



Professional Development

January/February 2011

Happiness: It's About the Mojo

The four ingredients that tell the world: "I'm a winner"

With the new year just begun, what better time than now to focus on finding, keeping, or getting back our mojo for 2011 and beyond? It's easy to attain happiness and meaning when we achieve two straightforward goals: loving what we do and showing it.

This is what I call mojo. All the successful people I know have it. It shows when positive feelings toward what we are doing radiate from inside us and are evident for others to see. In other words, there's no gap between the positive way we perceive ourselves—what we are doing—and how others perceive us.

To attain mojo, you need to combine four vital ingredients.

1. Identity. Who do you think you are? This question is more subtle than it sounds. It amazes me how often I ask people this question and their first response is, "well, I think I'm perceived as someone who" I stop them immediately with: "I didn't ask you to analyze how you think other people see you. I want to know who you think you are. Taking everything else in the world out of the equation, including the opinions of your spouse, your family, and your closest friends, how do you perceive yourself?"

What follows is often a long silence as they struggle to get their self-image into focus. After people think for a while, I can generally extract a straight answer. Without a firm handle on identity, we may never understand why we gain or lose our mojo.

2. Achievement. What have you done lately? I'm talking about accomplishments that have meaning and impact. If you're a salesperson, this might be landing a big account. If you're a manager or leader, it could mean successfully managing a project or leading a team effort. This question, too, is more subtle than it sounds because we often underrate or overrate our achievements based on how easy or hard they were to pull off.

3. Reputation. Who do other people think you are? What do others think you've done lately? Unlike the questions about identity and achievement, this one has no subtlety. While identity and achievement are definitions you develop for yourself, your reputation is a scoreboard kept by others. Your coworkers, customers, and friends (and sometimes, strangers who've never met you) grab the right to grade your performance. They report their opinions to the rest of the world. Although you can't take total control of your reputation, you can maintain or improve it in ways that have an enormous impact on your mojo.

4. Acceptance. What can you change and what is beyond your control? On the surface, acceptance—maintaining a realistic attitude about what we cannot alter in our lives and reconciling ourselves to this—should be the easiest thing to do. It's certainly easier than creating an identity from scratch or rebuilding a reputation.

After all, how hard is it to resign yourself to the reality of a situation? You assess it, take a deep breath, and accept it. Yet acceptance often poses the greatest challenge. Rather than accept that their managers have authority over their work, some employees constantly fight with their superiors (a strategy that rarely ends well). Rather than deal with the disappointment of getting passed over for a promotion, they'll whine that "it's not fair" to anyone who'll listen (a strategy that rarely enhances their image among their peers). Rather than take a business setback in stride, they'll hunt for scapegoats, placing blame on everyone but themselves (a strategy that rarely teaches them how to avoid future setbacks). When mojo fades, the initial cause is often failure to accept what is—and get on with life.

By understanding the impact and interaction of identity, achievement, reputation, and acceptance, we can begin to alter our own mojo, both at work and at home in 2011.

*Excerpt from Marshall & Friends, January 18, 2011 as reprinted in [Bloomberg Businessweek](#). Marshall Goldsmith is a world authority at helping successful leaders grow by achieving positive, lasting behavioral change in themselves, their people, and their teams. His bestselling books include *What Got You Here Won't Get You There* and *MOJO: How to Get It, How to Keep It, and How to Get It Back If You Lose It*.*