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5 Ways to Ensure Overachieving Isn't Undermining Your Success

BY MERILEE KERN, MBA

Overachievement is a concept that's seemingly become a gold standard on how to become a 'superstar' in business, career goals and life overall. Just Google search 'how to overachieve' and the web will dutifully deliver more than 355,000 resources to help propel your prosperity.

In today's fast-paced business climate, masses have surrendered themselves to overachievement in pursuit of business and career success. Not just ordinary success, but rather, the kind that exceeds expectations courtesy of excessive 'above and beyond' effort put forth. Some relent to a life of overachievement willingly and enthusiastically as they yearn to earn, while others grievously succumb to a multitude of pressures — both external and self-inflicted — and work themselves to extremes.

While overachievement certainly has its share of virtues, having induced profound innovation, breakthroughs, productivity and abundance for individuals, organizations, industries and economies at large, there's often a dark side to this extreme approach to advancement. For some, yes, dreams come true, but throngs of others miss the mark despite best efforts. "This often happens because they're aiming for achievements instead of at a deeper understanding of themselves and of what they want," says Keren Eldad, a certified business coach, keynote speaker and trusted adviser to industry-leading executives, acclaimed entrepreneurs and premier organizations.

"It's a silent story shared by many who present a happy, accomplished and enviable image; one of putting on pretenses and internally writhing with angst and anxiety; of never having enough, of insecurity, doubt and dis-

satisfaction — a state I have coined the 'Superstar Paradox,'" Eldad says.

Below, Eldad offers the five foundational insights to help ensure some of your overachieving behaviors or mindsets won't actually undermine your success or your level of life satisfaction even after you've actually realized 'superstar status.'

1. Reframe your success story. Overachievers often believe success only comes from power, money or status. Yes, those things are important benchmarks, but being successful in life overall should be the true Holy Grail.

So, if you are a C-suite executive, or aspire to be one, but are riddled with anxiety, stress, pain and dissatisfaction, it's evident that money and status isn't proving as worthwhile as it can and should be. To initiate change, be brave enough to reframe your personal story. Life isn't meant to be one-dimensional or even work-centered, so actually sit down and map out what you would hope for each facet of your life to look like if it were a true

success. This can include: marriage, children, extended family, friendships, professional networks, social media/networking, investments, travel, physical fitness, self-care, beauty, fashion and style, transportation, entertainment, hobbies and passions and so on. You'll soon see that life fulfillment means so much more than what happens on the work front. Once you start mapping it all out, you might come to the realization that you've been missing out on quite a lot in your quest for career glory.

2. Get out of your own way. Even 'superstars' create self-imposed limitations based on what they originally perceived their goal or benchmark of success to be. Once achieved, it's instinctive to want to bask in 'that place,'

both emotionally and physically. After all, you worked to extremes to get there. But, overachievers inevitably will want more, and then other kinds of self-imposed limitations kick in that are often founded on what we perceive our own capabilities and opportunities — or lack thereof — to be. Even the most confident overachievers suffer the 'can't rant' internal dialogue. Take heed that 'can't' usually is not a real thing. From "I can't afford to do what I really want" to "I can't start over now," — this word usually really means "I won't." Yes, you worked hard to earn your accolades and are pleased with where you are, but sometimes a hard pivot is needed to get you where you really want to go.

3. Classify and conquer your 'fatal flaw.' One definition of a 'fatal flaw' is that which causes an otherwise noble or exceptional individual to bring about their own downfall, which can be their own death — whether figuratively or literally. The idea that any particular 'fatal flaw' is holding us back is a primary reason why so many overachievers become hooked on their actualized achievements and come to rely on fake confidence and aggrandizement versus operating from a place of vulnerability and authenticity. Sometimes the phrase 'character flaw' is synonymous with this notion, revealing a bit more that the flaw is about the person themselves and not really his or her circumstance. So, to achieve 'superstar status' while fostering genuine, lasting happiness, it's imperative to discern if you have a 'fatal flaw' and, once identified, work wholeheartedly to resolve it — or learn how to function at a high-level with it.

4. Course-correct crippling self-constructs. A common obstacle to a 'superstar' realizing genuine happiness is their own reliance on self-esteem, which is different from self-acceptance. Self-esteem is defined as "a positive or negative orientation toward oneself; an overall evaluation of one's worth or value" and, for overachievers, depends on external conditions being met and how

they then 'rank' against others. Self-acceptance, which is a critical factor in genuine happiness and authenticity, is founded on other key self-constructs like self-compassion — a person's ability to forgive themselves for essentially being human and imperfect. Overachievers and aptly accomplished 'superstars' are susceptible to being heavily dependent upon the opinions of others, their corresponding status and their perceived stature versus understanding, and primarily relying on, self-acceptance. In many cases, this feeling of unworthiness is what coaches like

me consider fatal flaws for the overachiever. It's that 'something' about themselves they feel makes them 'less than.' For overachievers, what becomes fatal flaws are often regular imperfections like weight, assets, health, children, relationships and their home.

5. Pray for a storm. If you didn't buy all the above points yet and think, "Nah, I got this," then brace yourself because a curve ball is bound to throw you off your game. But, this unimagined disruption can be a GOOD thing! So many overachievers spend most of their lives working to avoid the pain of uncertainty or problems, assuring themselves with zealous overconfidence that "it's all going to work out" based on the current

approach or way of thinking — and never mind that nagging dissatisfaction and angst. However, I've found that when 'superstars' are most comfortable and when stress finally boils over, they not only find themselves immersed in a major issue, but often a major 'storm.' When this happens — embrace it — open yourself to the series of new possibilities it presents. Yes, it will be uncomfortable and tremendously unsettling. But it can also present an exciting opportunity: the 'wake-up call' to finally recognize where you are and what got you there, what weaknesses and threats have gotten the best of you, and work on thoughtfully strategized resolutions that'll make you emotionally stronger and your circumstances better than before. *C&IT*

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