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THE ART OF
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DEDICATION

This book is dedicated to the memory of my mentor and friend Coach John Wooden. As a champion and as a leader, he taught me that a productive life is a successful life, and a successful life is a productive life.

It is also dedicated to my corporate family at the Narrative Television Network whose productivity makes the world a better place.

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FOREWORD

by Steve Forbes

I became aware of Jim Stovall in the late 1990s when we at Forbes were compiling a book that was subsequently released in 2000 entitled *Forbes Great Success Stories: Twelve Tales of Victory Wrested from Defeat*. That book contained Jim Stovall's story along with those of Donald Trump, Tom Monaghan, and others whose real-life adventures in capitalism point out what makes our system the best in the world.

I was then proud to endorse Jim's book *The Ultimate Gift*, which, at this writing, has sold 4 million copies around the world and has been made into a major

motion picture from 20th Century Fox starring James Garner, Brian Dennehy, and Abigail Breslin. There have been three other books in *The Ultimate Gift* series, and *The Ultimate Life* starring Peter Fonda and *The Ultimate Legacy* starring Raquel Welch completed the film trilogy.

I have been quoted as calling Jim Stovall one of the greatest men of our era—not solely for the things he has done, but for the fact that Jim Stovall has dissected his own success and put it on display for others to follow through his speeches, newspaper columns, and books such as the one you hold now.

In *The Art of Productivity*, Jim Stovall strikes at the heart of success and failure for all of us individually and as a society. Natural and human resources abound, but how we harness them to create our own personal success is determined by our ingenuity and productivity. In this book, you will learn how to maximize your own productivity by discovering and releasing your core strengths in the critical areas of motivation, communication, and implementation.

I believe if we will let Jim Stovall lead us through our own Art of Productivity and Ultimate Productivity Profile, we will all become better people and grow closer to our potential. In the final analysis, we cannot be judged in comparison to anyone or anything but only in the reflection of our individualized mirror that reveals our potential.

Steve Forbes

CHAPTER ONE



THE ART OF BEGINNING

In our society, we tend to separate all endeavors into either art or science. While art is creative, it also contains elements of science through balance, form, and perspective. Science—while being very organized and regulated—contains artistic elements of creativity and expression. In this book, you will begin to see productivity toward your goals from both perspectives.

I am grateful to you and everyone who takes the time, effort, and energy to buy and read one of my books. By virtue of the fact that you selected this book, I assume that there are aspects of your life you would

like to change, develop, or improve. If this is the case, read on. If this is not the case and you are truly satisfied with every area of your personal and professional life, stop reading this book immediately and go get your money refunded that you spent to purchase this book.

This may be the third book you have read this month or, on the other hand, it might be the first book you have read since high school. I have had an interesting relationship with books throughout my life. For the first three decades of my life, I don't know that I ever read an entire book cover to cover. I got through high school and even college by reading as little as necessary to matriculate through the process.

This seems ironic to me today, because when I had my eyesight and could read the words on a page as you are doing now, I never did it. Then, at age 29, I began my life as a totally blind person, and from that day to this one—thanks to audiobooks from the Library for the Blind and a high-speed digital player—I have actually read a book every day.

When you go 30 years completing a full-length book each day, you form a unique relationship with books. They have become a major part of my life. I read books for entertainment. I read books for information. And after reading many thousands of books, I can state with certainty I have read a handful of books for transformation. These books have impacted me so deeply that they have changed who I am and how I live

my life. My fervent hope is that this book will be that kind of transformational experience for you.

Within these pages, you will have the opportunity to define your own success, create a life mission to achieve success, forge productivity on your own terms, and then begin to succeed by effectively utilizing motivation, communication, and implementation.

As an author, columnist, and speaker in the field of personal development, I have been exposed to many success systems, theories, and philosophies. They all have a certain degree of validity. But I feel, in many ways, the current state-of-the-art in the field of success and achievement is lacking a critical component.

There are many books or systems that will teach you to set a goal, create milestones, pursue your passion, and make changes in your world. These are important steps, but unless you have the practical tools to achieve and succeed at your fingertips, you don't have a chance.

Let's assume that I wanted to be a champion golfer. I could have this firmly established in my mind as a goal, pursue it with passion, and exhibit the highest degree of determination; but without practical, realistic instruction, I would be doomed to failure, even if I sought advice from the best golfer in the world. If, indeed, the legendary champion Jack Nicklaus himself gave me lessons, I wouldn't have a chance unless his instructions were mechanically sound and specific to me.

