The Pleasure of Finding Things Out†— A Look at the Research Behind *Success Built to Last*

Background and Methodology

We have always been deeply moved in the presence of people who are great at what they do—people who have found a way to live their potential. Finding out about the lives of people who are able to do this has been one of the great pleasures of creating this book. Our conversations with remarkable people yielded an embarrassment of riches, and some process had to be devised to hone in on the key ideas and behaviors that enable these people to live as they do.

Sometimes, even very accomplished people cannot accurately articulate their own process—they simply do what they do—almost beyond the threshold of consciousness. We use the word *consciousness* here to mean "to be aware of what one is doing and why." In other words, many successful people are busily doing mostly what works without always being certain about what they are really doing and why.

Good research can solve much of the mystery in all of this. It's rather like playing Sherlock Holmes. As the mysteries are solved, excellent coaching becomes available that we

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† Used with appreciation to Richard P. Feynman, et al.[1]

can all use to live closer to our full potential. Whatever we are, we can now learn to be a great one!

What follows is written for all of you who have a degree of curiosity about the ins and outs of this process. Some of the data are so compelling that we notice our own thinking about success and what it means to people has been changed for the better. We also notice that some of our behavior has changed, also for the better. You may find what follows has a similar impact on you.

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If you have read *Built to Last*, you may recall that the research method used in that study was characterized by three key components:

1. **Sample selection**—750 CEOs were surveyed and asked to nominate up to five companies they considered to be the most "visionary." (This process ultimately yielded 18 companies that were included as visionary companies, along with 18 companies in a comparison group.) Two sources were used to select the CEOs surveyed.

   a. First, 500 CEOs were selected by taking a stratified sample from the two 1990 Fortune 500 lists of the largest industrial and service companies in the United States.

   b. Second, 250 CEOs were selected from the two *INC Magazine* lists of the fastest-growing private and public companies. The 18 most frequently nominated companies made up the visionary company sample set.

   c. **Age**—Additionally, selected companies had to be old enough to have had a minimum of two different chief executive officers. The two youngest companies in the final sample were founded in 1945.

2. **Historical perspective**—The entire life history of all the companies was studied based on data gathered from books, magazine and newspaper articles, Ph.D. dissertations, masters theses, and company archives.

3. **Comparison group**—For each visionary company, a comparison company was selected based on it being:

   a. Founded in approximately the same time period as the visionary company
   b. In the same industry
   c. Key competitor for the visionary company
   d. Seldom mentioned in the CEO survey described previously
   e. Still in business in 1990

For *Success Built to Last*, we conducted two extensive and entirely independent studies that together tested and compared insights into the traits of successful people. These two pieces of research differ substantially from the *Built to Last* research for many important reasons, not the least of which was that this book is focused on individuals in all walks of life, rather than being limited just to organizations listed on the stock exchanges. For more than a decade, leaders have been asking us to provide greater insights into the success and leadership of all types of organizations, and pursuing two new studies gave us the opportunity to employ the genius of the *AND* principle from *Built to Last*.

Exploratory Field Research

The first of the two *Success Built to Last* studies consisted of ten years of field research—a series of personal interviews with a remarkably diverse group of enduringly successful people. These meetings were conducted in some of the best places to observe actual behavior—in the homes and offices of these leaders and during their travels to

communities and worksites. This approach allowed us to observe leaders in public companies, as well as those in nonprofit community organizations, government agencies, privately held small and large businesses, and solo practitioners (from schoolteachers and scientists to entertainers, athletes, and authors). The process provided a rich set of insights and hypotheses that we believe could not possibly have been derived in isolation, or by traditional survey methodologies. The second *Success Built to Last* study tested key findings of the first study in an independent, quantitatively based *World Success Survey*.

The first study employed the following methodology:

1. **Sample selection**—The people we were interested in interviewing were individuals whose traditional successes had lasted for decades, including many Nobel Laureates, government and community service leaders, teachers, scientists, and Olympians, as well as Pulitzer, Grammy, Peabody, and Academy Award winners and the CEOs of large and small organizations.

   a. To identify these people, we reviewed an eclectic variety of well-established lists—such as *Time Magazine*'s *Most Influential People*, as well as those on the annual honor rolls of the biggest, fastest-growing, or admired in major business publications, notably *Forbes* and *Fortune*. We also looked at lists of noteworthy individuals honored at nonprofit organizations, such as Oprah Winfrey's *Use Your Life Award* winners.

      i. We believe that lists of successful individuals drawn from magazines, newspapers, and other agencies are an appropriate surrogate for the CEO survey done in *Built to Last*.

   b. The individuals to be interviewed were screened to identify a diversity of interests, industries, and gender. Selected individuals were required to have a

minimum of two decades of impact in one or many areas of endeavor. This 20-year minimum is parallel to the minimum age criteria established in *Built to Last* by requiring at least two generations of CEOs.

c. We invited several hundred people to participate and, ultimately, completed more than 200 personal interviews from 1996 to 2006.

2. **Historical perspective**—In preparation for each interview, we reviewed the relevant biographical information about each subject from books, magazine and newspaper articles, and organization websites and archives. Because it was not possible to determine conclusively how a person thought about his or her life from his or her earliest years to the present, using external resources, we decided to use as the source of information what individuals said about themselves and their perceptions of how they built their lives and careers over time.

a. Data were collected from the research subjects in unscripted, exploratory, wide-ranging interviews focusing on success and leadership in their lives and the principles that guided their careers. The key challenge was to tease out the core dynamics in the lives of these remarkable people. We believe we achieved the maximum rigor possible given the constraints of a study of highly impactful individuals. (In the end, you are the best judge of any results we report—does it make sense to you and could it be helpful?)

b. The contents of hundreds of fascinating personal interviews were analyzed and coded by organizational theme codes and behavioral points of view—based on the rich narratives that have been shared throughout this book. A more detailed description of the methodology and data analysis approach

used in this study is presented in later sections (see Exhibit 1, "The Personal Interviews and Other Data Analysis").

