

# What Is Success?

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## Success Is a Slippery Target

Most often we think of success in terms of some One achieving a goal with the benefits accruing for the most part to that individual. We have the option of extending this attribution to a group/team/corporation that attains an objective – again with the rewards assigned primarily to that group in the form of increased status, freedom, power and wealth. This version of success begins in childhood games that “crown” winners. It salutes individualistic, competitive values and behavior: Industry, Assertiveness, Persistence, Resourcefulness, Creativity, Productivity, Efficiency, and Movement, Communication and Interactive Skills.

On the other side of the success ledger is the achievement of Social or Community goals. The benefits of these successes are commonly shared equitably among the members/citizens. Such achievements support communal values: Cooperation, Responsibility, Respect, Honesty, Generosity, Courage, Sacrifice, Service, etc. Individuals are often celebrated as the champions or leaders of successful social campaigns, but in general they receive the same overall benefits as everyone else.

Ecological success refers to achievement at the next broader scale. This form of success salutes goal attainment that supports the environment/ecology upon which both individuals and communities depend. The values associated with this version of success are: Sustainability, Improving Habitat, Addressing Climate Change, Respecting Species Diversity, Reducing Pollution, Resource Recycling, Energy Conservation, etc. Leaders of successful campaigns in this area may be saluted or vilified depending on how broad the perspective is of the affected individuals/corporations/parties and communities/states/nations.

## Conclusion

Attributing success to the achievement of goals depends on: 1) who benefits 2) in what ways 3) for what purposes 4) at what individual, group, community, and ecological scales 5) with what positive and negative consequences.

As humanity becomes more and more globally connected, the time has come to stop focusing on the narrowest forms of success – ME oriented success as reflected in personal/corporate/party gains in status, power and wealth. In part, humanity's survival in complex society may depend on greater celebration of the cooperative and inclusive forms of success – WE oriented success of social and ecological achievements that improve equality and sustainability for ALL.