

Shoot for the stars!

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*Health
psychologist
Dr Nicola
Davies reveals
the three
critical steps
to developing
a winning
attitude.*
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WHAT is it that differentiates a winner from someone who isn't successful? What can we do to increase our chances of being a winner? Dr Amanda Potter of Zircon Management Consulting, provides her perspective on these questions, informed by research on 42 successful CEOs, Olympians, entrepreneurs, sporting stars, and media personalities.

Driving forces

A key finding in Potter's research was that the successful people had endured experiences that helped them make the most of their situation and change their mind-set. These external forces - both positive and negative life events - triggered new ways of thinking or behaving, which led to the identification of goals and strengthened their perseverance to meet these goals.

Many participants involved in the research had experienced failure and adversity. These losses acted as a catalyst, igniting their persistence to succeed and desire to improve themselves. Many of those who had experienced adversity identified a turning point which changed their lives. Others, however, had sought a supportive network group that provided them with encouragement and motivation. Group members included parents, coaches, friends, or spouses. It was the positive influence of the network that helped them to find their passion and achieve their goals.

Potter's research also identified 10 key internal forces in people with a winning attitude. These include:



1. Burning ambition to fight for goals and a high need for achievement.
2. Dogged determination to keep going and a resilience to adversity.
3. Realistic optimism about the future and comfort with risks.
4. Unwavering self-belief and an awareness of their limits and weaknesses.
5. Intrinsic generosity in spending time and money on family, friends, and colleagues.
6. Mutual respect for team members, as well as empathy and tolerance.
7. Maximising opportunities by identifying gaps in the market and filling that gap appropriately.
8. Disruptive thoughts about challenging themselves and embracing change in order to become better at what they do.

9. Constant curiosity and a need to learn and grow.
10. Single-minded focus and a high attention to detail involving a methodical approach to tasks.

These attributes of a winning mindset are what lead an individual up the path of success. When an individual can identify and use their strengths to the maximum, these attributes lead to increased psychological wellbeing and productivity. Seven core strengths were also identified within the successful people:

- **Responsible** – they welcome being held accountable and take responsibility for their work.
- **Composed** – they recover from adversities and accept challenges in order to create opportunities.
- **Positive** – they remain optimistic and upbeat even in challenging situations.
- **Competitive** – they like to compete with others and achieve more.
- **Networker** – they work on building relationships and extend their professional network.
- **Innovative** – they scan their environment for unique ways to work and think conceptually.
- **Methodical** – they are systematic and well-organised and like to prepare ahead.

Varying groups of winners differed in the combination of how winning elements interacted with each other. For example, the traits that stood out for CEOs were being methodical and having mutual respect. The focus of entrepreneurs, on the other hand, was on finding opportunities and being innovative. Interestingly, it was also found

that being independent at an early age and having unconventional experiences during childhood were transformative experiences for these winners, and may have played a role in their success. Winners also have an internal locus of control,

meaning they see themselves as responsible for their success. They understand that success won't simply come to them, and that they need to work at it. This is why they have an unwavering persistence in their efforts to reach their goals. Potter's research suggests that we all have the talent and the potential to be winners. We just need to identify what we are passionate about, focus on our strengths, and be determined to win. ✨

✨ Identify your strengths

1. **Define your goals.** What is it that you want to accomplish? Have a realistic goal in mind.
2. **Utilise SWOT.** Begin by thinking of yourself as a competitive product in the market (S = Strengths). How will a customer differentiate you from another product (a colleague)? Some examples of strengths could be good management skills, likeability, creativity, or strong sales skills. Once you have identified these, analyse your weaknesses (W = Weaknesses). What are the areas you need to improve on? These could include procrastinating or being disorganised. After you have analysed your strengths and weaknesses, think of the opportunities available to you and how they might help you eliminate competition (O = Opportunities). Would furthering your education help? Finally, Compare yourself to successful competitors (T = Threats). Objectively assess their positives and evaluate how you can improve to surpass them. Performing this analysis will help you formulate strategies to achieve your goals.
3. **Ask yourself questions to reveal your inner strengths.** This involves identifying what you do better than others. What advantages do you have over others (education, experience, networks)? What are your personal resources? What do your family, friends and superiors see as your strengths? What achievements are you proud of? Once you have identified your internal strengths, you can utilise them to boost your performance in those areas of life where you want to be successful - whether that be at work, home, or in terms of your relationship with yourself and your personal happiness.

Failure and adversity can act as a catalyst, igniting the persistence to succeed and improve yourself.