3. **Comparison group**—We recognized early in the process of developing *Success Built to Last* that we would need a way to test our conclusions with a comparison set, even though it is always difficult to establish a "control" group for a human population based on the many competing definitions of success. Because we were not studying public companies, we could not use the same process as *Built to Last*.[2] Instead, we believed it was useful to see whether our results would be confirmed if we were to develop and administer an independent survey—the *World Success Survey*—based on an unrelated sample of respondents, using a completely different method from the personal interviews that we gathered over the past ten years (see Exhibit 1). The results were remarkable, adding incredible depth and insight into a decade of field research in personal interviews.

The World Success Survey

With our manuscript already drafted, our Stanford-based team partnered with our colleagues at Pearson/Prentice Hall, The Wharton School at the University of Pennsylvania, and the i-Novation division of Moskowitz Jacobs Inc. (MJI) to develop and conduct a self-administered internet survey. The poll, which we called the *World Success Survey*, was designed with the objective of validating the findings captured in the authors' interviews with enduringly successful people around the world. The factors and levels included in the survey were derived from the authors' research as reflected in the book.

In the spring of 2006, we communicated to readers of the Knowledge@Wharton about the opportunity to participate in a global study about success. Knowledge@Wharton is an online publication with a circulation to managers, educators, and other professionals at senior and junior levels in 100 countries. Readers of the online publication were invited to participate in a global survey on how people think about success (see Exhibit 2). Those interested in participating clicked on the designated link and were provided with brief instructions on how to participate in the survey (see Exhibit 3). During the first week, 365 people responded to the survey, and the results were embodied in this analysis.

Demographically, respondents were two-thirds male and one-third female, and the age splits were 23% under age 35, 57% 35-54, and 20% 55 and over. Altogether, 66% of the respondents were from the United States, with the remaining 34% distributed across the world—i.e., 13% from Asia, 9% from Europe, and 12% from other locations.

The survey used Dr. Howard Moskowitz's proprietary IdeaMap technology, a method that is used for consumer attitude studies. The theoretical foundation of Moskowitz Jacobs, Inc.'s (MJI) work is experimental design and mathematical modeling. The IdeaMap evolved from the method of conjoint analysis, and from an analysis of what Moskowitz calls, the "algebra of a person's mind." The IdeaMap survey format engages respondents in the "job" of reacting to a series of screens. The idea here is that even if a respondent is totally unable to articulate what he or she feels, nonetheless the results come bounding forth. Each screen displayed a "menu of success" incorporating unique combinations of 3–4 aspects or vignettes about "lasting success" based on narratives from our personal interviews—i.e., views about the definition of success or how people feel about failure, goal-setting, or assigning blame (see Exhibit 4).

Each respondent reacted to these success menus, developed via experimental design, using the rating scale of 1 (very poorly) to 9 (very well) to indicate how well each menu described "your view of lasting success." Moskowitz Jacobs Inc. had originally developed and validated the IdeaMap testing instrument in the late 1980s and 1990s to encourage intuitive responses and honest feedback rather than the "gaming" behavior that may be present in other, more pedantic, survey methods. In this way, the survey uncovers how people really feel about factors related to success.

Regression Analysis and Impact Scores

Regression analysis (see Exhibit 5, "The Regression Model,") relating the rating responses to the test stimuli (our "menus of success") show the contribution (positive or negative) for *each of the 36 aspects* of success (see Exhibit 6). These scores are the basis for measuring the absolute impact of each aspect of success and comparing that impact to all the others. The result is a wide range of scores across the 36 success aspects in this research, from a high of +21, indicating a very positive relation to success, to a low of -28, indicating a very negative relation. (Our experience suggests that, for this research, scores of +6 or higher and -6 or lower are identifying important and notable results.) Such a wide range of scores underscores the strongly-held feelings being expressed by the respondents, and allows us a clear reading of these feelings.

Respondents also answered questions on how successful they considered themselves to be both professionally and personally. These self-identifications are the basis for placing respondents in the successful/unsuccessful groups for analysis. Of the 365 people who participated in the survey:

- 35% identified themselves as successful both professionally and personally.

- 31% identified themselves as unsuccessful both pro-fessionally and personally.
- 23% identified themselves as only successful personally.
- 11% identified themselves as only successful professionally.

By analyzing the results for each group, we profiled the different sets of beliefs about what may contribute to being successful. We also compared the views of the "successful" people—the "S" group, as we will describe them here—versus those views held by the people who identified themselves as "unsuccessful" (the "U" group). The results from IdeaMap helped us understand what differentiates the minds of these two populations.

Finally, we examined key *demographic* categories—i.e., gender and age for insights into differences that might exist on how these groups view success and successful people (discussed in Section IV, "Selected Key Findings—Demographic Categories").

Overall Conclusions

This survey provided an independent and amazingly transparent source of comparison, supporting key findings from our personal interviews. Among the top line results were further confirmation that successful people don't rely on the approval of others to pursue their goals, causes, or callings. Successful people take the initiative *despite* social pressures rather than because of them. They are more committed to *doing* what they love than *being loved* by others. They don't wallow or obsess on a single defeat or rely on finding scapegoats or blame when things go wrong. Instead, successful people place higher priority on being effective in getting the outcomes they seek.

Regardless of whether the survey participants rated themselves as "successful" or "unsuccessful," all groups

said that the traditional dictionary definition of success—notably the significant achievement of fame, wealth, and power—*no longer describes* what success means to them. Although popularity and affluence, for example, are nice outcomes, people prefer to define *success* as the ability to "make a difference," "create lasting impact," and being "engaged in a life of personal fulfillment," according to the study. What is special about enduringly successful people is that they won't settle for less than this!

As discussed in Chapter 7, "The *Tripping* Point: Always Make New Mistakes," and Chapter 8, "Wounds to Wisdom: Trusting Your Weakness and Using Your Core Incompetencies," Builders "harvest" their failures and successes as "data," which they then use to improve their effectiveness. Successful people also said that "loving what you do" is a *necessary* condition for success. Indeed, Chapter 2, "Love It or Lose—Passions and the Quest for Meaning," reviews the dangers of not doing what you love because people who have that passion can outlast and eventually outrun you in the task. In a global economy, for every person who is half-hearted in a job, there are dozens of others who are passionately waiting to take that job from them. Passion for what you do is not just a creative imperative—it is a competitive necessity.

