

PILLAR 3: CONSCIENTIOUSNESS - THE PATH TO SUCCESS

The third pillar of building your career is to exercise and maintain a trait that consistently leads to success: conscientiousness.

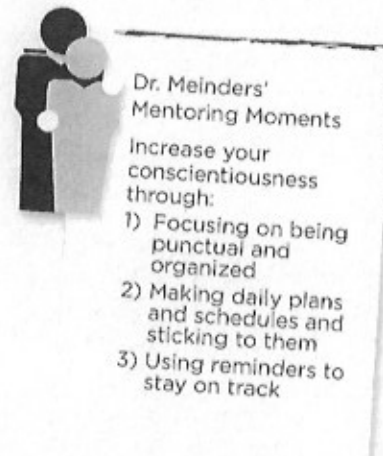
Conscientiousness is marked by a drive to complete tasks, attain goals and take obligations seriously – and to be focused on giving your best in all that you do.

The signs of conscientiousness often become apparent to others as early as your days in first or second grade. And the trait normally stays with you throughout life.¹⁰ But don't worry. As I'll cover in a moment, conscientiousness is also a characteristic that you, as an adult, can intentionally develop and make an integral part of your life.

Here's a good example of conscientiousness in the early years: A second grade teacher has to step out of the classroom for a moment. She instructs her students to be quiet and work on their homework. Conscientious students do just that. But others around them may be passing notes or whispering loudly to one another. And there's even one student standing on his desk, throwing paper wads at others.

People who are conscientious usually make better grades in school and college, commit fewer crimes, stay married longer, and live longer. A study conducted at the University of Pennsylvania and the University of Michigan found that conscientious people usually earn higher salaries.¹¹ Other studies have found conscientiousness to be an important factor in finding and retaining employment.

But why do conscientious people tend to be more successful? The reason is thought to be that they are better at setting goals, working toward them, and demonstrating persistence amid setbacks. They are self-disciplined, which is the most important factor. Instead of giving up when they meet hard times, they will switch to a more attainable goal. And they follow rules.

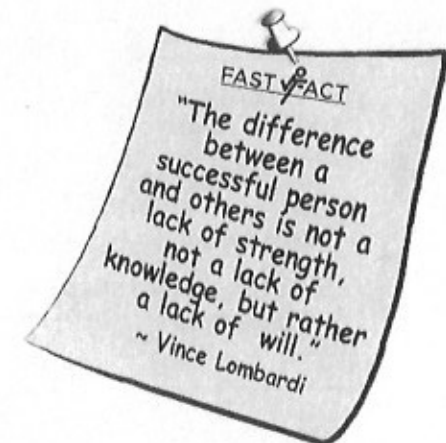


Conscientiousness does not correlate with high SAT scores, but it does predict high GPAs. Conscientious people react with planned, instead of spontaneous, behavior. They think through things before reacting. They are generally hardworking and reliable and normally are well-organized, neat, and systematic.¹² Demonstrated conscientiousness is an important factor in hiring decisions.

Even if you are not conscientious today, there is good news for you. You can work on developing the trait. Three steps can help you strengthen your conscientious

personality: 1) focus on being punctual and organizing your desk, 2) make daily plans and schedules and stick to them, and 3) use reminders so that you can stick with your schedule.¹³ Your Outlook calendar or other personal electronic calendar are great tools for keeping you on task.

Now let's take conscientiousness, as it relates to success, a step further. Vince Lombardi, a great football coach whose name graces the Super Bowl trophy, once stated, "The difference between a successful person and others is not a lack of strength, not a lack of knowledge, but rather a lack of will."



A person's will – or determination – is akin to conscientiousness. Research has shown that determination drives greatness and success. Talent is not nearly as important as determination in being successful.

You achieve greatness through hard work and deliberate practice, targeted toward

- Lead by example. An organization rises to the lowest standard that the leader sets. The leader's standard of conduct should be above reproach. Leaders should not only avoid wrongdoing but also the appearance of wrongdoing.



- Be open minded, interested in hearing different views, even after a decision is made. People understand that their opinion may not always be accepted, but they'll become frustrated if they're not allowed to voice their opinion. And even though you're willing to listen to other views, don't change your decision unless you determine it is the right way to go.

