

Interview with Brian Tracy

Q: Can you tell us something about yourself and your background?

A: I began my life with few advantages. I came from a home where we had very little money. I did not complete high school. I started my life working at laboring jobs and then sometimes lived in my car. I had always dreamed about traveling. When I was 20, I saved a little money and set off to see the world. I drove across North America, worked my way on a ship across the Atlantic to England and then rode a bicycle across France and Spain to Gibraltar. From there, two friends of mine and I purchased a Land Rover and drove it across the Sahara Desert into Africa. We had many experiences and adventures along the way, all of which contributed to shape my philosophy and my beliefs about life.

Eventually, we made our way to Johannesburg, South Africa where I lived and worked for almost two years. After that, I returned to London and then worked for a while in England and in Germany. In 1968, I set off on journey, by land, from London to Singapore, across Europe, Turkey, Iran, Pakistan, India and eventually through Malaysia to Singapore. From Singapore, I traveled north through Malaysia to Thailand where I again lived and worked for about two years.

Since then, I have traveled throughout Asia, North America, South America, the Caribbean, Europe, Africa and many other countries, more than 80 in all.

In my 30's, I attended the University of Alberta and eventually earned a Masters Degree in Business. I worked in Real Estate Development, Automobile Importation and Distribution, Sales, Marketing, Advertising, Training and Consulting. I became the Chief Operating Officer of a \$265 million company.

In 1981, I began developing learning materials and presenting seminars in Canada and the United States. Later, I produced audio and video training programs. In 1986, I moved to San Diego, California.

Over the past 20 years, I have produced more than 300 audio and video training programs, some of which have been translated into as many as 24 languages and are used in more than 30 countries. I am the best-selling producer of audio learning programs in the world. My video training programs are used by many of the largest companies in America and Europe.

I am the best-selling author of more than 40 books, published by some of the major publishing houses in the world today.

Currently, as a professional speaker and trainer, I address more than 250,000 people each year in the US, Canada, Europe, Australia, Asia and the Middle East.

Q: What experience or encounter in your life has influenced you the most?

A: I have had more experiences, in more places, under more different circumstances, than most people. Perhaps the most important formative experience for me was crossing the Sahara Desert when I was 21 years old. This was extraordinarily difficult and I almost died in the desert because of our Land Rover breaking down and other problems. Crossing the Sahara was a great experience for me and probably a turning point in my life.

Over the years, the most important experiences for me have been when I have been able to overcome extraordinary difficulties and hardships with determination and persistence. These two qualities, determination and persistence, are the most important qualities of all to develop to achieve great success in any area of life.

Q: What are the main highlights of your personal and professional life?

A: There have been several. First of all, traveling from Vancouver, Canada across the country, across the Atlantic, across Europe and then across Africa to South Africa, was a great experience. In total, I traveled more than 17,000 miles. I started knowing very little about what I was doing and I learned along the way.

My second great experience was my trip from London to Singapore, a distance of about 12,000 miles, which took several months and gave me an opportunity to visit and see several different cultures.

When I was 24, I learned how to sell and then how to manage. By the time I was 25, I was running a sales force that covered six countries and was made up of 95 people, all of whom I had personally recruited and trained. Altogether, we were selling millions of dollars worth of products per month.

Later, I got into real estate development, and over a five-year period, built, managed, developed and sold more than \$50 million dollars worth of real estate.

I was personally responsible for importing the Suzuki four-wheel drive vehicles into Canada. We set up 65 dealerships and sold \$25 million dollars worth of vehicles in a two-year period, starting from nothing.

I took over a \$265 million dollar development company and completely reorganized the company from the ground up. I set up new offices, staffed the company with new people and launched six major development projects involving many millions of dollars.

In 1979, I got married and began my family. Today, we have four beautiful children. This is probably the most important accomplishment of my life.

In 1981, I began speaking and training. Since then, I have become one of the best-known professional speakers in the world.

Q: Which of these are you the most proud of?

A: I am most proud of my family, my wife and children. My oldest daughter is 25 years old now and has just completed her Masters Degree at a leading university. My two boys are 19 and 23. They are both fine young men and are doing well, both in their college life and socially. My youngest daughter, Catherine, is 14 years old and an accomplished horsewoman. She is a wonderful girl with a tremendous personality.

To me, nothing is more important than my family. And my family are healthy, happy and doing well in every part of their lives. That is the most important thing and the thing that I am the most proud of.

Q: What is your idea and definition of success in life?

A: You are successful to the degree to which you can set and achieve your own goals. Success means being able to live your life the way you want to live it, free from the interference of others. Success means developing and using your full potential as a human being. In the final analysis, you are successful to the degree to which you can achieve your own happiness and peace of mind.

As it happens, happiness and peace of mind are a *result*, and the causes of them are your discovering and developing your talents and abilities to the full.

Q: How can you achieve this success?

A: The most important skill for success is the ability to set clear, specific goals and then to make detailed plans for their accomplishment.