The research study also provided a major breakthrough in our thinking regarding three *attitudinal* or *mind-set* segments. The response data from these key attitudinal groups provided further insight into our original interviews—revealing how different groups of people tend to behave. These mind-set groups are attracted to various dimensions of success. They are defined not by what they say about themselves, but their actual responses to the stimuli: what they think and how they define success. This is discussed in Section III, "Selected Key Findings: Attitude Segments—A Surprising Breakthrough."

Section I: Selected Key Findings: Successful People

The 35% of individuals in this survey who see themselves as being *successful both professionally and personally* express several very strong beliefs about what they associate with success.

Most importantly, this group believes being successful requires a commitment to make important things happen. Something must be created that makes a *difference*, and that something must have *lasting value*. They are not going to be satisfied with anything less.

Successful people strongly rate the idea:

- "Success means I can make a difference and create lasting impact" (+14).

The notion of happiness, however, gets only a modestly positive response compared with the other measures they use for success.

- "Success means I am happy" scores +6.

Successful individuals are more likely to define success in terms of personal fulfillment, and not by wealth or by social recognition:

- "Success means I am engaged in a life of personal fulfillment" scores a strong + 13, while
- "Success means I am achieving fame, money, or power" has a very negative -15 score among this group.

This belief in self-actualization is accompanied by a belief in self-reliance. These people have no interest in relying on others to tell them how to achieve what they want. They are not just doing it "for themselves," but they're also going to do it "their way":

- "To stay on track with my goals, it's best to rely on the opinions of others" is resoundingly rejected (-20 score).

Although personally focused on what they want to accomplish and how they want to go about accomplishing it, they are not a bunch of "loners." Quite the contrary, they understand the importance of contributing to and enjoying good relationships and being involved with others:

- "Success means I create strong relationships and connections with people" scores +9.

Being successful doesn't mean that these people haven't experienced failure. But, when they do, they use it as an important learning tool. In this way, they can better their odds of being successful in the future. They turn their wounds into wisdom:

- "I learn more from my failures than I learn from my successes" scores +7.

They understand their unique passions and allocate their view of the *right* amount of time to each (not equal or balanced portions, but rather their own individually chosen preference):

- "Balance to me is spending the RIGHT amounts of time on work, family, personal interests, and community" scores +10.
- "Balance to me is spending EQUAL amounts of time on work, family, personal interests, and community" scores –6.

They feel the freedom to choose what is important to do and act on it:

- "Success means I have the freedom to do what is meaningful" scores +9.

Setbacks do not cause them to give up on what they care most about:

- "Setbacks don't make me ABANDON my passions or causes" (+7).

They reject the idea that they must sacrifice something important to them to achieve another goal; they want both. As we learned in our personal interviews, enduringly successful people believe in the genius of the *AND* rather than the tyranny of the *OR*:

- "I prefer to pursue one of two alternatives rather than trying to make both work" scores a very negative –15.

Successful people also reject the idea that all their career steps have been planned out. They are more focused on what matters in their lives on each step in their journey, and make choices about what to do next based on what that action means to them rather than a preset plan. As noted in our personal interviews, they focus on those things that they care about, and when they do that, they are able to take advantage of the serendipitous opportunities that present themselves along the way rather than rely on a roadmap:

- "My career has followed a precise roadmap that I myself created" scores -16.
- "It's always been clear to me what I wanted to do for the rest of my life" scores -10.

This set of beliefs guides the actions of the S group. However, an examination of the beliefs of those individuals who view themselves as *both professionally and personally unsuccessful* (31% of respondents) shows a lot of similarities. So naturally the question becomes—what defines the *difference*? Although the U group wants to do meaningful things, the S group gives it a higher level of importance. It is *the priority* in the lives of successful people; whereas for people who say they are unsuccessful, it is more something that they would *like* to do:

- "The *main priority* in my life is to do meaningful things" scores a strong +14 among the S group versus +3 among the U group.

The S group is also uncompromising in its belief that "love" is a necessary requirement of their job, whereas the U group is relatively neutral about this need for loving their job:

- "It is absolutely necessary for me to work in a job that I really love" scores a +7 among the S group versus +1 among the U group.

In keeping with their beliefs of the importance of learning from failures and moving on, the S group is adamantly opposed to "playing the blame game," whereas the U group tells us that they have no strong views on this issue, or perhaps they have been the subject of that blame and therefore they see it as standard procedure!

- "I believe that when things go wrong, most people look for a scapegoat" scores -17 among the S group and -3 among the U group.

People who see themselves as unsuccessful are less secure about their work, feeling the need to appear "good" at everything they do. Successful people are more focused on what matters to them and are less concerned about how "good" they may seem to others along the way:

- "Whatever I'm doing, I make sure to be good at it" scores +10 among the U group and -2 among the S group.

Successful people don't obsess over what other people may think about their work. As was also revealed in our personal interviews, enduringly successful people are more concerned with *doing* what they love than *being loved*. They don't treat their passions like a trivial pursuit or low-priority item. Successful people focus on being good at what is meaningful to them, and do *that*, not "whatever" comes along.

People who described themselves as unsuccessful are also looking for (or feel that they have) acceptance among people who are significant in their lives, while the S group does not appear to worry much about that:

- "People who count support me in following my passions" scores +8 among the U group and zero among the S group.

As we learned in our personal interviews, enduringly successful people tend to do meaningful things because they matter, and they do these meaningful things *despite* popularity and social pressures.

Section II: Selected Key Findings: Professional Success Versus Personal Success

We analyzed the responses to all the 36 success aspects in the test, comparing the impacts by those who identified themselves as *successful professionally* compared to those who identified themselves as *successful personally.* We wanted to identify whether the notion of "success" was viewed differently in these two endeavors, and, if so, then in what ways?

