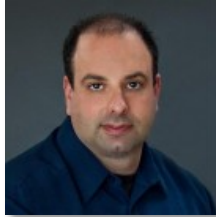


# The Five Hallmarks of Highly Respected Achievers



By David DiSalvo of Forbes Magazine

I've been working on a research project for a few weeks that involves identifying the characteristics that describe highly driven, achievement-oriented people who are also among the most well-respected in any organization. The intersection between drive and respect is an important one, because we all know people who are highly driven but think nothing of running others over along the way. And, we know examples of people who are respected but stagnant.

What follows is a taste of things to come, but here are a few initial thoughts on what makes respected achievers different.

## **1. Tempered Tenacity**

Respected achievers are incredibly tenacious. They do not allow obstacles to stop them, at least not for long, chiefly because they've trained their thinking to immediately seek out other ways of reaching a goal. To a tenaciously driven person, there is never just one way to get there, and no one will convince them otherwise. However, the sort of achiever we're talking about also keeps the well-being of others in mind, and if one of those alternate routes will result in unnecessarily harming someone else, then that route isn't an option, period. To the respected achiever, it doesn't have to be, because they know there are other ways to get where they want to go even if it takes longer to get there.

## **2. Consistent Commitment**

Another hallmark of respected achievers is that they do what they say they'll do. They don't spin out an elaborate vision, get others to buy into it, and then run off to the next big idea because it has sparked their interest more than the first. While nurturing multiple visions is fine (assuming they are manageable), the respected achiever sets a high standard for her/himself that what they commit to do on a project, they fully intend to do and will make every reasonable effort to make it happen. Granted, failure or unforeseen circumstances are always a possibility, but those are the exceptions. The respected achievers' standard of following through is consistently maintained whether or not adversity materializes, and others know that when they collaborate with a respected achiever it won't be a waste of their time.

## **3. Soulful Pragmatism**

Respected achievers are typically pragmatists – they focus on what works. If one approach isn't panning out, they either figure out how to tweak it in subtle or significant ways, or they abandon it altogether and adopt a different approach. Their focus is on outcomes. But, implementing a pragmatic approach without being mindful of how changes will affect others isn't commendable, it's cruel. Respected achievers know this, so they balance an

outcome-focus with a situational awareness of the adjustments required by others, and they work with them to make those adjustments. Again, this may build a little more time into the process, but respected achievers don't value outcomes above peoples' lives if there is any possibility of creating a mutually beneficial arrangement. And if there is not, they take it as a personal goal to help others transition into roles that will benefit them.

#### **4. Strategic Resolution**

Just like anyone else, respected achievers can become negative when things aren't going well, and just like all of us, they may vent now and again about how bad a situation is. What they do not do, however, is drop anchor in that negative place and allow their negativity to feed itself and eventually seep into the perspectives of those around them. Instead, they experience the pain, recognize that whatever caused it (business or personal) is now part of their repertoire of experience, and then they resolve to strategically move on. In this case, strategy refers to a guiding set of action steps to push forward – and, it also refers to decisions about *what not to do*. Strategy is choice, and resolving into a strategic mindset to pull out of a negative place requires making hard choices. Respected achievers are seen by others as those willing to make those choices, and that carries tremendous weight in any organization.

#### **5. Responsibility Ownership**

One less-than-admirable trait of many driven people is that they're good at figuring out how to avoid taking responsibility for what went wrong. If that means throwing someone under the proverbial bus, so be it. Better him than me. But the respected achiever sees things differently in a couple of ways. First, if something went wrong due to a mistake made by the team, the respected achiever owns responsibility whether or not other team members do the same. Why? Because teams are essentially organizations structured to accomplish specific goals, and if those goals aren't reached, then the team (not any one person) owns the blame, because the team (not any one person) was given the responsibility to succeed. Respected achievers own their role on the team instead of trying to explain why *their* responsibility should be less than that of the others'. Second, respected achievers are intuitively reciprocal people – they treat others in the manner they wish to be treated. Their embodiment of the “Golden Rule” is not situational; it's a consistently applied maxim that guides their behavior.