Your ability to decide exactly what you want, to then write it down, set a deadline, make a plan and then to work on your plan every single day will enable you to achieve greater success than anything else in life.

At the same time, you must be continually learning and developing new skills and abilities. We live in the information age. Knowledge and skill are the keys to the future. If you want your life to get better on the outside, you must get better on the inside.

The most important of all qualities for great success, once you know what you want and you have learned what you need to learn to achieve it, is for you to develop an unshakeable level of persistence. Every great success is preceded by difficulties, disappointments and setbacks. It is only those people who persist and persist and persist who achieve great things.

Q: Who do you think are the great talents in your field?

A: There are many thousands of speakers, writers, authors and trainers working today. The greatest talent in the field of business today is Peter Drucker. He has done more to influence thinking in business and management than any other person in the 20th century.

There are many great speakers. My favorites are Denis Waitley, Jim Rohn, Tony Robbins, Zig Ziglar, Les Brown, Roger Dawson, and others.

Q: What person, living or dead, do you most admire and why? How has that person influenced your perspective of life?

A: I have been influenced by many men and women, living and dead, over the years. When I was a young man, I studied great military leaders, such as Alexander the Great, Hannibal of Carthage, Cyrus of Persia, Genghis Khan of Mongolia, Chalemagne of France,

Frederick the Great of Prussia, Napoleon of France, Wellington of England, George Washington of the American Revolution, George Patton of World War II, Douglas McArthur of the Pacific and Korea, Robert E. Lee and U. S Grant of the American Civil War and many others. From these great leaders, I learned the qualities of clarity regarding objectives, boldness, tenacity, determination, and the ability to bounce back after defeat and disappointment.

In terms of personal development, I have studied the works of Napoleon Hill, Maxwell Maltz, Norman Vincent Peale, Og Mandino, Claude Bristol, Earl Nightingale, Tony Robbins and others. Each of these people has made significant contributions to the understanding of personal success.

In business, I have studied such greats as Peter Drucker, Andrew Grove, Bill Gates, Neil Rackham, Tom Hopkins, Ken Blanchard, Tom Peters, Warren Bennis, Ichak Adizes, Ries and Trout, and many more.

In spiritual development, I personally worked with Albert Schweitzer in Africa. I have greatly admired Jesus, Mother Teresa of Calcutta. Over the years, I have studied the works of Emmet Fox, Ernest Holmes, Charles and Myrtle Filmore, Eric Butterfield, Neville, The Bible, Buddha, Confucius and Lao-Tze. I have spent many years studying in spiritual and religious traditions and they have all been helpful and insightful.

In economics, the most influential figures in my life were Ludwig von Mises, Frederick von Hayek, Frank Meyer, Leonard Read, Milton Friedman, James Buchanan, Joseph Schumpeter, Thomas Sowell, and many others.

In every case, I have searched for universal principles and timeless wisdom that I can apply to my own life, and that I can teach to others to apply to their lives.

Q: What person, living or dead, do I identify with most?

A: There is no one person that I identify with more than another. I greatly admire the leaders of history, especially the great military leaders who were able to achieve victory against overwhelming odds. I admire the great business leaders of today, such as Jack Welch, Bill Gates, Andrew Grove and others who have built exciting, successful businesses. At the same time, I very much identify with and admire the great spiritual teachers of the ages, from all religious traditions. As a result, my philosophy of life is a balance between boldness and action orientation on the one hand and spiritual development and contemplation on the other hand.

Q: What failures, if any, have you encountered so far, and what are some of the lessons you have learned from them?

A: In everything that I have ever attempted, I have met with failure after failure after failure. I have learned that setbacks, disappointments and temporary failure are as normal and as natural as breathing in and breathing out. I failed in school. I failed in my first, second and third attempts to cross the Sahara Desert. I failed at different jobs, at least initially. When I began selling full time, I failed to make a sale hundreds of times. When I moved into management, I made an endless number of mistakes. At every part of my life and my career, I have had failures over and over again before I experienced success.

What I have learned from failure is the necessity for *persistence*. Every single person who has ever achieved greatly has also failed greatly many times. The reason that people succeed is because they never, never give up, no matter how bad it looks.

Q: What do you regret most about your career and life?

A: I am happy to say that I really have no regrets. If anything, I am sorry about the amount of money that I have invested in other

people's ideas. I have learned that it is 99% guaranteed that you will lose your money when you invest in the ideas and businesses of other people. I have learned that it is much better to invest in yourself and your own business, where you have everything under your own control.

Q: What is the single thing you have learned in the past year that is most meaningful to you?

A: In the past year, I have spent a good deal of time studying the life cycles of businesses and careers. I have learned that every life, every career, every product, service or business goes through a cycle of birth, growth, maturity and decline.

It is absolutely essential for each person to look at their life and determine where they are on the "curve." My career is still in a "growth" phase. But some of my products and seminars are in a "decline" phase. Many of my new business ideas are in the "conception" and "birth" phases.