The evidence in the research overwhelmingly identified that successful professional people held *the very same beliefs* about what contributes to their success as those people who were successful in their personal lives:

- Rating scores for each of the 36 aspects in this research showed no significant differences between people who identified themselves as *professionally successful* and those who identified themselves as *personally successful.*

These respondents believe there is "universality" to what makes lasting success in any endeavor.

Section III: Selected Key Findings: Attitude Segments—A Surprising Breakthrough

The IdeaMap technology we used for this survey analyzes the data to find key mind-set differences among the respondents and then segments those groups. People in the same mind-set segment "look the same" when we review which of our 36 specific factors drives them to describe success. *When we first looked at the mind-set segmentation, we did not recognize the power of what it was telling us.* Frankly, we were so fascinated that such an unrelated and independent research effort—the *World Success Survey*—had reaffirmed so many other aspects of what we had learned in our original interviews that we almost missed this additional dimension. We weren't sure we should even bother to include it in this discussion, but Moskowitz insisted that we take a closer look at it because the attitudinal segmentation was compelling and the statistical data were striving to tell us something significant about the specific mind-sets of these participants.

It was essential to compare what this scientific survey had discovered based solely on the mathematics of the IdeaMap algorithm with what we had gleaned, in more depth and richness, from our extensive personal interviews. The algorithm produced a set of results for each person in the study based on differences in the patterns of their responses to the stimuli. (No two respondents ever saw an identical order of the aspects of success on the survey because each person received a randomized set of elements!) People with similar patterns fell into the same mind-set segment, no matter who they were, or no matter how they described themselves. *This sophisticated statistical analysis revealed three distinct mind-sets in the survey, based solely on the way that the respondents in the survey reacted to the menus of success.* The segments were different, as you will see later. We were on to something—but what?

Looking deeper, our research director, Bonita Thompson, who possesses a remarkable gift for connecting the dots in enlightening ways, had yet another epiphany. She realized that what we were seeing objectively in the data emerging from the survey was the same three "Circles" of *Meaning*, *Thought*, and *Action* that we used to outline our methodology in the book! We were astonished that the IdeaMap survey had confirmed independently that there are, indeed, three distinctive attitudinal aspects of lasting success—meaning, thought, and action. In addition, the survey data had identified that there are notable attitudinal preferences that people have in this regard without realizing it themselves (nor did we at first!). It's not that these segments don't overlap on how to define success. It's just that, when push comes to shove, every individual tends to identify a bit more strongly with one of these three dimensions. The three dimensions are as follows:

- **Meaning**: The Make a Difference, Be Meaningful Segment (44% of sample).
- **ThoughtStyle**: The Allocating My Time to My Passions Segment (29% of sample).
- **ActionStyle**: The Be Accomplished and Love Work Segment (27% of sample). It's worth mentioning that there were no significant differences in these attitudes based on demographics. They were consistent regardless of age, gender, or geographic location.

Additionally, the likelihood of these groups to describe themselves as *being successful* was very similar across the three segments, as you see in the following table.

	Total Sample	Meaning Segment 1		ThoughtStyle Segment 2		ActionStyle Segment 3	
	N	N	%	N	%	N	%
Total Sample	365	160	44%	105	29%	99	27%
Successful professionally and personally	129	53	33%	39	37%	37	37%
Successful professionally but not personally	39	15	9%	12	11%	12	12%
Successful personally but not professionally	83	36	23%	24	23%	23	23%
Not successful in either	114	56	35%	30	29%	27	27%

Like all other segments of our sample, all three of the attitudinal segments—Meaning, Thought, and Action—agree about what success is

- "Success means I can make a difference and create lasting impact."

And, what it is not

- "Success (does not) mean I am achieving fame, money, or power."

However, the three segments differ quite distinctly, and occasionally dramatically, in some other belief areas.

Meaning

The largest attitude segment, containing 44% of the respondents, is the *Make a Difference, Be Meaningful* segment. This Meaning-oriented segment exhibits a somewhat lower likelihood of seeing themselves successful in both their professional and personal lives than does either of the other two attitude segments. (When it comes to "meaning," it's difficult to feel you're ever really finished or totally successful in all aspects of your life and work at all times. The key leadership task of managing meaning is never done, said Professor Warren Bennis, founding chairman of the Leadership Institute at the University of Southern California.)

The key distinguishing feature about this group is that they are even more strongly committed to making a difference/creating a lasting impact than are the other two segments. However, unlike the other two groups, this segment *requires* that everyone around them in their life and work share a common sense of meaning:

- "My boss supports what I believe to be meaningful and important" scores +9 versus -7 for the rest of the population (the other two attitudinal segments combined).

Another key feature that distinguishes this group is that their commitment to personal fulfillment is somewhat stronger:

- "Success means I am engaged in a life of personal fulfillment" (+12 versus +7 for the rest of the population).

ThoughtStyle

The second segment is identified as the *Allocating My Time to My Passions* segment, and it comprises 29% of respondents. The key distinguishing characteristic is a strong interest in recognizing what their true passions are and acting in a manner that addresses these various passions in the right proportion. They recognize their personal uniqueness, and are not simply reacting to society's expectations:

- "Balance to me is spending the RIGHT amounts of time on work, family, personal interests, and community" (a huge +21 versus +4 for the rest of the population).
- "Pursuing many different passions increases my effectiveness and creativity" (+12 versus +1 for the rest of the population).

Harvesting Contention

This ThoughtStyle-oriented segment, which represents almost a third of the sample, does not appreciate dissonance

in their views from those of other people, whereas the other two attitudinal segments (the other two-thirds of the population) "harvest contention"—they readily embrace the inevitable creative arguments that arise when you are trying to build something meaningful:

- "It's essential to me to encourage people to share views that disagree with my own views." (The ThoughtStyle-oriented segment scores –8 versus a strong +12 score for the rest of the population.)

- "To accomplish what matters to me, it may be necessary to go against the wishes of people who count" (-11 versus +5 for the rest of the population).

Harvesting Failure

Although members of this ThoughtStyle-oriented segment don't like disagreements with others, they more readily embrace the learning that comes from setbacks. As enduringly successful people described in the interviews, they "harvest" failure:

- "I learn more from my failures than I learn from my successes" (+10 versus + 3 for the rest of the population). The Meaning-oriented group (the first attitudinal segment) scores +7, while the third segment (which we'll describe next) is an ActionStyle-oriented group that is less enthusiastic about harvesting failure (–3).

