

Tips for Success

*Joe Scarlett's presentation at the **Scarlett Leadership Institute Seminar on Emerging Leadership**
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Core Values

Build your niche. Ask yourself what you are interested in and then really work at creating that niche for yourself. For example, Tractor Supply Company concentrated on the “typical” large-scale farming industry, but when Joe realized that “hobby farming” was growing substantially in the market, he made it his mission to be TSC’s go-to person for hobby farming. So pinpoint your niche and then commit to building it. Read articles and books, and talk to people who have already found success with a similar niche.

Be a communications pro. Good writing skills are critical in business. If you don’t write well, find someone who can guide you or proof your work. Solid public speaking skills are also important. Join groups that “force” you to speak publicly. Learn how to handle difficult conversations. Take advantage of every opportunity you’re offered to speak in front of an audience. Practicing communicating in a variety of circumstances is key, because in business we have to be able to talk to people all the time—under both good and bad conditions.

Build solid relationships. Make a list of 10 people you would like to meet before the end of the year and make it a point to call those people and get to know them. You have to build relationships in order to be successful. As a true believer in strong business relationships, Joe says that if clients like you and trust you then they will want to do business with you. But that trust doesn’t happen in one meeting; it takes time and dedication. You have to keep building that relationship.

Champion positive change. First, fact the facts: Organizations are going to change. But change can be positive. If you don’t think of a change as positive, then you simply need to figure out how to twist your initial resistance to change and convince yourself to embrace it.

Teach and coach others. You must be willing to coach others on your successes and failures. For example, when you’re visiting stores, take the 30 minutes in between stores to coach your employees. Keep a list of coaching tips handy. As managers we have to remember that coaching is part of our jobs. We have to teach our employees what to do, but then coach them on how to do it better.

Associate with winners. Find someone you admire and get to know them better. Most people go to lunch with the same co-workers every day. Instead, call someone that you want to get to know better and make a lunch date. Not only are you breaking out of your rut, but you are learning new things and meeting new people.

Have fun. Remember, no matter what you do, you have to enjoy what you are doing. If you don’t like it, find something else. Pretty self-explanatory.

Stick to your values. If every day, you are the best that you can possibly be it’s very unlikely that you won’t find success. You want to know at the end of each day that you have given it your best and, most importantly, stayed true to who you are.

You are always on stage. Whether it is during the business day, out on the weekend or at the gym, you are always on a stage. As a leader, people will always be judging you and your actions. But if you present yourself well and stay true to your values at all times, you don’t have to worry about being on that stage.

Style Points

Under promise and over deliver. In the end, it is always better if you give someone more than what you originally promised. Especially in the current economy, people are over-promising when, in fact, they might be able to do the job, but not very well ... and maybe really slow. So, be realistic in your promises.

Activity is not accomplishment. We all know that store manager who harps on working 15-hour days, but ironically has a store that looks horrible. The solution is simple: Work smart. "Activity" is something that we all have to do, but you have to focus on activity that leads to accomplishment. Figure out what is really eating your time and find a way to eliminate it so that you can focus on productive activity.

Ask what, not who. When there is a problem, don't ask who did it, ask what is wrong? Focus on the issue—not the person—at hand. It might be that the person involved wasn't properly trained or didn't have enough information. People are too quick to jump to conclusions when it comes to other people.

Respect people's time. We are all really busy. We need to respect others' schedule. If you say you are going to be somewhere at 4 p.m.—be there at 4 p.m. Likewise, if you say you are just going to take up 20 minutes of someone's time, only take up 15 minutes. When you are leading meetings, bring an agenda. The people in the meeting will respect you if you stick to that agenda and end the meeting on time.

Take responsibility. If you are wrong, admit it. Don't blame it on someone else. And don't just ignore it and hope it goes away. Admit your mistake and move forward.

Always say please and thank you. For *everything*. This simple gesture goes a long way. If you are asking someone to do something (even if they should already know to do it), you need to say please and thank you. You will come across much more considerate and people will respect—and like—you better.