If Mr. Nicklaus simply told me to hit the ball farther than anyone else straight down the fairway and never forget to make every putt inside of 20 feet and then left me to my own devices, my game would never improve, and my goal of being a champion golfer would go to my grave with me just as most people's passions, desires, and goals go to their graves with them. However, if my instruction included mastering motivation, communication, and implementation as you are going to discover through *The Art of Productivity*, I would have the opportunity to succeed as a golfer.

Before you learn to master and apply these principles, it is vital for you to decide what changes you want to bring into your life. In order to make this kind of decision, you first need to establish where you are today and take full responsibility for your current state in every area of your life. Only when you accept the responsibility for your past that has resulted in your current condition can you then take control of your actions today, which will create your future success tomorrow.

We live in a society full of people who love to blame their mediocrity on everyone and everything other than themselves. As a corporate and arena speaker, I have had the privilege of talking with literally millions of people. After some of these events, I have a chance to visit with people who have sat in my audience. Oftentimes, these people share with me that their life is not where they want it to be; they are not pursuing their

passions, nor reaching their goals, but they invariably hasten to add, “If you knew my family, you would know why I’m not succeeding.” Or, “I’m where I am today because my boss is an idiot, and the weather’s too hot, and the taxes are too high, and besides that, Jim, I’m a middle child.”

When it comes to failure, one excuse is about as good as another. In fact, the next time your life is not turning out the way you want it to be, don’t blame anyone else, just use my world-famous Jim Stovall, one-size-fits-all, 100 percent money-back guaranteed excuse for all situations.

Here is how it works. Instead of blaming everyone and everything around you for your condition, simply locate the nearest mirror, look directly into it, and say the magic words: “I guess I really didn’t want it that badly.”

This will work for you every time because unless or until you accept responsibility for the choices you have made in the past that have brought you to this place, you can never take control of your future. Now, I can imagine you thinking that I don’t understand your situation, your background, and the barriers you face. This is true, and as a blind person myself I certainly realize that bad things can happen to good people, but for every person you can show me who has been defeated by a given circumstance, I will show you someone else facing that same circumstance who has used it as a

springboard to do greater and more significant things in their lives.

Before you determine where you want to go in the world, there is one critical navigational element. You must first establish exactly where you are. Maps, directions, and even global positioning devices can only help you reach your destination if your current position has been established.

If you want to be wealthy before you decide what wealthy means to you, you'd better establish your current financial position. If you want to lose weight, you've got to get on the scales today. If you want to create the lifestyle of your dreams in every area of your personal and professional existence, you've got to be totally honest with yourself and elicit the honest opinions of those around you.

This honest assessment is a difficult process because we have a tendency to judge everyone else's performance while judging our own intentions. It's easy for us to smugly assert, without reservation, that the other guy was inexcusably late for his appointment. But when we find ourselves running behind schedule, we somehow come to the conclusion that we weren't late. It was simply that we missed every traffic light; we had to stop for gas; and who knew that there would be a traffic jam, a detour, and road construction en route to our destination?

If you're going to live the life of your dreams through the Art of Productivity by mastering motivation, communication, and implementation, you're going to have to be totally honest with yourself about where you are. The most destructive lies we ever tell are those lies we tell ourselves, because after a while we start to believe these falsehoods and begin sharing them with the world as if they were true.

One of my favorite actors, Jack Nicholson, in one of his best movies convincingly created a character who uttered the famous words, "You can't handle the truth." While it's not easy and never fun, I want you to know you can handle the truth, and it will be your first step toward making your life everything you want it to be.

As you accept responsibility for where you are and the choices you have made, you will begin to discover that while you have made some bad choices, in many cases you are mired in mediocrity because you have made no choice at all. I believe that in this world there are a few people who make good choices, and they enjoy every reward they seek. There are a few people who make bad choices, and they live in places like Leavenworth and San Quentin. But then there are the vast majority of people who make neither good nor bad choices; instead, they make no choice at all. These are the people who neither make things happen nor even watch things happen. They simply don't realize that anything happened.

I am reminded of a story about Irish emigrants coming to the United States during the earliest part of the 20th century. One particular family saved for many years to get the passage for the mother, the father, and three children. Even with all of their effort and diligence in saving their money, they were only able to purchase a ticket in what was known as steerage. This was a small, cramped area below deck where they had to sleep and pass the many days of the transatlantic voyage.

The family had brought some bread, cheese, and water with them to sustain them through the journey, but they rapidly consumed all of their rations with many days left in the voyage. From their squalid quarters below deck, they could see through the cracks between the planking onto the main deck above them. They observed first-class passengers dressed in all of their finery devouring a sumptuous banquet just a few feet away from where they were literally starving.