ActionStyle

The third attitudinal segment is identified as the *Be Accomplished and Love Work* group, and comprises 27% of the respondents. Above all else, this ActionStyle-oriented segment wants to love their job:

- "It is absolutely necessary for me to work in a job that I really love" (+15 versus -2 for the rest of the population).

And, they also want to see themselves as accomplished in it:

- "Regardless of what other people think, what motivates me most is doing a great job" scores highly (+12 versus +1 for the rest of the population).

Additionally, this segment loves to get things done and accomplish things for its own sake. They are very satisfied, never disappointed, with the goals they achieve:

- "Sometimes it's disappointing to achieve a goal and discover that it has little meaning to me" scores very low with this segment (-21 versus -2 for the rest of the population).

Alignment is essential: This IdeaMap research survey confirmed that people as individuals tend to resonate most strongly with one of the three circles (of meaning, thought, or action). Whereas many of us agonize over "balance" as society defines it, what is clear from this research study and our interviews is that the essential balance that we seek is likely to be an issue of *alignment* of the three circles—over what matters to us (meaning), how we think about those things and allocate our time to our passions (thought), and then how we proceed to get them done (action). The balance that we are seeking is to find our own personally defined portfolio of passions that we feel is *meaningful*— that fuel our creative *thoughts* and drive us to take *action* to manifest them.

Section IV: Selected Key Findings— Demographic Categories

Overall, there are differences in views about success across various age groups and among men and women who feel *successful both professionally and personally*. Females are somewhat more likely than males (40% versus 33%) to identify themselves as successful both professionally and

personally. By age groups, the feeling of success increases with age—e.g., 59% among ages 55+ versus 20% for those under 45.

- Males and females agree that "Success means I can make a difference and create a lasting impact" is the most important aspect of lasting success (+12 and +16 respectively).

However, males also tend to associate success with doing a "great job" despite the opinions of the others:

- "Regardless of what other people think, what motivates me most is doing a great job" (+6 versus -1 for females).

Females tend to be more oriented to the importance of personal relationships and happiness:

- "Success means I create strong relationships and connections with people" (+11 versus +3 for males).
- "Success means that I am happy" (+9 versus +1 for males).

All age groups recognize the key aspect of success as "Success means I can make a difference and create a lasting impact," and they also exhibit similarities across a wide range of aspects of success.

However, the older respondents (55+) exhibit an even higher level of passion about this desire, with ratings above all other age groups:

- "The main priority in my life is to do meaningful things" (+14 versus +8 for the rest of the population).
- "It is painful to me not to do something that is meaningful" (+9 versus +1 for the rest of the population).

To draw any conclusions about differences in individual countries, our sample would need to be sliced up into pieces so small that they wouldn't be reliable. However, we did see

enough variations in the data regionally to get us excited that there is more gold to be mined with further research. It will be well worth launching another more extensive survey nation by nation to uncover those insights.

This research identified a global view of "lasting success" in terms of what contributes to success and what it has come to mean for people. The traditional definition of success was resoundingly trounced in this survey, as well as in our personal interviews. It's amazing that society tolerates the old definition. It's clearly time to redefine the meaning of success in the dictionary, if not society as a whole. Please let us know about your definition of success, and make your views known to dictionary publishers. You can reach us at www.SuccessBuiltToLast.com.

Exhibit 1

The Personal Interviews and Other Data Analysis

Step 1: Exploratory Inquiry

What has been remarkable to us since we started this journey is that there are so few well-established, high visibility, or enduring inquiries into the meaning of success and leadership. We haven't seen major international campaigns underway to convince the dictionaries to change or expand the definition of success, for example, nor a major initiative to look at more meaningful and productive alternatives that might better serve organizations, business people, partners, parents, community leaders, or society as a whole. It is our hope and intention that efforts to better define success come flying out of the woodwork as this book goes into international distribution.

Indeed, we found in our live presentations that the combined topics of success and meaning discussed in the same conversation generate significant heat in the room—

as people struggle to rationalize preconceived or idealized notions (or personal demons) about what matters to them (as individuals and their organization) and what success should *really* mean.

The passion we felt also translated into considerable support for our exploratory approach to the eclectic collection of interviews that we have gathered along the way. Not only are people anxious to have this conversation, they are enthusiastic (or relieved) that we're taking a non-traditional approach to the subject. When we first reached out to the late Peter Drucker to conduct an interview with him for this project, we shared with him our interest in eventually developing a leadership survey in addition to our personal interviews. He admonished that "all that had been done before." He was not alone in his encouragement that we depart from pedantic methods—at least in the beginning of this journey—in two ways: A) To focus more on how leaders think about success than just leadership itself, and B) To approach this exercise as an open-ended exploratory set of interviews rather than a standardized test.

All three authors have coached, advised, and interviewed leaders for decades. The interviews upon which this book is based were initiated ten years ago as a practical business interest in capturing non-theoretical insights and practices for both individuals and organizations about success and leadership. We believe that real interviews with real people have great power to provoke richer discussion in the many contexts in which each of the coauthors has done their work: executive training programs, classroom sessions, publications, and also for public broadcasting programs and other consulting venues.

Over the years, we have taken an opportunistic approach to host face-to-face, unfiltered, and unstructured conversations with thought leaders from dozens of industries, professions, and community organizations around the world. As we discussed in the Introduction, we believe that

this approach has yielded a fresh, new perspective and the opportunity to explore areas of knowledge and perspectives that were nonintuitive and unlikely to have been discovered had we forged a traditional hypothesis.

Whereas these interviews did not start as a science experiment, we screened the data in a thoughtful, four-step process, not so that we could find a prescription, but to discover provocative and useful ideas for readers to consider. The first step was to meet Builders out in the world in an environment where they are normally operating, rather than in a laboratory setting. We sat down with them in their offices, home, or even a hotel room or conferences during their travels. The interview started with an open-ended question, such as "How do you define success?" or "Did you have a plan or did you imagine decades ago where you would be today?" Rather than seeking a particular answer based on a preconceived list of questions, we asked follow-up questions to explore and better understand what the response meant. We then reviewed and screened the interviews by organizational theme codes.

