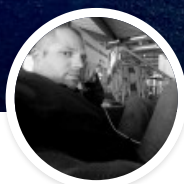
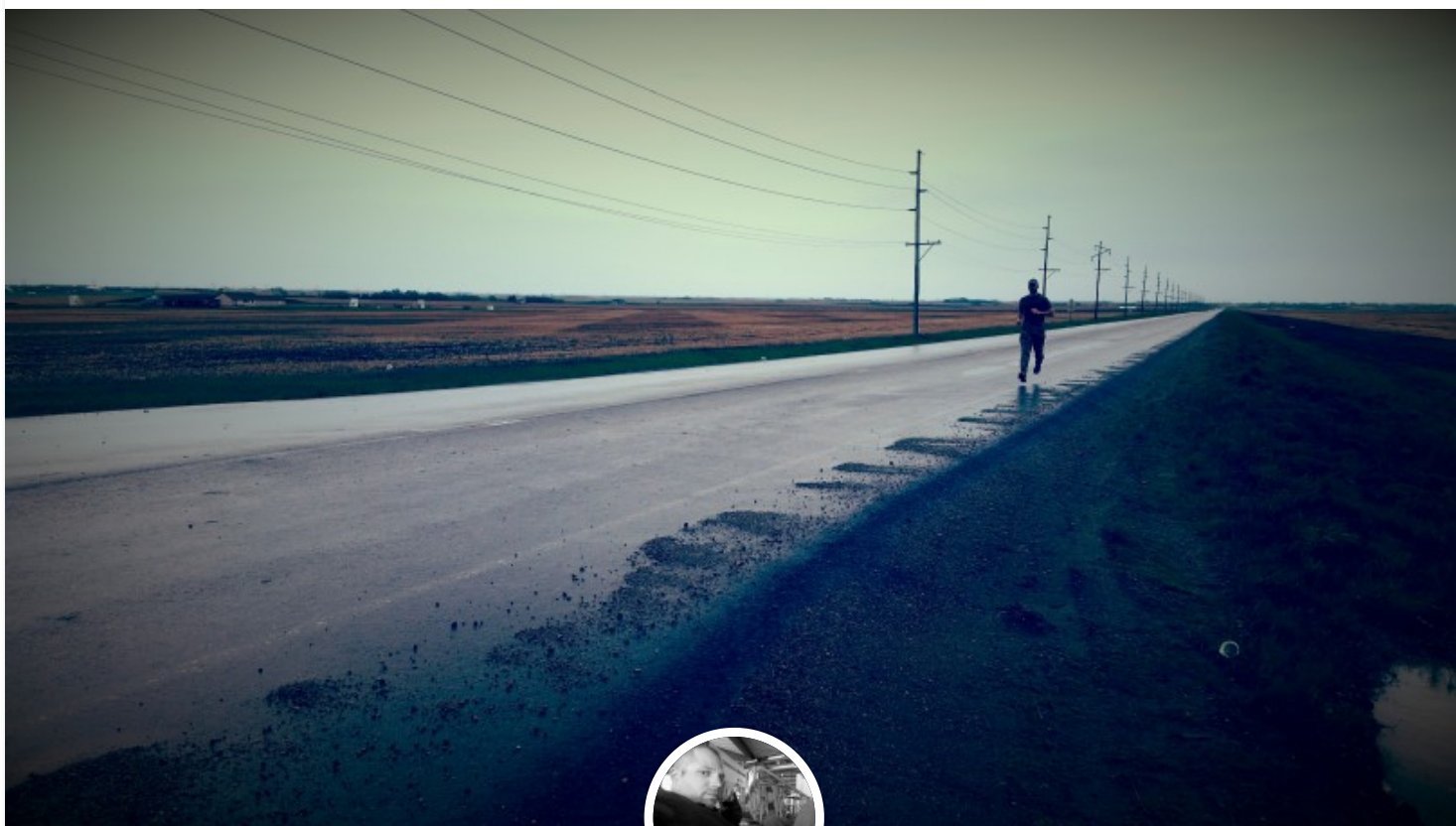


