

# **Win: The Key Principles to Take Your Business from Ordinary to Extraordinary**

## **By Dr. Frank Luntz**

### **1. What is a Winner? – The Attributes of Winners**

The Definition of Winning<sup>1</sup> What differentiates genuine winners from everyone else is the following:

- The ability to know what questions to ask and when to ask them
- The ability to see what doesn't exist and bring it to life
- The ability to distinguish the essential from the important
- The ability to communicate their vision passionately and persuasively
- The ability to move forward when everyone around them is retrenching or slipping backward
- The willingness to fail and the fortitude to get back up and try again

### **2. The Nine P's of Winning – What it takes to get to the top**

“Good business leaders create a vision, articulate the vision, passionately own the vision, and relentlessly drive it to completion.” Jack Welch, former Chairman and CEO, General Electric.

“The moderately successful person focuses on the roadblocks, on how to get over or around them. The winner focuses on the goal.” Tom Harrison

- People-Centeredness
- Paradigm Breaking
- Prioritization
- Perfection
- Partnership
- Passion
- Persuasion
- Persistence
- Principled Action

### **PEOPLE-CENTEREDNESS**

- Every decision about communication, products, and objectives must submit to the central organizational question: *How does that affect real everyday people?*

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<sup>1</sup> By Jim Davidson, the co-CEO of Silver Lake, a private equity firm. I've reduced his checklist from 15 down to 6.

- Winners know what makes people tick, and they connect either to our fears or our aspirations or both. The job of all winning communicators is to recognize what is missing in the lives of others and then try to address it.
- The most successful communicators are charming and charismatic, but it is not essential. Notable exceptions – such as Bill Gates, who is socially awkward, and Steve Jobs who was often described as self-absorbed.

## **PARADIGM BREAKING**

- Winners are not improvers; they are game changers. Three attributes define paradigm breaking:
  - the attitude of never settling for the conventional;
  - the practice and purposeful reinvention; and
  - the necessity of using skilled communication to lead people in a new direction. It's convincing people that a radical departure from the status quo isn't just a good thing to do – it's the only thing to do.

## **PRIORITIZATION**

- Winners in business and politics have an uncanny ability to prioritize, whether they're part of an organization or team, or are acting individually.
- They know how to separate what must be done from what should be done. In fact, identifying and effectively articulating priorities may be the single most important component of successful communication.

## **PERFECTION**

- If you're not driven to perfection, you'll never reach excellence.
- Good enough... isn't.

## **PARTNERSHIP**

- No one has all the answers.
- It's about getting the right people on the right seats on the bus. And getting the people off the bus that shouldn't be on the bus.

## **PASSION**

- There isn't a winner anywhere who doesn't bring passion to what they do or how they communicate.

- Passion is more than just words and language. Effectively communicating passion requires focus on style and delivery. It's also about intensity.

## **PERSUASION**

- Winners don't preach; they persuade. They tell you why you should accept their point of view, yet you feel like you came to their conclusions on your own.

## **PERSISTENCE**

- Winning is never about a single game or performance. Winners know how to succeed over the long haul. In fact, they know that winning is defined by repeat performances and increasing achievements.
- One-hit wonders experience brief success, but only consistent chart-toppers win the industry.
- Winners never give up, never accept defeat, and work as long and as hard as it takes to get the job done right.

## **PRINCIPLED ACTION**

- The essential nature of a set of guiding principles defines a true winner.

**SUMMARY** – It's important to understand that not every winner has all of these characteristics. But you won't find a winner out there today who doesn't exhibit most, if not all, of these fundamental human traits.

### **3. People-Centeredness** – Humanizing your approach

- People-centered is not the same thing as being a people person. They are not the life of the party. They are not necessarily charming, charismatic, or even nice.
- Are you people-centered?
  - Do you look others right in the eyes? People-centered people are very attentive not just to what you say but how you say it.
  - Do you repeatedly ask "why"? People-centered people are naturally inquisitive and want to know what other people think?
  - Do you analyze what you can gain from each interaction? People-centered people are looking for personal meaning and benefit from interactions with others. They are always focused on achieving their goals by learning from others.

- Do you actively look to improve products, results or situations? They are always looking for things that need to be fixed.
- Do you apply your experiences? They have the ability to take what they've learned from a situation and apply it to other areas of their life.
- The Power of Questions
  - Questions are how you get inside someone's head to show you what you want to see, not just what they want you to see.
  - All people like to talk about themselves. And they want you to listen.
  - Successful people ask better questions, and as a result, they get better answers.
- Essential Questions You Need to Ask Yourself
  - Am I asking the right questions?
  - Am I truly listening to the answers?
  - Am I acting on what I learn?
- Good questions, like good art, don't have to be complex. Their intent should not be to get confrontational but rather to elicit a real response.
- Something Is Always Missing
  - One of the most powerful benefits of people-centeredness is figuring out what's missing in people's lives – the void – then filling it.
  - The ability to understand people's hopes, fears, and motivations is the most valuable skill any human being can ever possess.
  - Without that understanding, you'll never be able to lead people to their maximum potential. You'll end up settling for "good enough."