Step 2: Content Analysis— Organizational Theme Codes (OTC)

We identified topic areas, or organization theme codes, that covered the broad landscape of subjects discussed in the interviews. We could have easily found more than 100 categories, or we could have decided on fewer OTCs depending on one's orientation to the data. In the final analysis, we sought to avoid arcane or technical OTCs that would require complex description and instead focused on 21 pragmatic, easy-to-understand themes and their subcategories that often emerge in discussions with management teams, such as leadership, success, risk-taking, failure, and globalization. We filtered the content of the interviews based on those OTCs.

Coding the dialog by these OTCs generated far more ideas than we could cover in a book that we hoped to keep under 300 pages. Those responses that appeared consistently for the majority of the participants and were particularly non-intuitive (to us) were analyzed for the final manuscript. You will notice that many of those insights were also tested in the IdeaMap survey discussed earlier. We hope to revisit and mine further many of these OTCs for future surveys, books, and articles. The following are the OTCs that we used during the interview process:

- **Leadership**—Perspectives, roles, meaning.
- **Risk**—Taking risks, managing risk.
- **Failure**—Harvesting failure, resilience, frequency.
- **Pain**—Grief, lack of fairness, using your pain, managing pain.
- **Confidence**—The role of self-confidence, self-esteem.
- **Focus**—Clarity, letting go, managing time/resources, choosing goals, persistence.
- **Measurability**—Ability to measure goals (both big and small goals).
- **Trust**—Respect, listening, building trust, importance of trust.
- **Values**—The role of core values.
- **Change**—Managing change, helping others through change.
- **Growth**—Encouraging growth, managing it, the need for growth.
- **Excellence/Best**—Doing your best, quality of product.
- **Innovation**—Creativity, how to encourage innovation, giving resources to innovation. The paradox of failure as necessary for innovation.
- **Culture**—Organizational culture; creating a culture around a goal, idea, or passion.
- **Global/Environment**—Globalization, diversity of ideas the environment always wins.
- **Stakeholders**—The role of and relationship with customers, shareholders, community, and suppliers.

- **New Ventures**—The special needs of new ventures, new services, or ideas.
- **Teams**—Managing people; managing yourself, as well as subcategories like the following:
  - **Authority**—Giving power away, holding others accountable, giving resources to the team members. Managing through others.
  - **Skills**—Building other leaders, training, building the team, mentoring.
  - **Rewards/Recognition/Incentives/Gratitude**—Using rewards to focus goals; using rewards to communicate the goals.
  - **Alignment**—With goals/buy-in.
  - **Incentives**—Paying for performance and consequences of ignoring this.
  - **POV**—Communicating the goal and meaning to the team; consistency.
  - **Contention**—Encouraging contention, managing it.
- **Fear**—Managing fear; helping others manage fear.
- **Preparation**—The importance of doing your homework; what's involved in preparation, planning.
- **Passions**—The role of passion; loving your work and life (or not).

Although we were obviously looking for patterns in the personal interviews that might fit into an OTC, we didn't fall into the trap of simply counting the number of occurrences that people uttered one of these things. For example, we would not just listen for the word "fear'" in order for a statement to fall into that section—we would listen to the entire conversation to determine where that idea should be coded. (We found that leaders often deal with or feel fear, but rarely use that word—particularly men!)

If a person we interviewed said "preparation" 23 times, or 3 times as often as other OTCs, then you might jump to the conclusion that she was always prepared or planning, but still not know what role preparation plays in the

organization or its relative effectiveness in her strategy. Nor would you know whether any single word translates into actual behavior. In a noble attempt to find a way to code the word "preparation," you could miss the context or the concept that the interviewee was intending. You might even assume, as many authors have, that enduringly successful people had a roadmap that they had prepared or always followed plans that lead them to a preconceived destination. *In fact, Builders almost never said they had imagined at the beginning where they are today.* They thought of preparation as "going deep" into their subject or field or the immediate task that they find is meaningfully engaging to them at that point in their lives. It was a serendipitous journey in which luck favored the prepared.

If a leader used the words "love" and "passion" frequently (and they did in our interviews), we would not just tally the times it was mentioned—we would explore it further to find out more about what those words meant by actually asking him—something you can't do on a survey. Listening to the context made it clearer that leaders were not preaching love in general. Whereas many expressed affection for teammates, employees, and customers, they also were making a very different point during our particular interviews. They insisted to us that *you love your work or you will be beaten by someone else who does.*

Had we simply counted the frequency of a word used in an interview, for example, we also would have missed entirely one of the biggest, most non-intuitive insights in our study: harvesting contention. The word itself was rarely used in the discussions, but Builders incessantly talked about their relationship with their "teams" as if they were playing with their favorite professional ice hockey team. What was rewarding about this interview method was that it provided the space and patience to listen for *their* meaning, not ours, for a change. When you listen for *meaning*, rather than a preset agenda that you have in mind, you get

a different picture of what may be going on, and some remarkable insights leap out. In fact, it was surprising to hear the excitement in the voices of leaders over and over again as they described how much they looked forward to spending time with their colleagues—not just for polite collaboration and fellowship, but for sessions that were so creative, productive, and contentious that many Builders said they would be reluctant to allow outsiders witness them.

A written self-assessment or survey has its own value (as we reaffirmed in our success survey), but there is nothing like the experience of meeting someone to discuss issues. We had the good fortune of actually seeing the Builders we interviewed. Whereas people might still attempt to mislead you in person, you have the opportunity to listen and watch for the context and seek samples of behavior as well as the individual words that would lead to placing an idea into an appropriate OTC code.

Step 3: Behavioral Point of View (BPOV)—Archetype Positioning Statements/Identity Narratives

The next step was to take another look at the data and our contextual observations to see how we could frame statements to serve as elements of a survey. In other words, if you could take key traits and narratives that were demonstrated or described during the interviews, what would an archetype of an enduringly successful person say (or not say) about himself or herself in the context of this conversation from a behavioral point of view.