- Admit when you're wrong or make a mistake.
- Put the goals of your organization above your personal ambitions and ego. Always exhibit your integrity by doing the right thing, at the right time, for the right reason. Those who report to you will be watching. And they'll be able to tell when your decisions are driven by self-interest, which will hinder their initiative.
- Remember the birthdays of people who work for you. Enter birthdays in your office calendar so you'll be reminded. The same goes for other special occasions.
- Thank people informally for a job well

done in front of others in the office – in addition to any formal recognition you may provide.

- Likewise, an earnest apology can also be done informally, but in front of others. If an apology is made in private, it does nothing for the wronged because others are unaware of the apology and still think the offense was condoned.
- When taking care of your people, you must recognize them for good work. Don't only recognize your top performers. Recognize everyone who does a good job. Take time to write complete employee performance reports. This is an excellent opportunity to give your employees feedback and recognize them for work well done and provide guidance on how to do better.



Dr. Meinders' Mentoring Moments

- Thanking people in public and in front of their peers is good. But be careful not to overdo it and risk jealousies.

Personal Contact

Leadership is a relationship based on personal contact. Studies show that personal contact increases productivity. A leader sets the standards for the entire organization. People will follow your lead, but at most, they will only try to achieve

the lowest level of commitment that you demonstrate.

Good leaders know they must lead by example. They know it's not a matter of "do as I say, not as I do," but rather the opposite.

Maintain a high standard of dignity because you are setting the standard your subordinates will follow.

Examples of demonstrating dignity include:

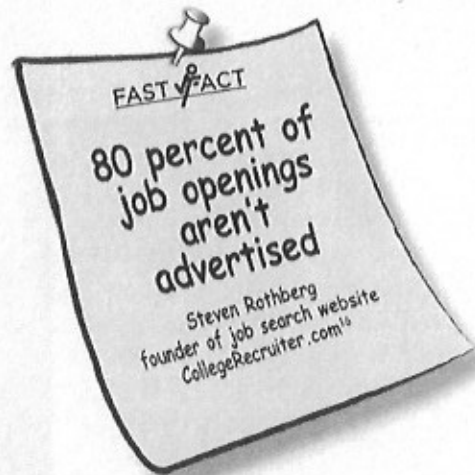
- Being well dressed and well mannered
- Avoiding profanity
- Helping subordinates through personal crises
- Warmly welcoming newcomers through a welcome letter and assigning a sponsor to assist them in transitioning into your organization

In setting the office standard, leaders should not only avoid wrong doing, but also avoid the appearance of wrong doing. And good leaders never expect followers to do anything that they would not do themselves. A leader should walk the talk of the high standards of the organization. Doing this will help reinforce the plans and goals of the organization and will frequently improve productivity and job satisfaction as much as an incentive and awards program.

Another mistake that can put you at a disadvantage is limiting your job hunt to replying to online and newspaper employment ads. With this strategy you will miss about 80 percent of available job opportunities. That's because 80 percent of job openings aren't advertised, according to Steven Rothberg, founder of job search website CollegeRecruiter.com.¹⁶

And that's where networking comes in. Networking helps you get your foot in the door and make an impression - something you can't do if you're only responding to job postings (like dozens, hundreds, maybe even thousands of other people). Without networking you miss out on the advantage of personal contact and building relationships with people who can lead you to hidden opportunity - and even recommend you.

Networking and marketability go hand-in-hand. But networking can help provide you a strong foundation from which to find employment or advance your career. For that reason, let's explore networking strategies first.



Networking involves establishing and maintaining relationships with people who can become your friends, advisors, and even mentors - to help you as you start out and advance through your career.

Your network could include relatives, friends, teachers and professors, classmates, alumni of your school, past or current co-workers, and members of organizations you're active in, including your house of worship. And anyone else you are in contact with who could help you with any of the following:

- Job search advice, including where to look for work in your field
- Inside information on what's happening in your field of interest, such as an organization's plan to expand operations, create jobs, or release a new product
- Introduction to an employer
- Tips on job hunting tools, such as resume, interviewing skills, portfolio, and online search sites

Developing a network takes some thought and work. If you are like me, networking can be difficult - though well worth the effort you put into it. Starting out, I was shy. I felt very uncomfortable walking into a room of people I did not know. And then having to introduce myself and start a conversation. I feared saying something or doing something that would be embarrassing, and having people laugh at me. But with time and experience, it became easier.

