



Strangest Secret

by Bob Whipple, MBA, CPLP

If you are pursuing a worthy goal, you are probably feeling pretty good about yourself, even if you are sometimes exhausted or discouraged along the way. As Lou Holtz once said "When we feel the best about ourselves is when we went the extra mile, when we lay our head on the pillow late at night worn out and exhausted, but we know we paid the supreme price." That statement is what effort toward a goal feels like much of the time. When you reach your goal, after you celebrate, it is important to set a new one fairly soon, so you do not drift.

This rule for living comes from numerous philosophers, including Earl Nightingale, a member of the International Speakers Hall of Fame and the Radio Hall of Fame. Earl produced several books on personal leadership and wrote over 7,000 radio and television commentaries on how we can lead better lives. His famous program "Lead The Field" is my all time favorite program for inspiration. It is available through The Nightingale Conant Company.

Here is the secret to a long and prosperous life (in every sense). When we are being "successful" is when we are pursuing a worthy goal. Earl discovered this law several decades ago. His famous "strangest secret" is only six words long...."We become what we think about." As we put forth extreme effort in pursuit of our goals, that is what gives meaning to life.

When we reach the goal, it is like a signpost along the road that we have arrived at that point in our life. It is right and smart to take a deep breath and celebrate with our loved ones who have supported us in the challenging times. Take some time to rest and to feel the great peace that comes from achieving your goal. Share the credit, because you did not do it alone.

Now comes the crucial part. Do not let too many days go by before you set your next goal in life. It may be completely different from the one just achieved. For example, someone who has studied for years to get an advanced degree may set a goal to climb

a mountain, or to become an excellent speaker, or an artist. The point is to not rest on the past achievement of a worthy goal too long. It is the next goal that must be envisioned, because that is how we get the most value from life. Without a worthy goal we quickly lose the real zest of life. Think of it this way..."The road is better than the inn," or "Life is a journey, not a destination."

Thornton T. Munger wrote, " There is no road to success but through a clear, strong purpose. Nothing can take its place. A purpose underlies character, culture, position, attainment of every sort."

Once you have set your goal, it is time to lay out your strategy for achieving it. This strategy is so valuable because it will help you regulate your effort to focus energy on the necessary tasks to attain it and not become distracted with other activities that cause overload.

You know when you are stretched too thin if performance starts to lag. It is really a fascinating area of life. We can always add another activity, but at some point we would be better off taking something off the plate. If we create a solid strategy for our life, then we will know what things to add and what things to prune. It is a really important concept in living well, and it is one that many people just arrive at by default. The most accomplished people do not leave it to chance, rather they own their destiny.

What you achieve in life is a function of how you run your life. Make sure you have a worthy goal at all times. Celebrate the achieving of one goal by setting a new one. Combine the goal with a focusing strategy, and you will be amazed at the level of achievement and satisfaction you can pack into your precious years on this planet.

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