Finally, in desperation, the father crawled down the passageway and stepped up onto the main deck, and asked one of the stewards if he could have a few scraps or leftovers, lest his family starve to death below deck. The shocked steward replied, “Sir, this banquet is provided three times daily for all of our passengers. You and your family have been starving when you could have been feasting on the very best all along.”

Before you launch into your quest to make your life everything you want it to be through the Art of

Productivity, be sure you have set your sights high enough. A person who doesn't make a choice is no better off than a person who doesn't have a choice at all; but a person who accepts less than their true destiny is relegated to a life of mediocrity. When you have seen yourself in your mind's eye on top of the world, anything less will leave you wanting.

We have all had dreams and secret passions inside of us for many years. When we were teenagers or young adults, the world seemed pregnant with possibility. But somewhere between there and here, this thing we call reality set in, and we got so busy making a living that we forgot to create a life.

Your destiny awaits.

CHAPTER TWO



THE ART OF DEFINING SUCCESS

There are very few times in life when being selfish or self-centered is desirable; however, when you're setting your goals, it needs to be all about you and what you want to be, do, or have.

Whether you're reading my book or anyone else's that purports to guide you to success, you first need to agree on a definition of success and be sure the person leading you knows how to get there.

All of my grandparents and both of my parents come from a pleasant town called Springfield. Springfield has much to recommend it in the way of historical sites and

recreational activities. Let's say you and I agree to meet for a long weekend in Springfield to discuss our respective professional and personal goals as well as enjoy some of the local attractions and recreational activities.

This sounds like a pleasant prospect to me, as I hope it would to you; however, unless you were acquainted with my grandparents or parents, you and I would have a tremendous challenge getting together because there are over 30 cities and towns in the United States named Springfield.

I'm sure many of the various Springfields have wonderful attractions and notable attributes; however, unless we agree on the same Springfield, we will not get together, and my directions and roadmap will be useless to you.

In each of the more than 30 Springfields across the country, there are people who were born and raised there or have chosen it as the best place for them and their families to live their lives. Millions of people call Springfield home, but they do not mean the same thing when they use the word *Springfield* or *home*.

Success is much the same. I am convinced that there are as many definitions for success as there are people. More people fail, not because they are unable to reach their goal, but instead, because they have defined their goal or success as the wrong thing.

Success is probably the most private and personal definition you and I will ever establish; therefore, as

we work toward creating our own picture of success, we can only accept limited help along the way. If this weren't difficult enough, the challenge of defining success is compounded when you realize that your personal success definition will be constantly changing throughout your life.

Many self-proclaimed success gurus encourage us to compartmentalize our success. They may label these compartments financial success, business success, family success, fitness success, etc. While I would agree these are all components of your personal success definition, you can't truly succeed in one area while failing miserably in another.

The Titanic, which had been called unsinkable as it was being built and launched, became the most famous ship of all time for doing the one thing no one wants their ship to do—that is, to sink. There might be many definitions of a successful ship—whether it be militarily, financially, aesthetically, or in overall performance—but I think we can all agree, in ship terms, sinking could be synonymous with failure.

When the Titanic was constructed, it was built with a number of watertight compartments. The engineers designed the Titanic to stay afloat even if several of these compartments were flooded. Unfortunately, all of the compartments were connected at the top, so when the Titanic hit an iceberg in the North Atlantic, the water that flooded several of the compartments

overflowed at the top and flooded the entire ship; therefore, the Titanic sank.

Your and my success is much the same way. Failure in any area will affect all areas.

Success could be looked upon like a three-legged stool. For the sake of this analogy, you might have a financial success leg, a family success leg, and a physical success leg. It is important to realize that you can become the greatest financial success the world has ever known, but if you lose your family and ruin your health in the process, you will not be successful, even if the world may view you as a success.

Our media-driven society has created a phenomenon over the past several decades that is unique to our modern culture. Through magazines, television, radio, the Internet, and every other means of communication, we are bombarded with information about people and how they live. People have become famous in ways they never were before. We have always admired famous athletes, but now we may know where they spend their vacation, what they like to eat for breakfast, and the name of their dog.

People have always admired great artists and actors, but now we know every sordid detail of not only their professional lives, but we know far more than we need to about their personal lives. We constantly consume information and images about the lifestyles of the rich and famous and how some people are rising to the

pinnacle of our society while others are falling from that same pinnacle and plummeting toward the depths of disgrace.

In this environment, it is easy to get a warped view of success. One of the big lies we are bombarded with regularly is the corrupting thought that if we had enough money, all our problems would be solved. One need look no further than the daily headlines to learn about some of the wealthiest among us who have lost their health, sacrificed their family, disregarded their integrity, and have subjected themselves to all manner of human failure.