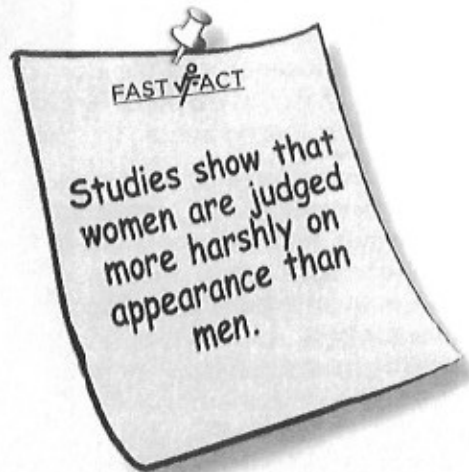
Today, with the internet, you do not have to rely only on face-to-face contact to network. But no matter whether you network online or in-person, I offer a few basic strategies for getting the most value from your efforts.

Basic Networking Strategies for getting the most value from your efforts :

- Identify the ideal people to network with. For instance, people in your office, your same job category, your community service group, or your church.
- Identify the best place (physical location or social media site) to connect with them.
- Start by building a personal relationship with people in your network. Allow them to share what's important to them. Remember: Networking is a two-way street. People in your network will offer you helpful advice and guidance, so reciprocate. Share information you think will be of interest and benefit to them.
- Approach almost every encounter with people as a potential networking opportunity. Until you meet someone and get to know them, you never know what help they may be able to provide you or what you can do for them.

LinkedIn

LinkedIn, the online networking platform for professionals, has more than 562 million users. At its most basic, LinkedIn allows you to post your profile and invite others to join your LinkedIn network. That was all I did with LinkedIn when I first joined. Even



about being stereotypically pretty and more about consciously highlighting your best attributes and features and taking the time to appear well-groomed."

Even slimness or a fit appearance may help you climb the ladder of success. In this case, 21% of the executives said being overweight reflects poorly on women, compared to 17% who said extra pounds hurt men. These numbers doubled for the effect of obesity (45% and 35%, respectively). Several executives interviewed said that being in good physical shape implies you know how to take care of yourself and, by extension, important projects - regardless of whether there's any validity to this assumption.

While women are judged more critically for their weight, men tend to be sized up by their height. Of those surveyed, 16% said being tall is important for men, compared to just 6% for women.¹⁸ According to the leadership book *Management* by Chuck Williams, 58% of male CEOs running the 500 largest U.S. companies stand 6 feet tall or more. In contrast, only 14.5% of the

general American male population stands at least 6 feet tall.

Clothing - including accessories like dress shoes and a nice watch - makes the man or woman, too, the executives said. But they tended to advise against flashy jewelry as it can undermine your appearance. Similarly, they said brand names suggest stature, but too many labels are distracting. They also said that youthful appearance is more negative for women than men.

Posture also is important. Sitting and standing tall is considered the second most important leadership signifier, no matter what type of office environment you work in.¹⁹

7 Ways Your Boss Is Judging Your Appearance

- Grooming
- Physical Attractiveness
- Slimness/Fitness
- Height
- Posture
- Clothing
- Youthful Appearance

Your Brand

What do you think of when you see the Mercedes hood ornament or hear the word Mercedes? Most people think of words like "expensive," "luxurious," "reliable," and



other terms associated with high quality. The same thing happens when you think of people. What people associate with you when they see you or hear your name is what is called your "brand." Your brand is not only a result of what you have learned and accomplished in life but is also people's perceptions of who you are.

You have the power to influence people's impressions of you and your brand by being consistent and true to yourself in your personal and professional life. Your brand is the image you want others to associate with you - and a good brand is a key factor in determining if friends and associates include you in conversations, activities, and recommend you to others for jobs.

Examples of characteristics that help build a good brand include: conscientiousness, being knowledgeable/expert in your specialty, being thoughtful, having good communication skills, the desire to help others, and good grooming.