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## My Rules for Success

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# My Rules for Success

## **Abstract**

Success means something different to everyone. It can mean wealth, power, happiness, or a hundred other things. There are all kinds of success and all kinds of ways to achieve it. I know bus drivers who are as successful as bankers; I know anonymous computer programmers who are now more successful than some of the biggest sports celebrities. Success can take many forms, but the ingredients for success are basically the same

# My Rules For Success

by  
Dave Thomas

Success means something different to everyone. It can mean wealth, power, happiness, or a hundred other things. There are all kinds of success and all kinds of ways to achieve it. I know bus drivers who are as successful as bankers; I know anonymous computer programmers who are now more successful than some of the biggest sports celebrities. Success can take many forms, but the ingredients for success are basically the same.

People tell me I'm successful because of the things I've accomplished over the years. I appreciate that, but I'll be the first to tell you that it was hard work and a burning desire to succeed that got me where I am today. And there were times when I had to learn things the hard way, too.

I'm often asked for advice on how to achieve your dreams, how to succeed. I've met a good number of successful people over the years and, combined with my own experiences, I've developed a list I call "My Five Rules for Success."

- **Nothing good ever comes without hard work.** Whatever you do for a living, you can't get ahead without hard work, dedication, and focus on the basics. There's not one successful person who'll tell you that you can make it "the easy way." You must be honest and maintain high quality in your work, and you should never, ever, lose your integrity.

- **You can't go forward if you don't keep balance in your life.** Life is not just making a living. I'd be the first to say that's really important, but so are your family and friends, and your hobbies – you need to have a life outside the workplace. It'll help you recharge your batteries and make your life fuller and richer.

- **Don't let your ego get in the way.** It's easy to start believing your own PR, or what people *think* you are. Because I'm in Wendy's advertising campaigns, people recognize me everywhere I go. That has its

ups and downs, but it would be easy to start believing that I'm some important celebrity (boy, I hate that word!) just because people know who I am. Just because people know who you are doesn't make you successful. Every day I remind myself, "You're still just a hamburger cook!"

- **Take risks and rewards.** The first part makes sense: You can't get ahead if you don't try new things. Sure, you might fail – we all do now and then – but you could succeed in a big way. And when you do, don't forget to enjoy the rewards that come from succeeding. Take some time to smell the roses; then look forward to your next challenge.

- **Give back – early and often.** Success means nothing if you don't give back to the community, not just as a company, but personally, too. Writing a check to a non-profit group is a good start, but your time, energy, and expertise are just as important to give. Everyone has a responsibility to give back to the community and make the world a better place. I know it's an overused phrase, but that doesn't change how important it is.

I guess the bottom line to being successful is "Do the Right Things." That pretty much sums it up. Be nice to people; lend a helping hand where and when you can. Be honest in your dealings with others, and just do the right things. It's pretty simple.

I started out talking about accomplishments and I'd like to take a moment to tell you about some of the things I'm most proud of in my life.

- **My family.** I've been married to my wife Lorraine for 43 years (and counting), and we have five terrific children, and, at last count, 13 grandchildren. My family is my greatest accomplishment and greatest legacy.

- **My business – Wendy's.** It was my dream to open a hamburger restaurant and I never thought it would be so successful. Look at what hard work, commitment, and a great management team will get you! I'm most proud that my dream provides thousands of people with jobs and careers so they can accomplish their dreams, too.

- **Getting my GED.** I dropped out of school when I was 15 – one of the biggest mistakes in my life. Reporters would ask how could I have been so successful if I was a high school dropout. The word "dropout" haunted me until I decided to do something about it. So 45 years after I quit school, I got my GED. I wasn't a dropout any more. It made me feel like a million bucks!

- **Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption.** Because I was adopted, I understand how important it is for every child to have a home and loving family of his or her own. I talk about adoption every chance I get, trying to generate awareness for all the children who don't have a family. In 1994, we established the Dave Thomas Foundation for

Adoption to promote adoption and educate prospective parents about the adoption process.

The second part to the adoption story is encouraging every U.S. employer, corporations, non-profits, and government agencies, to make adoption benefits available to their employees. Similar to maternity benefits, adoption benefits provide paid leave and financial assistance to cover legal and medical costs. This will help make adoption more affordable. I'm proud to say we're making progress in this important area.

Success is certainly in the eye of the beholder. My family and my GED may not mean "success" to anyone else, but they sure do for me.

You can be anything you want to be within the laws of God and Man. If you believe you'll be successful, you will be. Success is what you make of it. Remember your responsibilities – and don't forget to have fun!

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**Dave Thomas** is senior chair of the board and founder of Wendy's International, Inc., Dublin, Ohio.