

David Moritz – Founder & CEO, Viceroy Creative

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Entrepreneur David Moritz is the founder and CEO of three successful businesses: Society Awards, Viceroy Creative, and Ambition Beverages. Equipped with a Bachelor's degree from NYU and a J.D. from Cardozo School of Law, Moritz turned his passion for luxury and design into a thriving businesses empire. His first company, Society Awards, was founded in 2007 and grows by over 50% every year. Under his leadership, the company was included on Inc. Magazine's prestigious 500/5000 list of the "Fastest-Growing Private Companies in America." A testament to his business savvy, David identified a need within the custom award market and, in just a few short years, has made Society Awards the premiere company for high-end award design and creation.



David followed up this successful business by launching a sister company, Viceroy Creative. Viceroy is a full-service design firm specializing in brand strategy, brand innovation, and package design. The concept was derived from the obscure and sometimes overlooked field of package design, which is a vital component of many businesses, but is not always done correctly. With David at the helm, Viceroy has transformed the standard for design studios, securing high profile clients including Pepsi, Lipton, Playboy, Marc Jacobs, Patrón, Skyy, and Colgate, amongst others.

Never one to miss a business opportunity, David quickly realized the profitable marriage between his two companies and set out to create his own luxury products which include a vodka, sparkling wine and champagne. A nightlife aficionado who enjoys parties all over the world, David always wanted to create his own high-quality spirits that would surpass the brands already on the market. He opened Ambition Beverages and launched the American-made Vision Vodka, which quickly became the darling of NYC nightlife. He then released Gabrielle Wine, a sparkler made in New York State at the oldest winery in America. David completed his trifecta with Noblesse Champagne, a luxury French champagne that is 100% cuvee and 100% estate, and one of the finest champagnes on the market today. All three products are award-winning and sold at upscale restaurants, nightclubs and bars in New York City.

1. How do you define success?

My idiosyncratic definition of success, as I apply to it myself and others, is a mixture of professional and personal development and attainment that evolves over time. At its most

basic, the common meaning applies: achieving an intended outcome with satisfactory results. To do that, I require some notion of what I want in life and business, and I need to accomplish that in a given period of time. What success is, at one stage of my life, is certainly not the same thing it would be at a later stage. At this point in my life, my goal is to try to figure out what I do want out of life, under what optimized circumstances I would be happy and content, what I want to achieve, and then to set myself up in the greatest position to achieve those things for the most part. If I could identify what I really want and get it, that would have to be a success.

I have to keep redefining success, to make sure that I can't tell myself I've attained it and stop striving to be better and do more. But at some point, I certainly would love to find that place where I feel that I've done enough and can rest.

2. What is the key to success?

Above all else, steady, productive, unrelenting perseverance. Just be "The Terminator" – never stop, never give up, never relent. You might get lucky, and why not leverage that good fortune into something even bigger through the application of productive hard work? Some degree of wheel spinning for some length of time at the outset in all new ventures or new projects should be acceptable. However, pretty soon the initial approach needs to be tinkered so that the effort is yielding improving results over time, no matter if slowly. If you keep at it and keep trying to improve the system, you will get traction eventually, and you can then leverage that traction again to a better method and better results. If you combine this with everything else – natural talent, timing, resources, everything else at your disposal – then you will at least know that you did everything possible regardless of the outcome, but practically speaking, you cannot fail if you never give up. Most people can acquire an expert level at most things with enough practice. I'm talking about the kind of practice and dedication that comes with years of effort. You should be thinking about personal and professional development on year-long timescales. If you've only got the stamina to keep trying for a shorter period of time, then you don't have the right motivation in place to start. I've found that if you are prepared for the long haul and you cover every possible base, you will not really need the long haul to see results. Whatever your strategy is, its chances of success can be improved by looking at this way.

Along these lines, if you find that your path to success relies heavily on the attainment of a very specific singular goal, which itself is depending upon the success of a single strategy, do everything you can to diversify that approach. Find other pathways to the goal, or find other goals that would suit the purpose, and find additional strategies to accomplish all of them so that you are never just "letting it ride" on one effort, no matter how carefully planned that single effort to a single goal is. There are many caveats, such as not spreading yourself too thin or getting distracted, but the point is that if you want a "key" that will yield "success," minimally have identified the possibilities to diversify your efforts, to give "success" more room to emerge eventually. This kind of planning generally ensures that things go more or less the way you want them to in the first place, and with backups already mapped out, the progression to "success" becomes more fluid.

3. Did you always know you would be successful?

Using a more broadly applicable definition of “success” such as professional esteem, financial independence, and familial contentment – yes. Different potential career choices necessarily have to yield different definitions of success, and I believe, as a society, we should learn to celebrate all the small steps that are generated by the private sector. For example, if you’re going to be a scientist, a career path that we need to further encourage and celebrate, then you may spend your entire career in a lab attempting to marginally improve a small link in a greater chain, and a lifetime spent in that pursuit must be considered a form of success because advancing scientific knowledge is never fruitless. There is no “failure” in carefully conducted science, as every path is explored, and the general knowledge is increased. Your work could lead to other people making a breakthrough that improves the world in ways that no one could have imagined at the time.