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“Success” is a Journey for the Out-of-Reach Bar

by AJ Powell | 1 Comment | 8 min read



Written by [AJ Powell](#)

How do we measure achievement? When do we know that we have achieved success in life? How do we measure the value and worth of success? There seem to be many people out there who claim to have the answers to these types of questions, and far too many quickly ready to discredit any who dare suggest a standard too high for social acceptance... And I'll tell you why that is, but first, understand this... REAL success is a never-ending struggle, a journey for the Out-of-Reach Bar, the Highest of Standards, the Bar forever just out of reach...

Real success in life is a journey made up of a lot of little successes. It does not come easy nor cheap, and most certainly isn't handed out in the streets. There exists zero liberalism or socialism in the achievement of success, for it is an endeavor that cannot be obtained, borrowed, or stolen and redistributed from someone else. It is an endeavor to which only the individual himself or herself is capable. Yet all too often do we find the vast majority inescapably incapable of its attainment. Why? It's simple; most quit before they have ever taken the first step.

Early on in my professional career, a leader told my cohort these things, that throughout our career the seemingly impossible will be asked of us time, and time again, yet that when we carefully reflect on all we had accomplished that day, we would find that, with a little planning and determination, the impossible had become the very probable, and wasn't so impossible after all. You see, life is filled to the hilt with overflowing, unprecedented mediocrity and underachievement. We are unfortunate enough to live in a society where mediocrity is hailed and praised as "achievement", and to where *real* achievement is often ridiculed and shunned. A society to where very few truly shine above the rest and accomplish great and meaningful things, all because they were the only ones willing to strive for them, while the vast majority refused to leave the comfort of their bubbles. And because the rest complain of the effort required to obtain greatness, they lower the *Bar of Standards* down to their own mediocre levels so they may praise themselves, pat themselves on the back, and tell themselves that their new substandard level of achievement was meaningful and worthwhile.

But such things are not worth praising! For if we do allow the praise of such willful underachievement, then an ever new *Lowering of the Standard* shall continuously become the next socially accepted subject of praise! Before you know it, there will be fewer and fewer of those willing to challenge the highest peaks or dive to the deepest of depths! Fewer and fewer of those willing to escape from the bubble, boldly tell society to its face that its standards are worthlessly low, and strive to reach real stars! Society will eventually be reduced to one that praises itself just for showing up, and hands itself a trophy merely for living and breathing and simply taking up space!

Oh wait... it has already...

I'll tell you right here and now, such a low standard of achievement is worthless and meaningless, and unless the standard is moved to a place beyond your own reach, it isn't worth striving for. The vast majority are uncomfortable with the idea of being uncomfortable, and dismissive of the need of discomfort as a requirement for success. But discomfort is at the source of the journey to success, and unless individuals are willing to leave their narrow-minded, lazy, and indifferent bubbles of mediocrity, their lives will never amount to anything worth anything worthy of praise.

Many might read this and shout aloud, "But, if the bar is set too high, we'll likely never reach it!" And to this I say, you lot of lazy demagogues, the bar should always be out of reach! If you ever reached the bar, would you not then cease to grow? Should you strive along your journey, leaving the comforts of your bubble behind, and reach the bar, would not your journey reach an end? For the true leader set-forth upon the road of self-betterment – the journey to success – a stagnant life is one not worth living! But if the bar is always and forever just out of reach, set higher and higher each time you get closer, you'll soon find you've reached unprecedented heights, and look back to marvel at all you've achieved! Such a journey is rightly truly worthy of praise!

Knowing this, there will surely still remain doubters, questioning, "But what's the first step? Certainly it must be difficult for any who have never began such a journey, what say you then?" And to them I say, for you relentless doubters who fallaciously demand more proof because you refuse to be moved and lack initiative, the first step shall always be the most difficult, and rightfully so, known by, "Responsibility"...

