

Strategy for Success

By Susan Ellis

For some people success just falls into their laps, either because of circumstance, right time at the right place, random luck, or simply because they are naturally very good at something without having to work too hard at it. But for the majority of us success does not come easy and we have to work very hard for what we get.

To have success you first need to know what that means to you, in other words, you need to be very specific in determining at what point you can say you have been successful. To do this you need to know what steps will determine the path to success. You need to set goals, small steps that lead to bigger steps, and ultimately the top of the ladder. Setting a strategy for success is as important as setting a strategy for races. If you know how you are going to get there, and follow the steps up, you increase your chances of getting what you want.

For most of you now, your season is finished. You all fall into the following three categories: You have either met all of your goals, some of your goals, or none of your goals. Why is that?

- Some of you had a well laid out plan of action and followed it. Chances are you met a great deal of your goals and experienced a lot of success.
- Some of you had goals, an idea of how to accomplish them, pursued some of those things and so were somewhat successful.
- Some of you had a goal, but no plan to get there, and therefore didn't accomplish what you wanted.

Now is the time to set the strategy for the success you will have next season. It's not just a strategy but a plan of action, and by committing it to paper you will have a great chance to succeed because now you have a map to follow.

The following is meant to help you map out the strategy for next year. You start by assessing what you accomplished this year and how you got there, or didn't get there for that matter. You must be absolutely honest with yourself in this assessment and not make lame excuses for what wasn't. By the same token if you did your very best in trying to meet all your goals but some fell a little short, give yourself credit for the effort. Maybe the strategy brought a measure of success and continuing on it will bring even more or you need to find a different strategy to be even more successful.

Yes, this is a long process. But it WILL help you to have a much clearer path to accomplishing next year's goals. You will need to establish daily goals, weekly goals, monthly goals, season goals, motivation plan, attitude plan, evaluation plan, etc.

Here's an example of how you might use this exercise to help you evaluate and plan for next season:

Example:

MY PLAN FOR SUCCESS FOR NEXT SEASON

My plan for success for this season included these goals

I specifically wanted to improve technically in the following areas:

Area 1 – Corner lay in

Success – I feel I was 80% successful

The things that help me to succeed were:

- Practicing the lay in on the buckets.
- Practicing on the Techni-Cords.
- Watching others who did it well and trying to get a feel for what they were doing.
- Skating behind Paul because he does it really well and I can simulate what he is doing.
- Doing lots of kinesthetic imagery and seeing and feeling myself do it.
- Keeping my chest down as I approach the lay in.

The things that hindered my improvement:

- When I tried to rush it.
- Following other skaters who don't do it well makes me revert back to old habits.
- Just forgetting to focus and practice it when I get caught up in going fast or just getting through the program.

To improve this for next year I need to:

- Ask coach to include bucket entries at least once a week in warm up so I can really feel it and slow it down.
- Off-ice warm up to include specific lay in focus on Techni-Cords before Tuesday night practices and practice 2 x week on Tuesdays and Thursdays during the summer.
- Make sure I am right behind Paul and not Yogi during group warm ups.
- Make a habit of writing down my daily technical focus before going to the rink so it is fresh in my mind.

I need to evaluate my progress in this area by:

- Assessing what I did and how I felt at the end of practice every Tuesday.
- I will evaluate by asking coach for feedback on my lay in, rating myself on how efficient it felt.
- Reviewing the video.

Be very specific in what you want or wanted to improve.

If you wanted to improve technique, what specifically did you want to improve, i.e.: corner entry lay in, corner exit lean and power, straightaway timing, start position, start reaction. Write down specifically how you improved it and how you will improve it next year.

Specific physical qualities might include: aerobic capacity, aerobic power 1000m and up, lactic capacity 500 – 1500m, start reaction, power of line – 1st 100 meters, foot speed, maximum strength, strength endurance, muscle mass. If you wanted to improve strength but didn't, why not? Pick a couple of key areas that you feel might be lacking and ask your coach for specific training programs to improve each quality. Decide the method to evaluate improvement – testing, time improvement, heart rate improvement, number of reps you can do, amount of weight lifted in 10 reps, etc.

Specific strategies could be: passing inside, passing outside, blocking, learning how to lead, leading at a different paces, using different tracks to your advantage. When, where and how will you improve your inside passing? What drills do you need to do it, what time of year is best to bring in this focus, what races will you target for it? Who will your training partners be? Who do you think will best assist you in accomplishing it?

Improving mental skills might be: controlling fears, controlling emotions, maintaining confidence, following my race plans, maintaining a positive attitude, being happy, blocking distractions, improving imagery skills. For example, a plan to improve imagery skills may involve picking a specific technical thing you are focusing on improving. You may watch skaters who do it well, get videos of skaters who do it well, do simulations off ice and feel and see yourself doing it well, image on it before doing it, and feel the correct technique as you are doing it.

Assess your flexibility in various areas and decide what and how you will improve as flexibility plays a major role in comfortably being able to hold your basic position as well as in applying power to your push.

How was your nutrition this year? Do you know what you need in your diet to perform well. Assess and plan in the following areas: General everyday nutritional plan, pre-race nutrition, race day nutrition, post-race nutrition, hydration, weight loss, weight gain, knowledge of what foods work best for training, racing, recovery.

And, yes, there is life outside skating. Your goals and plans must take all the other things you need to get done, like school, music, other sports, family, friends, etc. These things need to be written as part of your plan as well. Can you realistically fit it all in and expect the level of success you say you want. Be honest. No sense writing it down and making a semi-commitment to it because it will only leave you disappointed. If you want to skate 5 days a week, make the Junior World Team, and play varsity basketball, do you have time to do both at the level you want. Commit to what makes most sense in your life that you will be satisfied accomplishing.

Once you have completed this exercise, pick out the 3 most important items to help you get where you want next year and tape them inside your helmet or write them on a piece of cloth and sew them to the back of your glove so you are reminded every time you skate of what is important to you.

Refer to the information below and start your Plan for Success today!

MY PLAN FOR SUCCESS FOR NEXT SEASON

My plan for success for this season included these goals

I specifically wanted to improve in the following areas:

Area 1 – _____

Success – I feel I was _____ successful

The things that help me to succeed were:

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-
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The things that hindered my improvement:

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-

To improve this for next year I need to:

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I need to evaluate my progress in this area by:

-
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-
-

My three main targets for improvement next year are:

1)

2)

3)