Here are five early samples of narratives from the interviews that later became part of the global study. We reviewed dozens and dozens of statements like these in each OTC, which were used to build the 36 aspects that ultimately formed the *World Success Survey*.

  a. I don't let my (negative) feelings or setbacks hijack the importance of the cause or goal that I'm after.

b. I don't use my mistakes or weaknesses as a reason to distrust my ability. I often think that I learn as much from my failures as my successes.

c. Often the best choices I make use up all the options. Life is rarely a matter of either/or.

d. I don't let what other people think about what I'm doing stop me from doing what I must do.

e. I never could have pictured 20 or 30 years ago where I am today. I earned my luck by loving what I do and making sure I understand everything I can about my field. I never stop learning about it—I can't stop, won't stop; it's who I am. When I'm in doubt, I go deeper and learn more.

Step 4: The World Success Survey

The final step of this process was to launch our second study for this book—a psychographic statistical look at the issues raised in our personal interviews. As described earlier, our Stanford-based team engaged in an additional round of research in association with Pearson/Prentice Hall, Prof. Jerry Wind at The Wharton School at the University of Pennsylvania, and the i-Novation division of Moskowitz Jacobs Inc. (Chuck Loesch, Director of Marketing Research for FiSite Research, also supported the development of this research).

The theoretical foundation of Moskowitz Jacobs Inc.'s work is experimental (statistical) design and mathematical modeling. The technology and software are proprietary, and are based on the work of Dr. Howard Moskowitz, a leading scientist in this field. He holds a Ph.D. in Experimental Psychology (as in the design of statistical experiments and psychophysics) from Harvard University and has written 14 books and more than 300 scientific papers on his innovative work to identify what he calls the

"algebra of the consumer mind"—from consumer product innovation and food research, to social issues, health, the stock market, and presidential elections. Moskowitz and a team of researchers worked with us to develop, implement, and evaluate our *World Success Survey* using the IdeaMap conjoint-based computerized concept development technology described earlier.

Exhibit 2

Here is the invitation to participate in World Success Survey, which appeared in the Knowledge@Wharton newsletter:

Leadership and Change
How Successful People Remain Successful

When James C. Collins and Jerry I. Porras wrote their hugely popular 1994 book, *Built to Last: Successful Habits of Visionary Companies*, they began by stating clearly that they did not mean to write about visionary leaders. Their goal was to find visionary companies—the crown jewels of their industries—and discover what made them extraordinary. Then questions arose about the extent to which the principles of *Built to Last* might apply to individuals. That sparked another investigation that has now led to a follow-up book, *Success Built to Last*, which will be published by Wharton School Publishing later this year. Mark Thompson and Stewart Emery, co-authors with Porras of *Success Built to Last*, spoke with Knowledge@Wharton about their book. In addition, the authors are conducting a global survey on how people think about success; a link to the survey can be found at the end of the article.

http://knowledge.wharton.upenn.edu/article/1451.cfm

Exhibit 3

Here are the brief instructions on how to participate in the survey, which appeared when participants clicked on the designated link:

In this section we've constructed a simple 'test'...really a MENU for success.

Please read each menu on the screen. This menu describes a set of aspects of a successful person. Now...how would you feel about this phrase describing a menu for 'lasting success'. Of course, some vignettes will describe success 'almost perfectly', whereas others will be 'far off the mark'.

This survey gives you a chance to help redefine the meaning of lasting success, and ignite a productive dialog about success around the world.

On the following screens, you'll see success menus, one per screen.

Please read each menu as a total idea, and rate the combination on a simple 1-9 scale:

> **How well does this 'MENU' describe your view of lasting success?**
>
> **1=Very poorly...9=Very well**

As a 'thank you', for your participation, 50 people will be randomly chosen to receive a FREE COPY OF THE BOOK **Success Built to Last: Creating a Life That Matters**.

In addition, we will **send everyone the results of this WORLD SUCCESS SURVEY before it goes to the news media, along with a link to download a free copy of the first chapter of the book and a 50% discount coupon towards the purchase of the book**.

At the end of the interview there are a few more 'classification' questions and then you will be able to see how **your view** of lasting success compares with the views of other participants in the survey.

This WORLD SUCCESS SURVEY should take about 15 minutes.

Please press 'Continue' to start the survey. Just give your 'immediate, gut opinion' of success.

Thank you!

Exhibit 4

Here is an example of the text that would appear on a screen displaying a "menu of success:"

MOTTO...Success means achieving money, fame, or power.

ADVERSITY...I believe that when things go wrong, most people look for a scapegoat.

CAREER...Regardless of what other people think, what motivates me is doing a great job.
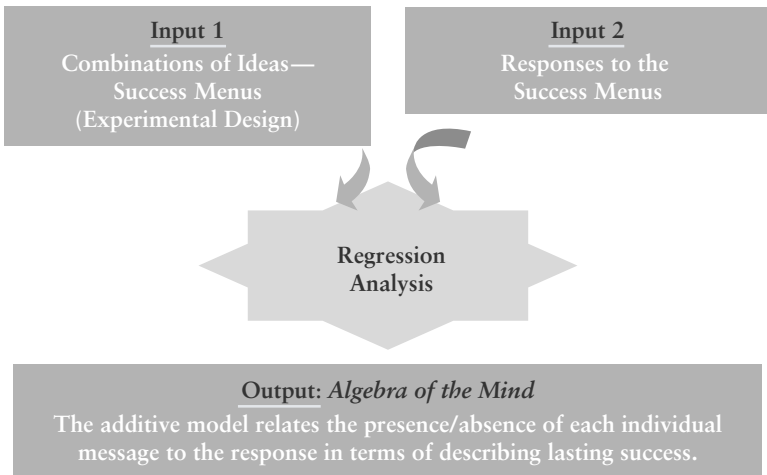
VALUES...The main priority in my life is to do meaningful things.