The journey towards the achievement of success is a never-ending and difficult path of self-betterment – a path of leadership development – and it all starts with accepting responsibility for yourself and your actions. Accept that your life is what *you* choose to make of it. Accept that no one can make *your* life better except you. Accept that no one is to blame for *your* life being what it is but you. Accept that nothing worth anything meaningful in life ever comes easy. And accept that without pain and hardship, sacrifice and struggle, difficulty and failure, you will never learn, you will never grow, and you will never achieve.

Real success requires you to accept responsibility for yourself, and then take action to make a positive change. Take the initiative to do what needs to be done, to take the first step, and focus on reaching the *Out-of-Reach Bar*. Accept responsibility for your failures, don't blame others for your shortcomings, faults, or problems you help create, commit to the goal, focus on personal change, and keep moving forward.

Real success requires you to admit you can't always do it alone, but also that you must pick your teammates wisely. You must commit to relationships with other individuals also walking the path – those who also strive for growth and reach for meaningful success – and at the same time, remove from your life all those infected with content, self-pity, and indifference. The masses will leach off you and try to trick you into carrying them along with you... but they are mere self-defeatist, diseased, lazy dead weight that will only end up dragging you down the road of failure. Understand that once you commit to the journey, that overwhelming majority of society, hell-bent on lazy and indifferent stagnation, will shun you, hate you, and even disown you once they realize you will not do the work for them, and all because they envy you and despise themselves for not doing the same.

Real success requires commitment. It requires a commitment to continuous discomfort, to continuous education, to a willingness to explore beyond your niche, to the often lonely and difficult path, to the pursuit of continuous growth. It requires a commitment to reflecting in the mirror, to accepting faults and shortcomings, and to taking charge of your life. It requires you to commit to commitment, to reaching the next higher ledge, to never giving up...

No, *real* success is not easy, it cannot be bought, borrowed or taken, and it comes at a steep personal price. It requires acceptance of responsibility, a willingness to cut away the scum that leaches off you and holds you back, the realization that teamwork is required, that you will need help and to lend a helping hand to others also on the path. Above all, it requires you to commit to the journey. You must commit your life to discomfort, to struggle, and pain, and through it all, commit to having the backbone and the fortitude to walk your journey for yet another day. To cast aside your weak feelings of pity, remorse, and regret... To the deep-sixing of dead weight and developing an iron will. Real success isn't for everyone – as society has shown, it doesn't like it when everyone can't be winners. Society will scream at you that your wrong, that you need to be soft, that success can and should be shared, that you should be just like them... But real success is an achievement attained only by leaders – those Initiative-Takers, those trend-setters – those who never stop reaching for the *Unreachable Bar*, the one held to the *Highest of Standards*, the Bar forever just barely out of reach...

So look at your life with all seriousness, accept real responsibility in the gaze at that reflection, and ask yourself if you have yet to cast aside the comfortable bubble of mediocrity and take that first step! Decide for yourself if you're strong enough to take up such an endeavor, and if so, commit!

After all, a stagnant life is one not worth living,

and the only one capable of getting you to the summit... is you.

SOUND OFF!

What are **YOUR** thoughts?

Let us know in the **comments below!**

Open discussion helps everyone learn and grow.

Achievement Bubble Commitment Leader Leadership Leadership Development Responsibility Success

About the author



AJ Powell

AJ is a retired U.S. Army NCO who served in both the U.S. Navy and U.S. Army. He is a combat veteran, and has participated in contingency operations around the world. AJ is the Owner of Veteran Leadership Solutions, the Founder and Editor in Chief of The Warfighter Journal, and is a published Sociological Analyst, Researcher, Guest Lecturer, and Public Speaker. He is a graduate of Pennsylvania State University with a focus on Sociology and a science degree in Organizational Leadership, and is published in the field of sociology. AJ is an inductive analyst; public figure; researcher/writer; aviator; a certified advanced operational diver; professional instructor, trainer, mentor, and adviser; snowboarder; motorcycle rider; world traveler; he enjoys long distance endurance events, and much more.