Q: Do you have a personal motto? What is it?

A: I have *three* personal mottoes: "Just do it!" "Make it happen!" and "Never give up!"

Q: If you can change one thing in your life, what would it be?

A: At this moment, I am happy to say that my life is very well balanced and under control. My family is happy and healthy. My business is stable and growing and my health is excellent. I am involved in several exciting projects and I look forward to every new day. I have no regrets at all.

Q: How do you improve yourself in your own personal development and continue to stay motivated constantly?

A: This is a great question. I believe that mental health and mental fitness are very similar to physical health and fitness. They both require that you work on yourself every day. For physical fitness, I exercise every day — walking, swimming, bicycling and using lightweights and stretching exercises.

For mental and emotional fitness, I read spiritually every day, listen to audio programs in my car, watch educational video cassettes, study in various subjects, write and rewrite my goals, plan and organize my time, and take additional courses whenever I can.

If you feed your physical body with rich, healthy, nutritious foods, you will have high levels of physical health and energy. If you feed your mind with positive, interesting, enriching ideas in the form of books, tapes and additional seminars, you will be continually motivated and functioning at a high level. This is my basic philosophy of life.

Q: What would you advise others who desire to excel in your discipline or at least, generally, in their work?

A: The keys to success are simple, but they are not easy. First, decide exactly what it is that you really enjoy doing. You will always be most successful, and paid the most, doing something that you enjoy more than anything else.

Second, throw your whole heart into becoming very, very good at what you do. Pay any price, go any distance, make any sacrifice in terms of work and study to become excellent in your chosen field. This is the key to great success in whatever you do.

Third, dedicate yourself to lifelong learning. Never stop growing and improving in your chosen area.

Fourth, resolve to persist until you succeed. Never give up. Back everything you do with the twin qualities of persistence and determination.

With regard to succeeding in my field, it is important to understand that it takes a minimum of seven years to excel in your chosen field. You will have to pay the price in terms of many long hours of hard work and sacrifice where you get very few rewards. If you want to be successful as a professional speaker, you must read and study for about 100 hours for every *one*-hour that you speak in a seminar or talk. A one-day seminar may take you as much as 500-1000 hours of research and study to prepare. Everyone who is successful in professional speaking and training has invested many thousands of hours of hard work and preparation to get to their current level. This is true for any profession.

Q: What do you like best and most about your work?

A: The very best part of my work is my opportunity to share practical, helpful, proven ideas that people can use immediately to improve their lives and their work. What I like the most is when people come to me, or write to me, and tell me that their lives have changed and improved dramatically as a result of applying these ideas. I am not in the speaking or seminar business. I am in the life-changing business.

Q: What is your regular day like?

A: My regular day begins at about 6:00 am in the morning when I arise. I immediately exercise and work out in some way, either by walking, swimming or using exercise equipment.

I follow my exercise session with 30-60 minutes of spiritual reading. I then write and rewrite my goals and begin my day.

I always work from a list. I make out a list of everything I have to do the night before, set priorities on the list and then, first thing in the morning, begin working on the most important item on my list.

I work steadily throughout the day. I try not to waste a minute. As a result, I get an enormous amount of work done over time. I produce far more books, audiotapes and video programs than anyone else in my business.

Q: How do you relax?

A: My primary methods of relaxation are to go for walks with my wife, spend time with my children, exercise and especially to read in a variety of subjects. Because I am doing work that I really enjoy, I do not experience very much stress or attention, at all. I very seldom have any need to relax or to unwind. When you are doing what you enjoy doing, you want to do more of it, in different ways.

Q: What do you hope to do and achieve one year from now?

My goal in the next 12 months is to give 120 speeches and seminars in the United States, Canada, Europe and Australia. In addition, I plan to write and publish four books. I will design and record a new audio program.

Q: How do you think your discoveries and message has helped mankind in the world today?

A: In the last 20 years, I have spoken to more than two million people worldwide. Many of these people have reported to me that their lives have been completely changed as a result. The people who have read my books, listened to my audio programs or used my video training seminars have often transformed their lives.

The key to success has always been to “learn from the experts.” Find out what other successful people are doing, and then do the same

things. Copy them. You do not need to reinvent the wheel. You do not need to start over from the beginning. All you need to do is to study the most successful people and learn what they have learned, usually at great cost.

My gift as a speaker, writer and teacher is my ability to *synthesis* ideas and information from a wide variety of sources and then condense these ideas into practical, useable programs that people can take to improve their lives rapidly.

Success is not an accident. Failure is not an accident, either. Successful people are simply those who do the things that lead to success. Unsuccessful people are those who fail to do these same things.

Throughout all of history, the secrets to success have been simple. First, set clear, written goals and make plans for their achievement. Second, learn everything you need to know to be very good at what you do. Third, back your goals and plans with persistence and determination and refuse to quit when the going gets tough.

There are no limits to what you can achieve except for the limits you place on yourself by your own thinking. This is the greatest time in all of human history to be alive. And your future is unlimited.