#### **4. Paradigm Breaking** – The values of being first

"You see things; and you say, 'Why?' But I dream things that never were; and I say, 'Why not?'" George Bernard Shaw

- Winners don't accept the world for what it is. They're driven by their ideas of how the world should be. Their vision becomes a mission, and that mission reshapes the human experience. If you're not asking "Why not?," you're not in the winning mentality.
- In simplest terms, paradigms are frames through which we look at the world.
- Paradigm breakers convert their own dreams and visions into wide-spread public demands.
- An enormous part of paradigm breaking is mental. You have to do whatever it takes to effect change, and often that means clearing your mind of past failures and preconceptions and focusing anew on ground breaking ideas.

- Paradigm breaking is the difference between innovation and breakthrough, between incremental and transformational. It's not about making something "new and improved," it's about reimagining the entire purpose of the original.
- Dreamers – winners – challenge the status quo.
- While human progress is achieved best through revolutionary change, it is rarely accepted through revolutionary rhetoric. The public wants methodical progress, not revolution. Paradigm breakers need the individual drive to transform but the common touch to connect with the expectations of the masses.
- The Rules for Breaking the Rules
  - Embrace risk – accept the truth that you might fail – knowing that you can continue to fight on. Anyone who engages in paradigm breaking is stepping out on a limb.
  - Paradigm breaking is about focused exploration – Identify the need. Distill the quest to its purest form. Synthesize a new and better solution.
  - Paradigm breaking is still subordinate to putting people first – you must first look at the human condition as it exists today and identify its insufficiency.
  - Communication matters – the best revolutionary leaders communicate as if they are incremental progressives while moving at the speed of light.
  - Have the courage to defend your new and better approach – have the guts to stand by your discovery. Expect people to resist, question and ridicule. Expect pain to precede the payoff.

## 5. **Prioritization** – Creating confidence one step at a time

"The key is not to prioritize what's on your schedule, but to schedule your priorities." by Stephen Covey

- Winners have an uncanny ability to prioritize: to separate what must be done from what should be done. Winners are able to focus intensely on their priorities, and then pour all of their resources into those priorities.
- Articulating your priorities quickly is one of the most important components of communication. First words build first impressions – impressions you have only a few precious seconds to make. For you to get inside of the audience's head your first impression must be powerful or people will forget it and you as well.
- People judge you in seven seconds and your ideas in thirty seconds. If their eyes stay on you, they're giving you a chance. If their eyes wander, it's over.
- Brevity is the hallmark of good communication.
- Phrases that prioritize
  - First things first

- If you remember one thing
- A straightforward approach
- The bottom line

Summary: The essence of prioritization is that you can't do everything or say everything or be everything to everyone, so don't try. It's not just a language lesson – it's a life lesson that winners have learned again and again.

## **6. Perfection – Why great is not good enough**

"We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence, then, is not an act, but a habit." Aristotle

"Perfection is not attainable, but if we chase perfection, we can catch excellence." Vince Lombardi

"If you are going to achieve excellence in big things, you develop the habit in little matters. Excellence is not an exception, it is a prevailing attitude." Colin Powell

- True excellence is not perfection, but it's what motivates you to come as near to perfection as human endeavor allows. It's not so much being perfect that makes one a winner; it's the driving need to be perfect that sets winners ahead of the rest.
- All perfectionists have in common extremely high standards for themselves and for others.
- If you're not passionate about what you do, perfection will always be just out of reach.
- Words that communicate the pursuit of perfection
  - No excuses
  - Extraordinary/exceptional
  - No surprises
  - Total satisfaction

## **7. Partnership – Creating Alignment in words and actions**

"If I have seen farther than others, it is because I was standing on the shoulders of giants." Sir Isaac Newton

"Coming together is a beginning; keeping together is progress; working together is success." Henry Ford

- The best companies are governed by leaders who understand that they exist because of a partnership with their customers, their employees, and the communities in which they operate.

- When you are communicating to people, remember it's about them. Making the communication about you, only serves to undermine any shred of true sincerity or credibility you may have.

## 8. **Passion** – The power of intensity

"There is no passion to be found playing small – in settling for a life that is less than the one you are capable of living." Nelson Mandela

- Without passion, you will not win no matter how much of anything else you have.
- Passion is a difficult emotion to learn, to develop, and certainly to fake. True passion is one of those rare human emotions that can't be manufactured. Passion just is.
- Winners live passion. Their work is a part of them and in some cases it completely defines who they are. They're driven by something deeper and more powerful than mere interest or curiosity. They never stop looking for ways to do things better.
- Three elements separate real winners from those who merely play the game:
  - **Emotion** without vision is just the heart's way of throwing a tantrum for no reason.
  - **Vision** without emotion won't get you anywhere because it lacks drive; it has no reason to keep fighting the good fight.
  - **Commitment** without vision is meaningless because without clear direction, there's no sense of achievement when you get there.
- Conveying your passion is just as much visual as it is verbal. Passion is an obligation of any effective communicator.
  - Eye contact with the audience is vital. You'll rarely see a truly impassioned speech delivered straight from a script.
  - Body language is another key visual component of passion. Ways to show passion through body language:
    - moving your arms and hands,
    - walking around the room,
    - the way you stand, all contributes to showing passion.
  - Body language that turns people off;
    - You cannot be passionate with your hands in your pockets or with arms folded across your chest.
    - Never finger wag. That's a visual form of lecturing. A passionate person talks with their arms fully outstretched, palms pointing upward.

