

# Ambition

**Quotations** "Character cannot be developed in ease and quiet. Only through experience of trial and suffering can the soul be strengthened, ambition inspired, and success achieved."

- Helen Keller

"Revenge, lust, ambition, pride, and self-will are too often exalted as the gods of man's idolatry; while holiness, peace, contentment, and humility are viewed as unworthy of a serious thought."

- Charles Spurgeon

## Questions

- Who is the most ambitious person you know? What is their daily routine?
- Does race, gender, culture or any other social difference hinder people's ability to succeed in life?
- Does ambition always equate to success?
- What are the drawbacks of ambition?
- Where do you see yourself at work, at home and at school in 10 years?
- Are people born ambitious? Could it be cultural?
- Is there a group of people who are the most ambitious?
- In your opinion, which nation do you think has the most ambitious people? Why do you think that and could this change in the future?
- How does a dream or hope differ from ambition?
- Are men or women more ambitious? Could you give examples?
- Could poverty, greed or envy make someone more ambitious?
- Can you name five people with a great sense of ambition?
- Imagine you are a manager in a large firm, how would you motivate your employees?
- If you were to have a child, what methods or strategies would you use to encourage them to be ambitious?

**Vocabulary**

Nouns: Promotion, Success, Status, Inherent, Excellence, Incentive

Adjectives: Industrious, Reliable, Motivated, Eager, Driven, Ambitious, Incompetent, Personal, Monetary, Professional, Productive, Resourceful, Go-getter, Goal-orientated, Self-starting, Determined, Enthusiastic, Diligent

Verbs: Overachieve, Desire, Aspire, Strive, Attain, Elevate

**Promotion** is critical for **success** in any corporation which values highly productive individuals. Modern firms place a strong emphasis on being **resourceful** and **self-starting** so as to be more autonomous. Such characteristics of **excellence** are hugely desired since businesses seek...

Task: Are you able to create a short paragraph, on the topic of ambition with the above language?

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## Language

**At all costs** = determined to achieve something, regards of the expense

The company wanted to retain market share **at all costs**

**beyond (one's) wildest dreams** = better than you imagined

The charity received funds from the public that was **beyond their wildest dreams**

**Blood, sweat and tears** = project or action which requires really, really hard work

Our research project has taken three members of staff almost 900 hours of work and lots of **blood, sweat and tears**.

**Buckle down** = apply yourself with determination, give full attention to something

The HR team has been asked to create a quick presentation for this afternoon's meeting, we have approximately 45 minutes, so we better **buckle down**.

**Explore all avenues** = investigate all solutions

The CFO has convened this meeting to **explore all avenues** on our financial situation.

**Embark on** = to begin on a long project

Verizon's take over bid of Yahoo now means the company wishes to **embark on** a larger online presence focussing on niche engagement.

**Forge ahead** = to make progress really quickly

Upon launch of the company's latest product we have witnessed a fall in our share price, nevertheless we need to **forge ahead** and speak to our regional agents.

**Get ahead** = to progress and achieve success

To **get ahead** it's always wise to improve your soft skills.

**Go the extra mile** = to do more than what is expected of you

The meeting with our maintenance team was really fruitful and included a lot of detail that we seemed to have missed; it's really obvious they **went the extra mile** with their research.

## Ambition Is Just Another Word Until You Act

True ambition is not dreaming and talking about what you want to achieve. Ambition is knowing where you want to go, how you are going there, and doing what it takes to reach your goal. The key is to combine ambition, which means desire, with initiative, which means action.

Ambition is a sanctified ideal in the folklore of successful careers. Just as the commonly uttered phrase – "She has always had a lot of ambition" – evokes a degree of respect and admiration, it prove to be an inherently unstable force. Ambition may be embraced or ignored; used or abused. It can even become an excuse for failure. It all depends on how it is employed.

There are lessons to be learned from the way Harry Kluwe managed his ambitions.

Harry had been in his job for less than a year, but he was already restless and frustrated by what he saw as his lack of progress.

"I am ambitious," he told everyone who would listen to his complaining. "I will be a success, but I'll never make it doing little insignificant things day in and day out. I could do a lot more; they just won't give me a chance."

Joe, his supervisor, believed Harry had the potential to succeed, but knew he was under-performing and creating a problem for the entire staff with his constant complaining. Joe called the young man in for a performance evaluation. The meeting soon turned into a confrontation when Harry began to push his case within a few minutes.

"I am still doing the same old things. I know I'm paid less than the others in the department. It's just not fair," he began, ignoring the compliments he had been handed at the beginning of the conference.

"Harry, you have been with us for only eleven months," Joe replied. "You are the newest salesman; everyone else has been here at least three years. They've worked their way up the ladder."

"You are making reasonable progress, but, let's face it, you are still short on experience. Give it a little time". Joe complimented Harry again and went on to suggest that his work habits needed some improvement.

"Harry, you are late most mornings, and you are out of here right at five o'clock. And, frankly, I think you could improve your performance by devoting a little time at nights and on weekends to learning more about your job. I'm not asking for blood, sweat and tears, I am seeking a a go-getter attitude."

"You are not being fair," Harry bristled. "The company is not paying me as much as it pays the rest of you. I work the hours you pay me for, sure, I know you and the others stay late, but I don't have anything to do; and besides, as I told you, I am not married to this company. If you pay me, I will show you what I can do! I can move this company forward beyond your wildest expectations."

"Harry went on to spell out his expectations. "I'm on the fast track. I expect to be a Group Manager in six months at all costs. I just can't wait around forever.

"Joe saw the discussion was a dead end despite exploring all avenues, but he still believed Harry had potential. He made what he thought was a fair offer and embarked on a new bespoke training scheme.

"Let's speed up your learning curve, you can work with Bill Davis as his assistant. You will gain a lot from his experience and hopefully get ahead in the department. We'll

also provide you with some special training. However, I can't give you a raise now, since our budgets are frozen; but if you do as well as I know you can, I promise you'll get an increase in three months.

"That's not fair," Harry charged. "Everyone in the department knows Bill is past his prime. He is worn out. I would be running his errands. I don't think that is much of a promotion, certainly not what I deserve. "Harry never recovered from that discussion in the eyes of his supervisor and the department head. He soon left the company.

Unfortunately, Harry never learned the real meaning of ambition. He used his stated ambitions as an excuse for his failures, telling everyone things hadn't worked out with various employers because he was "too ambitious to wait around to be promoted. The lesson here is simple. Ambition is nothing more than a word until it is coupled with commitment and action.

**Scenario**

Imagine you are Joe, what advice would you give Harry?

Imagine you are Bill Davies, how could you mentor Harry?

Imagine you are Harry, how could you ask for what you want in another way?

**Presentation**

You work for a large Chinese technology multinational XiaoMi, who have recruited you as an outside consultant. You have been tasked with creating a new staff retraining course which focusses on building staff confidence and forging ambition. Employees need to feel they are in control of their careers, are given responsibility and worker autonomy. How will you achieve this?