

# Barking up the wrong tree

The surprising science behind why everything you know about success is ( mostly) wrong

**Eric Barker**

**Eric Barker's work has featured in the New York Times, The Wall Street Journal, Time, Business Week etc. He is a former Hollywood screenwriter**

**Success does not have to be something you only see on TV. It is less about being perfect than knowing what you're best at and being properly aligned with your context.**

**No 1 s in high school academics are rarely  
No 1 s in life. There are two reasons – first,  
schools reward students who consistently  
do what they are told, academic grades  
loosely co relate to IQ, which is a good  
predictor of discipline, conscientiousness,  
and the ability to comply with rules.**

**The second reason is that high schools reward being a generalist. There is little recognition of student passion or expertise.**

**School has clear rules, life does not. When there is no clear path to follow, academic high achievers break down.**

**Following the rules does not create success,  
it just eliminates the extremes, both good  
and bad.**

**The difference between good leaders and great leaders is not an issue of 'more'. They are fundamentally different people**



**The traits that make people a nightmare to deal with can also make them people who change the world.**

**Lincoln, Gandhi, Michaelangelo and Mark Twain all lost a parent before age 16. The list of orphans who became spectacular successes is long and includes no fewer than 15 british prime ministers.**

**Due to their unique personality and circumstances, these orphans overcompensate and turn tragedy into fuel for greatness.**

**Eighty per cent of our valuations of people  
come down to two things : warmth and  
competence**

**Why do jerks succeed? They are assertive about what they want and they are not afraid to let others know what they have achieved.**

**There is an old joke about ethics – right, wrong and everyone does it. When we see others getting away with something, we assume it is ok. Nobody wants to be a sucker who plays by the rules when no one else does.**

**The quality that everyone desires in others  
in a family, in a team, etc is Trustworthiness**

**Data shows that street gangs do not create crime, in fact crime creates street gangs.**



**In the criminal world, trust is even more important, since in their world , you cannot take trust for granted.**

**The stakes of trustworthiness are higher for criminals since they cannot call the police when someone steals their heroin or diamonds or ill gotten wealth.**

**Income peaks amongst people who trust people more, not less.**

**Sticking to something, working hard and not quitting, also known as grit is the secret to success.**

**It is surprising that when asked to make predictions, depressed people are more accurate than optimists.**

**Optimists lie to themselves, but if we all stop believing anything can change, nothing ever will. We need a lot of fantasy to keep us going.**

## **Pessimists tell themselves that bad events**

- Will last a long time
- Are universal
- Are their own fault

## **Optimists tell themselves that bad events**

- Are temporary
- Have a specific cause
- Are not their fault

**Fate is the thing we cannot avoid  
However, destiny is the thing we must  
chase.**



**Meaning keeps us going when stark reality  
says 'quit'**

**Very often our stories are stronger than who we are and if they are meaningful ones, they can carry us through the tough times.**

**David foster Wallace once said –'if you are immune to boredom, then there is literally nothing you cannot accomplish'**

**Dreams are not bad, but we need more than dreams to achieve success**

**89 per cent of achievers classify themselves as introverts, in sports, in music etc. Only 6 % feel they are extroverts and the other 5% are in between.**

**The best investment bankers are emotionally stable introverts.**

**The extroverts weakness in listening skills become apparent after they assume a leadership role and they often lose status amongst co workers in team situations.**

**Extroverts have a skill in building networks, however, anyone can build networks if they are inclined.**



**It is better to give than to receive. Sharing knowledge, sharing contacts etc. Do not be transactional about networking, if you give without expecting anything, you tend to get more.**

**One of the quickest ways to boost your network is to connect with old friends.**

**People say they want to increase their network, but few make any serious attempt.**

**The biggest source of conflict amongst friends is making the time to see each other.**

**Analyzing eight million phone calls between two million people, researches at Notre Dame found that what makes for close friendships is simply staying in touch every fortnight.**

**The best predictor of team success is how the team members feel about one another.**

**Great mentors and great teachers help you learn faster.**

**Mentors make learning fun, they help you overcome frustration while pushing you to do your best.**



**Fun is emotional and is a critical component for success at work.**

**There is an old saying-'when the student is ready, the teacher appears'**

**In the 1970s, the NYPD started a program to talk to extremists who held people hostage. Today it has become a science.**

**When we make anything a win or lose, then everyone loses.**

**The police make three mistakes in dealing with situations : they make everything black or white, they want to solve things immediately and they don't focus on emotions.**

**Active listening means you are listening and letting them know you are listening**

**Fighting only works when you are by far the biggest and the strongest and likely to stay that way.**

**When we are young we take everything for granted and never really thank people for their help**



**Feeling gratitude and not expressing is like wrapping a present and not giving it.**

**In 1997 the US news and world report ran a survey on who was likely to go to heaven. The results ...**

**Bill Clinton scored 52 %, Michael Jordan got 65%, Mother Teresa got 79% and 'me' got 87 % !!!!**

**Overconfidence lifts output among teams,  
while under confidence harms it.**

**People who believe they can succeed, do not feel victims of fate. Their success is a function of their own motivation and ability.**

**‘The CEO who misleads others in public, is likely to mislead himself in private’- Warren Buffett**

**Confidence can improve performance ,  
however it is also dangerous, it can lead to  
delusion.**

**Overconfidence is usually the mistake of experts.**



**Feelings of power are likely to make us more selfish. Power also makes us hypocritical.**

**Confidence makes it hard for us to learn and improve. when we think we have the answers, we stop looking for them.**

**There are two benefits of humility – it keeps us from getting arrogant and it is a reality check.**

**To be the very best at anything, you have to be your harshest critic.**

**As someone becomes an expert, they deliberately seek feedback so that they can improve and make fewer mistakes.**

**Bosses who show vulnerability are more popular. US Navy Research shows that esteemed leaders are democratic and have solid listening skills.**

**Confidence is a result of success, not a cause.**

**Obsessive work might take you to the heights of success, but it does not give you a fulfilling, balanced life.**



**The most productive part is the morning for most people. If you wake up at 7 am, then you are most productive between 8 and 1030.**

**Energy, not time is the fundamental  
currency of high performance says Tony  
Schwartz.**

**We love having choices, and we hate making choices.**

**You need a personal definition of success.  
Trying to be a relative success compared to  
others is dangerous.**

**Measuring life by one yardstick will not work.**

**You need a plan to be successful, most of us do not have a plan.**