## 9. Persuasion – Building reputation and earning trust in politics and business

“Tell me and I forget. Teach me and I remember. Involve me and I learn.” Benjamin Franklin

- How to emphasize something important when talking
  - Pause before and after the important thing that you want to say.
  - Never raise your voice. If something is really important, lower it, and leave space on either side. People listen more carefully when you talk softly. The louder you talk, the more they turn up their resistor.
- The most successful people don't set out to communicate. They set out to motivate. They don't want to change your opinion. They want to change your life. They don't want supporters. They want disciples.
- So how does perfection meet persuasion? Winners don't win by simply telling people, “This is the way it is” or “This is how it's going to be.” They convince us that what they're saying is true, that they can be trusted, so that we willingly follow their lead.
- Confidence is a critical component of persuasion. Without confidence, people won't listen to a word you say. Without confidence, you're not a leader. You're just someone standing at the front of the room who talks a lot.
- Persuasion requires disciplined persistence. It never, ever happens in a sentence, or a sound bite, or a flip of the switch. It requires repetition.
- Survey question: When listening to someone, what are some of the nonverbal cues that best indicate to you that you can believe what he or she is telling you?
  - They speak from the heart and make direct eye contact with the audience rather than speaking from a text or teleprompter.
  - They say what they mean, mean what they say, and live by what they tell others.
  - They answer questions accurately, directly, and thoroughly.
- Don't overdo on the passion so much that it obscures your facts. Remember to always make passion subordinate to persuasion.
- Shared Principles in Persuasive Speaking
  - Your first sentence of a speech sets the right tone *followed by* shared principles.
  - Shared principles are the big, umbrella-like statements that most people agree with. For example
    - The American Dream should be accessible to everyone.
    - Every American should have the right to determine his or her own future.

- Persuasive speakers start their conversations with these kinds of statements.
- Shared principles are an honest attempt to find common ground with your audience before staking out your turf to defend. You lose nothing by making this first attempt... but what you gain can be immense.
- By establishing shared principles, you stop the skepticism that blocks audiences from hearing you. These shared principles disarm your audience so you can start a real conversation.

## **10. Persistence – Learning from failure**

“The most rewarding things you do in life are often the ones that look like they cannot be done.” Arnold Palmer

- Of all the attributes it takes to win, persistence is the most important, because without it, winning is impossible.
- Persistence, unlike its weaker, less successful little brother, effort, is a way of life. It gnaws at you. It will wake you up at 3:00 a.m. so you can go over the numbers one more time.
- Persistence is all about action. No amount of IQ, cunning, or skill makes work finish itself, or inspire others to fight with you. You must be willing to put in the effort required to get the results that stand apart from – and miles above – everyone else’s.
- This is not about the drive to get things done. It’s about doing them over and over again until you win. Persistence is a mind-set. It’s a way of life. It’s your way to achieve greatness.
- A critical distinction between effort and persistence is the willingness to take responsibility for one’s actions. Very often the person who puts forth mere effort will find ways to point fingers at anyone but themselves as a justification for, in effect, giving up.
  - “We were robbed.”
  - “We can’t compete with that.”
  - “This isn’t a level playing field.”
- Persistence doesn’t care whose fault it is... it just drives you to keep going until you get it right. Too many people spend too much time looking for language to explain, justify or excuse failure.
- If you’re going to be a leader, or a winner, or successful in anything in life, the most important thing is to be in control of is yourself. You have to know what makes you successful and stick with that. Your approach has to be consistent. Adjust when things aren’t working, but know what makes you click and stick with it.

- Winners refuse to accept setbacks or failure for what they are. Instead, they redefine them as an opportunity, giving them new energy to attack the problem.

### **11. Principled Action – Winning the right way**

“Doing the right thing is good for business.” Costco CEO James Sinegal

- Winning without principle is like bricks without straw. Operating with a strong set of principles holds it all together, providing enduring strength. But leave them out and it's only a matter of time before everything comes crashing down.
- Doing the right thing is the common quality of a winner. Winners do the little things the right way, even as they achieve bigger and better things than most of us can ever dream.
- To determine if someone is truly a winner, you have to evaluate the whole person not just the results of the success, i.e., their wealth. And you have to judge that complete picture against a simple question: are they serving their fellow man, or simply serving themselves?
- Those who act with a guiding set of principles leave an indelible imprint on society that lasts longer than their wealth, or even their names. This is the final test of a winner.
- Language for demonstrating principles
  - “The simple truth is”
  - “Say what you mean and mean what you say”
  - “Uncompromising integrity”
- If you can apply the principles of winning in a principled way, then you'll have truly won. If you can put others before yourself, and in doing so lift yourself and others to a higher place, then you indeed are a winner.