Recent studies of people around the world from the wealthiest to those living in abject poverty reveal that beyond the basic necessities of food, clothing, and shelter, more money doesn't make us happy and, therefore, successful.

Any discussion of money and success would be lacking if I did not state that money is neither good nor bad. In the hands of good people, money can build places of healing, worship, and learning. In the hands of bad people, money can create death, disease, and destruction. In my life, I have been very poor and very rich. All other things being equal, never forget that rich is better.

While money, in and of itself, will not create success, I believe from my personal and professional contact that Bill Gates, Warren Buffett, and Steve Forbes are

each, in their own way, quite successful. They are not a success because they have amassed great wealth; instead, they are successful because they have created value in the lives of other people that has brought them wealth, and they have utilized their financial success to make the world a better place. If money were a prerequisite to being successful, we would all have to agree that Mother Teresa was an absolute failure.

Fame and notoriety have been mistakenly labeled as success by many in our society. We have people whose names have become household words for playing baseball, being on a television show, eating insects on an island, dating a famous person, and there are even people today who are famous for nothing more than being famous. As a society, we have all gotten caught up in a massive parade, and no one has yet stopped to take a deep breath and consider the fact that we're not following this person because they're famous. Instead, this person is famous because we're following them.

Fame, in and of itself, is not a factor in success. Some of the most famous people in the 20th century would include Winston Churchill, Franklin Roosevelt, Adolf Hitler, John F. Kennedy, Sandra Day O'Connor, Martin Luther King Jr., and Lee Harvey Oswald. Some of these people, we would all agree, lived lives of great success while others were miserable failures in spite of their fame.

Some of the most successful people in the world will never be known by anyone other than the people

whose lives they powerfully and positively impact. These people have defined success in such a manner that achieving their life goals does not bring them fame and notoriety. In some cases, their anonymity is a byproduct of their success goal, and in other cases they have defined success, at least partially, as living their lives away from the spotlight.

Success has, furthermore, been misdefined as being young, healthy, or beautiful. While these are all desirable traits in the right time and place, they are not a sole determinant of what we would call success. Those who worship at the altar of youth and beauty will necessarily find themselves fighting a losing battle. Your hairdresser, tailor, and plastic surgeon can only do so much. If you define yourself, totally, by the image in the mirror, if you simply live long enough, you will fail due to your own misguided definition of success.

While you will have to fill in the details and the specific elements of your own success, when it's all said and done, you will find that success comes when you live a life of productivity on a mission toward a worthwhile goal that brings you happiness, passion, and fulfillment.



ABOUT JIM STOVALL

In spite of blindness, Jim Stovall has been a National Olympic weightlifting champion, a successful investment broker, the president of the Emmy Award-winning Narrative Television Network, and a highly sought-after professional speaker. He is the author of 30 books, including the bestseller, *The Ultimate Gift*, which is now a major motion picture from 20th Century Fox starring James Garner and Abigail Breslin. Five of his other novels have also been made into major motion pictures.

Steve Forbes, president and CEO of *Forbes* magazine, says, “Jim Stovall is one of the most extraordinary men of our era.”

For his work in making television accessible to our nation's 13 million blind and visually impaired people, The President's Committee on Equal Opportunity selected Jim Stovall as the Entrepreneur of the Year. Jim Stovall has been featured in *The Wall Street Journal*, *Forbes* magazine, *USA Today*, and has been seen on *Good Morning America*, *CNN*, and *CBS Evening News*. He was also chosen as the International Humanitarian of the Year, joining Jimmy Carter, Nancy Reagan, and Mother Teresa as recipients of this honor.

Jim Stovall can be reached at 918-627-1000 or Jim@JimStovall.com.

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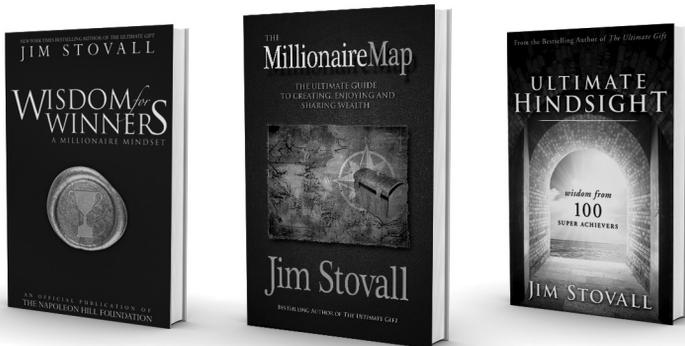
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