is no longer congruence between what you are doing and what you really want to do. This is especially true if your values change in the light of your experience. If this happens, tasks can seem to be more difficult or tiring. You may feel it more of a struggle to complete tasks, that you are looking for excuses to put tasks off, or even that you don't want to do anything at all. If you experience goal inertia it is time to recoup, to reconnect with your initial ambitions in at least some way, or else to change direction.

The preceding activity, 'Does it all add up?' can help identify the congruence of your own position.

Opportunities

Forks in the road

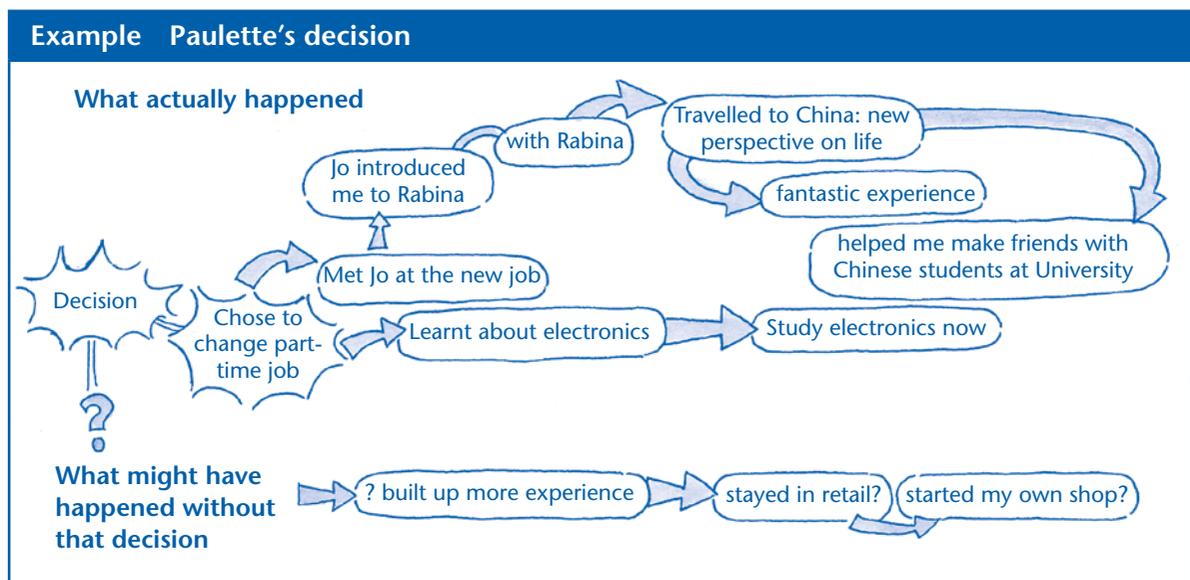
If you know what you want, either generally or in fine detail, are you taking and making opportunities that advance your aims? Are you somebody who looks for the opportunities in whatever comes your way or are you more likely to

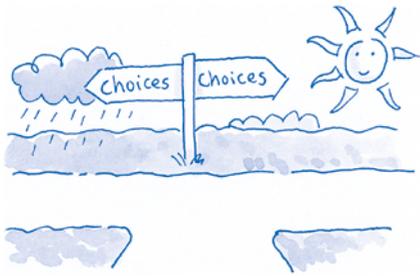
wait, hoping for the perfect moment to arrive? In every moment of the day, we make decisions that create a 'fork' in the path of our life. By acting one way or another, or by not acting at all, we make a choice to move in one direction and not another.

In the example shown on the flowchart below, at 15, Paulette decided to leave her part-time job at a local shop and work part-time in an electronics company. At the time, she just wanted a 'change of scene' that allowed her more flexible hours. From that decision, she met new people, overcame a fear of 'technical things', and travelled to China. These changes affected her choice of subject and friends at university.

What if I ... ?

