

WHY SUCCESS WITHOUT PURPOSE STILL FEELS EMPTY

Derek Strokon on abundance, hero culture, and redefining wealth

MARKET TRENDS

By the time Derek Strokon built a 5,100 square foot home with a sweeping 270 degree panoramic view, he had achieved what many would define as success. The house was impressive. The career was thriving. The optics were flawless.

And yet, standing inside that symbol of achievement, something felt fundamentally wrong.

“None of it mattered,” Strokon recalls. “When I started thinking about how many people we could have helped with the money we spent building that home, everything shifted.”



That moment became a quiet inflection point, one that would eventually reshape how he thought about business, wealth, leadership, and responsibility.

Today, Strokon is a three time international bestselling author, TEDx speaker, CEO of Soul Summit Ventures, and a long time veteran of

corporate finance and insurance.

But titles are no longer the metric he uses to measure success. Instead, his work now centers on a deceptively simple idea, that abundance is real, but unevenly distributed, and leaders have a responsibility to decide what they do with their excess.

THE COST OF HERO CULTURE

The seed for this shift was planted years earlier, on Halloween night, by Strokon's two year old son.

Dressed in matching Spider Man costumes, Strokon proudly announced they were going to show grandma how to be heroes. His son stopped, dropped the costume on the ground, and said, "No. I just want to be me."

It was a moment that caught Strokon off guard.

"I realized I was teaching my son that to be a hero, you have to wear a mask," he says. "That somehow being yourself is not enough."

That realization became the foundation of his TEDx talk, *How to Escape Hero Culture*, which challenges the societal narrative that worth is earned through performance, sacrifice, and appearances. In business, hero culture shows up as overwork, excessive consumption, and the constant need to signal success. Buying the things that do not matter, to impress people who do not care, using money you do not actually have.

It is a familiar pattern, and one Strokon admits he followed for years.



DOWNSIZING TO SCALE IMPACT

The change that followed was not symbolic. It was structural.

Strokon and his family downsized dramatically, moving from their custom home into a modest half duplex. They reduced consumption, eliminated excess, and focused on owning only what they actually used.

What they gained was margin.

Not just financial margin, but mental clarity, emotional presence, and the ability to give with intention.

"The world is full of abundance," Strokon says. "The challenge is that it is not equally distributed."



WHAT COMES AFTER ENOUGH

There is a point where success stops solving problems. The lifestyle is set. Security is in place. More money no longer changes daily life in any meaningful way.

As Derek Strokon puts it, “Once you eclipse a standard of life that is acceptable to you, the real question becomes, what do you do with the rest?”

For leaders, this is the moment ambition matures. Excess can be consumed, or it can be directed. Toward people, community, and impact. At that level, success is no longer about accumulation, it is about allocation.

That belief now drives much of his professional work. Through his consulting and coaching practice, every client is encouraged to establish a community fund tied to causes they personally care about. Sport access for children. Nutrition and health. Cancer supportive care. Local initiatives with direct, measurable impact.

The point is not charity as optics. It is agency.

“People mistake unfamiliarity for inability,” Strokon explains. “They think, ‘I do not know how to do this, so I cannot.’ The truth is, everyone starts unfamiliar.”

MONEY, MEANING, AND DIMINISHING RETURNS

Strokon is careful not to demonize money. His background in finance gives him a practical lens on reality. “Money is access,” he says. “Not having it is a problem. Having it creates options.” But he is equally clear about the diminishing returns of consumption.

“There is a point where each additional dollar creates less happiness, not more,” he notes. “After that, the question becomes, what is this money for?”

He points to a quote from his close friend Randy Molland, and that line has stuck. “If you want to be the happiest Million dollar income earner on the planet, build a business that makes two million a year, and give half away”. Not as punishment, but as permission to live a life full of abundance, both financially and community wise.

Permission to live with purpose.

Permission to enjoy success without guilt.

Permission to define wealth on your own terms.

TIPPING TIME AND RECLAIMING AGENCY

One of Strokon's most compelling frameworks is a concept he calls “tipping time.”

Imagine life as an hourglass, with future and past flowing endlessly. We assume access to the future only comes once enough time has passed. Tipping time means turning the hourglass sideways.

“When you do that,” he explains, “you realize the grains are not connected. They are just touching.”

In practical terms, it means the future you want is accessible now. You do not have one shot. Opportunity recreates itself at every moment.

This belief has fueled Strokon's ability to start multiple companies, write numerous books, and pursue impact driven ventures without the anxiety of scarcity.

REDEFINING SUCCESS FOR MODERN LEADERS

As organizations enter another year of goal setting, scaling, and performance metrics, Strokon offers a grounded reminder.

“You are already living a life that someone else is dreaming of,” he says.

That realization is not meant to dull ambition.
It is meant to stabilize it.

From that place of calm and contentment, leaders make better decisions. They build healthier teams. They create businesses that last. And they use profit not as a scoreboard, but as a tool.

Success, in this framing, is not about having more. It is about needing less, so you can do more with what remains.



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