

Achieving success through persistence

The secret of success is constancy to purpose. [Benjamin Disraeli](#)

What is persistence?

The definition of persistence is to refuse to give up or let go; to make progress in spite of difficulty or opposition; to endure setbacks; to maintain firm continuance in a course of action.

The most famous observation about persistence is a quote that has been [misattributed since at least the late 1800s](#).

“Nothing in this world can take the place of persistence. Talent will not: nothing is more common than unsuccessful people with talent. Genius will not; unrewarded genius is almost a proverb. Education will not: the world is full of educated derelicts. Persistence and determination alone are all powerful.”

[Anonymous](#)



Innovators with persistence **start with a clear vision for accomplishing a goal that is personally important**. That clear vision for accomplishing a goal is built on low cost, low risk, small and easily reversible steps to make steady progress. The persistent gather tools, nurture relationships and acquire resources to be ready to overcome roadblocks.

Persistent innovators are agile and able to change tactics while remaining focused on goals. Innovators with persistence reflect on successes to build confidence and always pursue life-long learning.

In the confrontation between the stream and the rock, the stream always wins - not through strength but through persistence. [Buddha](#)

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Do you have persistence?

If you really want to do something, you'll find a way. If you don't, you'll find an excuse. [Jim Rohn](#)

Persistence is often called out as one of the most important factors in achieving success. Is the only difference between success and failure simply the capacity to keep going? Here are the traits of those who persist:

Goals – if you don't know where you're going you probably won't get there. You need a clearly defined outcome about which you are passionate.

Focus – persistence means 'eyes on the prize' day in and day out, to stay the course and to remain committed even when moving forward is exactly the last thing you want to do today.

Confidence – whether you think you can or you think you can't, you're probably right! Those who **think they can**, most often **do**.

Curiosity – persistent people use curiosity to zero in on new opportunities, to find ways around roadblocks and to overcome barriers.

Adaptability – evolve or die, as the saying goes. The persistent among us try new approaches, learn new skills and develop new relationships in pursuit of goals.

Accountability – after the goal is identified and the path forward is clear, persistent people hold themselves accountable for results. The persistent use accountability to drive progress forward.

Persistence is a great element of success. If you only knock long enough at the gate, you are sure to wake up somebody. [Henry Wadsworth Longfellow](#)



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Can you strengthen your persistence?

One of the great things about being human is the power of your mind over your every-day experiences. You perceive the world through the lens of your thinking. If we manage our thinking, we can manage our perceptions and build persistence.



The first step in strengthening your persistence is to develop an actionable vision of success.

If you don't know where you are going, you will never get there. A vision of success will sustain us through challenges and help us measure our progress towards our goals.

The next step is to prepare yourself for roadblocks.

Anticipate problems and have a plan. AN action plan gives you the steps to reach your vision of success. Prepare alternative courses of action ahead of time to be mentally ready for a challenge. There won't be time to develop a plan for a setback when it lands in your lap, but if you make a plan in advance, you will be psychologically ready. Too many people give up entirely at the first obstacle, declaring a goal impossible and giving up in despair.

Now, take the first step, whatever it might be.

It's hard to persevere, much less succeed, if you never try. While it's true that you won't fail if you don't try something, you also won't succeed. A safe strategy is to make the first few steps you take small enough that failure won't be catastrophic.

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Network to find advocates and mentors.

Good counsel can assist you with suggestions and recommendations based on experience and expertise. There will be hard work, but positive reinforcement can be exceptionally sustaining.

The “F word” is FOCUS.

Maintain focus by visualizing yourself accomplishing your goal no matter what it takes. In other words, keep your eye on the prize and stay in the game. Studiously avoid getting caught up in negative thinking and surround yourself with things that, and people who, motivate you and boost your confidence.



As you go forward, plan, do, check, act.

What didn't work? What could you have done better? Did you have all the necessary skills and tools? Your findings should set you up to make a more effective move, next time.

Take time to reflect on your progress.

Your vision of success sets your final goal, and your action plan gives you the steps to get there. As you go forward, reviewing and appreciating your progress, no matter how slow, will help keep on track and moving forward. “Don’t look back, you’re not going that way,” is good advice, but don’t forget to reflect on the good work you have done.

Persistence and determination alone are omnipotent. The slogan 'press on' has solved and always will solve the problems of the human race.

[Calvin Coolidge](#)

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Putting your powers of persistence to work.

Think long term.

If your vision of success is sufficiently powerful, you will be pursuing your goals over a long period of time. Sustain yourself by breaking down big goals into smaller subgoals, tied together by your long term vision of success.

Avoid negativity and protect your time.

It's hard to find advocates and mentors, but detractors seem to be everywhere. Let negativity be someone else's problem while you stay focused on your personal goals and achievements. Negative ideas sap your energy and time thieves rob you of the one asset you can never relace – your time. Avoid detractors and time wasters, they add nothing and take far too much.

Place a high value on learning about, and adapting, to the constraints of reality.

You've probably heard these before:

“The only constant is change.”

“Change is inevitable. Growth is optional.”

“In life, change is inevitable. In business, change is vital.”

The inevitability of change, people's resistance to change, the chaos of change and the benefits of change have long been debated in western European literature because we have a culture based on change. That doesn't mean we like change when it happens to us, but we would be deeply disappointed if our circumstances never changed.

Change – we can't live with it and we can't live, or succeed, without it.

The illiterate of the 21st century will not be those who cannot read and write, but those who cannot learn, unlearn, and relearn. [Alvin Toffler](#)

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