What ideas emerge if you keep asking yourself the same question and have to give a different answer each time? The obvious answers tend to get used up after a while so that you draw more on your imagination to find new responses. Some of your responses may become rather far-fetched. However, sometimes, unexpected and useful responses can emerge. For the 'What if I ...?' activity on p. 49, let your mind range broadly. Avoid censoring your thoughts, even if an idea seems unlikely. Be imaginative. See what emerges.



Activity**The road walked**

Take approximately three minutes to jot down choices you have made that you look back on and feel good about. This may include significant friendships, work, how you dealt with difficult situations, saying or doing the right thing, presents given, offers that you accepted or turned down, your dedication to your learning or to resolving a problem, the benefits from learning

a new skill, acts of kindness, and good decisions you made. Focus on your role – what you did or did not do – rather than on what others did to you.

Read through your list and select your best use of an opportunity. It may appear small, such as giving somebody a card and seeing their face light up, or it may have been a major event such as saving a life.

Take a piece of paper and write the example at the top of the paper, as in the example above under 'Paulette's decision'. Spend a few minutes jotting down the various impacts of that one occasion on other aspects of your life. What opportunities, large or small, arose for you from seizing that first opportunity?

Activity**The road unwalked**

Now take approximately five minutes to brainstorm all the decisions you look back on and feel less good about. This may include opportunities that were present that you did not recognise at the time. For example, as well as the items on the above list, you may consider the things you did not do, say or learn. Focus on your role – what you did or did not do – rather than on what others did to you.

Read through your list and select the one opportunity that you feel you missed that has had the greatest impact upon your life.

Take a piece of paper and write down this decision as in the example above under 'Paulette's decision' (see p. 48). Spend a few minutes brainstorming all the ways that that one occasion has had an impact upon your life since. What other choices could you have made then? What might have been the consequences of making each of those other choices?

Activity**What if I ... ?
(from p. 48)**

In your reflective journal, jot down at least thirty times:

- 'What if I ... ?'
- 'What if I ... ?'
- 'What if I ... ?' etc.

Take about five minutes to write responses to the whole set of 'What if I ... ?' statements. For example:

- 'What if I ... spoke Japanese?' (I'd apply for a job in Japan)
- 'What if I invented a toy?' (I could set up a business)
- 'What if I rode a pogo stick?' (I would be fitter)

Make rapid replies so that you do not have time to check how sensible your responses are.

Look through your responses.

- Which ones surprise you?
- Which ones provide useful information?
- Which one would be the most interesting to put into action?
- Consider what the answer to some of these questions might be? Where does that line of thinking take you?



Take three minutes to jot down all the alternative paths you could have chosen today.

- What did you not do today that you could have done?
- What might the impact of some of those decisions be?



Closing comments

When engaged upon a long-term project such as gaining a degree or developing a career path, it is important to stay focused on what you want to achieve. This may be very different for each person. It is for you to decide what 'success' means for you, what you would consider to be an 'achievement', and what you want to gain from the experience. For some, the 'travelling' is as important as arriving: the journey may be the goal.

This chapter has encouraged you to think deeply about the future and the things that influence, motivate, inspire and guide you. Long-term goals such as gaining a degree and working towards a career require commitment. Though it would be lovely if everything ran smoothly, this is unlikely always to be the case over a period of several years. When things feel difficult, it is quite common to feel like giving up. It is then important to find ways to keep going until the path gets easier and to keep yourself motivated. Motivation is the key to success. It provides the energy and the drive. That is why the goal or 'vision' must contain something within it that really motivates you.

It is also important that you are true to what you really believe. The obvious reasons for personal goals are not always those that motivate us the most. This chapter has encouraged you to look more deeply below the surface and examine what is really important to you. You should now have a much clearer idea of your visions for your life, your goals, your targets, values, motivation and skills.

In the next chapter, you will have a chance to look more closely at further aspects of what makes you unique. Chapter 2 provides an opportunity to look back over your life journey and the events that have most significance for who you are now and how you make decisions. It will also enable you to consider how you construct your personal narrative and perception of yourself, and the impact this may have on the choices you make. By identifying expertise you may have hidden in your repertoire, you can consider how you do things now – and how you might do things differently in the future.

Further reading

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