How well does this 'MENU' describe your view of lasting success?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
	1=Very poorly...9=Very well								

Exhibit 5

The Regression Model

For those you who enjoy statistics, our method is simple. We begin, for each person, with the combination of ideas (Input 1); i.e., the vignettes or menus. The participant gives us ratings (Input 2). We use simple statistics (regression) to figure out how each individual idea drives the response to the entire success menu.

Input 1	Input 2
Combinations of Ideas— Success Menus (Experimental Design)	Responses to the Success Menus

Regression Analysis

Output: *Algebra of the Mind*
The additive model relates the presence/absence of each individual message to the response in terms of describing lasting success.

The additive model for LASTING SUCCESS has these components:

- **Element impact scores (or utility)**—Show you the contribution (conditional probability) of the element to overall "lasting success."

  Positive values indicate that the element *enhances* the likelihood of the perception of success.

  Scores that are *near zero* indicate that the element does not contribute to success.

  Negative values indicate that the element actually *detracts* from success.

- **Additive constant**—Shows you the number of respondents (out of 100) who feel that they are successful, even without a particular element or idea from the Success Menu.

The system also creates groups of like-minded people, who show similar patterns regarding what menu items (elements) they feel describe lasting success. This is the mindset segmentation that we found so informative.

- **No gaming and PC behavior!** Finally, because the IdeaMap system works with menus that change randomly from screen to screen during the interview, it becomes almost impossible to "game the interview" and get away with politically correct answers. Very soon into the interview, the respondent relaxes, and gives a fast and honest "gut reaction." The answers come out blazingly quickly as the respondent reacts in a normal everyday manner, soon dropping the standard defenses that so often defeat standard surveys.

Exhibit 6

Impact Scores for the World Survey

Regression analysis (see Exhibit 5) relating the rating responses to the test stimuli (our "menus of success") show the contribution (positive or negative) for each of the aspects of success in our survey. These scores are the basis for measuring the absolute impact of each aspect of success and comparing that impact to all the others. The result is a wide range of scores across the success aspects in this research. On the table below you can see we have reported the responses for the three attitudinal segments in the survey from a high of +21, indicating a very positive relation to success, to a low of –28, indicating a very negative relation. (Our experience suggests that, for this research, scores of +6 or higher and –6 or lower are identifying important and notable results.) Such a wide range of scores underscores the strongly-held feelings being expressed by the respondents, and allows us a clear reading of these feelings. As a sample of the findings, we have provided below a broad comparison of the differences of everyone in the three attitudinal segments. This is just one of many ways to slice and dice this fascinating data.

	Meaning— Segment 1	ThoughtStyle— Segment 2	ActionStyle— Segment 3
Base Size	160	105	99
Constant	36	40	41
MOTTO...Success means I can make a difference and create lasting impact.	17	8	12
VALUES...The main priority in my life is to do meaningful things.	9	12	6
MOTTO...Success means I am engaged in a life of personal fulfillment.	12	7	6
BALANCE...Balance to me is spending the RIGHT amounts of time on work, family, personal interests, and community.	4	21	3
MOTTO...Success means I have the freedom to do what is meaningful.	9	8	2
MOTTO...Success means I create strong relationships and connections with people.	6	7	3
ADVERSITY...I learn more from my failures than I learn from my successes.	7	10	–3
ADVERSITY...Setbacks don't make me ABANDON my passions or causes.	10	5	2
CAREER...It is absolutely necessary for me to work in a job that I really love.	–2	–1	15
MOTTO...Success means I am happy.	3	1	8
LEADERSHIP...Success comes from setting big goals in both my personal life and my professional life.	11	–7	3
CAREER...Regardless of what other people think, what motivates me most is doing a great job.	–5	10	12
VALUES...I'm most successful when my team shares my values.	2	2	7

	Meaning—Segment 1	ThoughtStyle—Segment 2	ActionStyle—Segment 3
LEADERSHIP…It's essential to me to encourage people to share views that disagree with my own views.	14	–8	9
VALUES…I believe there is one clear set of values to guide my life's choices.	2	–3	3
PASSIONS…Pursuing many different passions increases my effectiveness and creativity.	1	12	2
ADVERSITY…It's painful to me not to do something that is meaningful.	7	4	–7
PASSIONS…People who count support me in following my passions.	4	2	2
LEADERSHIP…Whatever I'm doing I make sure to be good at it.	7	–6	7
ADVERSITY…Setbacks don't make me QUESTION my passions or causes.	6	3	–10
BALANCE…I need a long-term relationship in my personal life for lasting success.	–5	6	–10
LEADERSHIP…To accomplish what matters to me, it may be necessary to go against the wishes of people who count.	3	–11	8
LEADERSHIP…My boss supports what I believe to be meaningful and important.	9	–14	1
BALANCE…Balance to me is spending EQUAL amounts of time on work, family, personal interests, and community.	–8	1	–12
ADVERSITY…Sometimes it's disappointing to achieve a goal and discover that it has little meaning to me.	–2	–2	–21
VALUES…When I have a major change in my life, it helps to reconsider and then change some of my values.	–7	–5	–2

	Meaning— Segment 1	ThoughtStyle— Segment 2	ActionStyle— Segment 3
CAREER…It's always been clear to me what I wanted to do for the rest of my life.	–22	–11	–6
LEADERSHIP…I don't share all my doubts, judgments, and concern(s) with my team because it is more important to say what is appropriate to achieve our goals, even at the loss of some authenticity.	–5	–19	–14
VALUES…There is one passion—"just one big thing"—that guides my life.	–10	–9	–12
CAREER…It would be nice but not necessarily practical to work in a job that I really love.	–19	–9	–5
VALUES…I believe that most people in business are driven by attaining fame, money, or power.	–11	–14	–20
BALANCE…I prefer to pursue one of two alternatives rather than trying to make both work.	–16	–3	–14
MOTTO…Success means I am achieving fame, money, or power.	–11	–21	–19
CAREER…My career has followed a precise roadmap that I myself created.	–18	–24	–6
ADVERSITY…I believe that when things go wrong, most people look for a scapegoat.	–10	–10	–20
CAREER…To stay on track with my goals, it's best to rely on the opinions of others.	–28	–18	–14