

Guest Author Bob Cooper: Reaching Your Full Potential

☒ Have you ever wondered why some individuals with average talent achieve great success while others with exceptional talent see their careers derail? In sports we witness this all the time. Players with great talent often find themselves on the bench or out of the game. It may be a lack of commitment, desire or emotional intelligence. I have always appreciated the dedication and commitment of New York Yankee shortstop Derek Jeter. He clearly has talent, but his desire to continuously improve, his love of the sport, and his respect for all is why he will always be admired for his achievements.

What about the world of business? Do you feel that you have reached your full potential? If not, why not?

The following are a few suggestions to assist you to reach your full potential:

Don't Blame Anyone for Where You Are

If you are not satisfied, then take an honest look in the mirror. When working with professionals, I often need to spend some time helping them to stop blaming everyone for their inability to achieve their goals. I hear things like "If only I got lucky", "My boss isn't willing to give me the opportunity", "I just can't catch a break." If you are surrounded by people in your life who are willing to listen to this and say "you're right, you can't catch a break" or "It's your bosses fault", I encourage you to stop listening. You can either be the victim, or you can take control of the situation. It's not too late. Hope is not a strategy – passion and focused commitment is.

Find Your Passion & Purpose

When you feel passionate about your work, and it has great meaning to you, it doesn't feel like work. Why did you choose your profession? Do you love your work? If not, why not? If your environment has taken your breath away, you probably need a change. The starting point in this journey is to connect with your work in a meaningful way. How have you made a difference for the business and those whom you serve? What can you do going forward?

Keep Your Energy Up

This has a connection to the first two points. Blaming others or not finding joy in your work takes away your energy. Focus on your goals and develop a plan to achieve them. Don't let anyone say you can't do it. Be careful not to buy into other's stories. People in your life will try to convince you that you will not be able to accomplish big goals – don't believe them. You must believe in yourself, see the possibilities and go for it. I recall a conversation I had with a colleague where he spent a tremendous amount of time telling me why he couldn't make a change. "You see Bob, I have 4 weeks vacation. I have been in this industry for over 20 years, I can't do anything else." This went on for months. I listened, offered empathy and some guidance, but he was stuck. He had finally reached a point of desperation. I said the following – "If you believe you are stuck, then you are stuck. If you believe in yourself, then you are free." He switched careers and is extremely happy. His energy is high and he feels a sense of peacefulness. Surround yourself with people who will fuel your energy tank, and try to minimize contact with people who want to fill your tank up with negative thoughts. It might just be that they are not happy and are looking for company.

Build Talents into Sustainable Strengths

I highly recommend the book "Strengths Finder 2.0 by Tom Rath." Based on the work of the Gallup organization, you take an online assessment to learn about your top 5 talent themes. The main message is we need to spend our time building on our talents and turning them into sustainable strengths. When you combine talent with passion you can achieve greatness.

Find Great Mentors

I was very fortunate to find great mentors throughout my career. These are individuals who are excellent role models and teachers. They take the time to listen and understand. They build up your competence and confidence, and assist you to reach your full potential. They tell you the truth (even if it hurts), and care about you and your success. Thank you Bill, Harry, Warren & Susan as I will always be grateful to you. You attract great mentors when you show passion and desire. I remember a conversation I had with Harry on our way back from a trip to Boston. I said "Harry, I want to train every employee throughout the country on our new Distribution Resource Planning Program." He said, "Bob, have you done much training in your career?" I said, "No Harry, but I love it and will not let you down." Harry smiled and said "It's yours." If you want others to believe in you, you must believe in yourself. They will want to see you win and will take great pride in helping you to succeed. Harry helped me develop the curriculum and gave me several important suggestions. I was only 24 years old at the time and greatly appreciated Harry's belief in me and his willingness to help me succeed.

If you lead others, I encourage you to assist members of your team to reach their full potential. Find out about their professional goals. Provide the guidance and mentoring support

to build competence and confidence. As a leader, your most important role is the developer of champions. You will build a team capable of executing the business strategy because they believe in the direction, believe in the strategy and most importantly believe in themselves. They will trust you and go the extra mile for you.

Are you willing to provide the opportunity to let others reach their full potential? If yes, thank you. I thank you on behalf of your entire team. You are living the principles found in my book "Heart and Soul in the Boardroom."

Reaching your full potential is much more than a nice saying – it can be your destiny!

For a complete listing of our services, please visit us at www.rlcooperassoc.com or call (845) 639-1741.

*RL Cooper Associates' book "**Heart and Soul in the Boardroom**" outlines suggestions for leaders to develop highly respectful and ethical work cultures and is available in the **Manage My Practice Store**. For additional information about their services, please visit www.rlcooperassoc.com.*