4. When faced with adversity, what pushes you to keep moving forward?

When I read this question, it seems to me that the answer is stated in the question. I could reformulate it as a statement: Adversity pushes you to keep moving forward. I imagine the question along these lines, “When faced with a charging lion, what pushes you to keep trying to attain safety?” For me, adversity itself is the motivation. It’s what perks me up and gets me fired to reach my real potential. I’ve always said that I’m, at my best, in a crisis. However, you cannot successfully plan for the long-term future in crisis mode, and it certainly is not a healthy way to live. So regardless of your adroitness when faced with adversity, I believe the goal is to anticipate potential pitfalls and be prepared for them. Nevertheless, you simply cannot plan for or imagine everything.

There’s something in adversity that makes us strain every muscle and use every part of our brain – stress, unhelpful emotional responses, limited options and unclear thinking, due to time constraints that come with crises – to work to counteract these benefits. What if we could take the positive attributes, induced by “adversity,” and apply that state of being to a “normal” situation in business, devoid of stress, counterproductive emotional responses, and with the panoply of options that exists in the absence of strictly imposed time constraints? Certainly, people cannot live like this all the time. However, if you can periodically strive in this way, in the absence of adversity in order to hit the nitro boost from time to time, I believe you will learn to react optimally in the presence of adversity.

As to what I personally use as motivating factors to “push” myself forward (beyond the motivation that a lion provides)? All of the usual human motivations, from competition to reputation, family to obligations.

5. What is the greatest lesson you’ve ever learned?

A gem that I return to is the notion that “You cannot change others; you can only change yourself.” This applies across the board, but in order to effectuate a change in another, if that is the goal, don’t directly try to change them because that’s clearly impossible. However, you do have complete control over yourself, and you can try changing how you interact with others. On one end of the spectrum, a change in your behavior could lead to a change in their behavior. On the other end, there may be nothing you do which can change someone’s behavior but at least you can change how you yourself react to it or allow it to affect you.

Moving away from trying to change others, the basic premise holds true: You can change yourself. Whatever you want to be, however you want to be, you can become. Even personalities are not immutable. The brain is an adaptable organ and you can be, at least, a strongly similar version of the person you wish yourself to be. I don't mean portraying; I mean changing and adapting. If you believe that you can learn a new skill, then why can't you also learn to be more thoughtful, more polite, more debonair or outgoing, if that's what you want? Maybe you want to be more/less trusting, or maybe both in different areas. You can be nearly your fantasy version of yourself.

6. What do you enjoy doing in your spare time?

Principally, at this point in my life, I enjoy reading. I've always enjoyed reading, but when you go out less, you can read more. Imagine that. A nice decade of international parties and popping bottles has transitioned to heating up bottles for my baby girl. Actually, my wife does that, but I supervise. At home, "Princess 1" (my wife) and "Princess 2" (my daughter) help provide me with new definitions of success. I still like to travel, and I've taken up a diet-fitness lifestyle that I'm very content with, currently. I collect whiskeys and unique spirits, and I'm very into fashion and, of course, design. I have a very close group of friends, like an extended family, and I cherish the times that we can all get together.

7. What makes a great leader?

Being a leader isn't the same as being in charge. To be a leader, you have to have people who follow you. The greatness of your leadership has to be reflected by the efficacy with which you get people to follow you. It's certainly conceivable that you could have a great number of people following you extremely effectively without being in charge of any of them. What makes a leader great is not about the orders he/she can give, it's about the inspiration he/she can generate. The desire that he/she can create in others to want to follow his/her vision and to be excited and motivated to see where it will take everyone. To have a feeling that we're on a journey together and the leader is bringing us somewhere great, where greatness is to be attained both along the way and in the outcome. To make people feel that the effort itself is worthwhile, and to motivate people to do their utmost of their own accord. That's what makes a leader great.

8. What advice would you give to college students about entering the workforce?

Understand how our government's monetary policy directly impacts your life and future. The current expansion of credit and printing of dollars serves as a direct tax most harshly on savings and salaries, and the current environment encourages acquisition of debt that can be repaid in cheaper future dollars. Do not fall into the trap of spending with abandon. Instead, seek to find inflation-resistant assets that you can secure with fixed, low-interest rate debt. Starting to do that now can put you in an amazing position later when interest rates rise. Keep in mind that you will not be protected by a steady income, unless there are huge changes in monetary policy. In order to prosper, you will need to be able to greatly advance your income. Buck this "casual" everywhere trend. It's sloppy, juvenile and shows a lack of self-respect. You

don't have to wear a suit everywhere you go but pay attention to the way you present yourself, regardless of whatever everyone else does or doesn't do. Do not wear a sock cap unless it's snowing, or you are skiing, and you are outdoors.

No one is going to give anything to you, and you are not entitled to anything, except the opportunity to work hard. First you work hard, and then you are rewarded. It's never the other way around. If you want to advance, make yourself indispensable. Never be afraid to ask questions – lots of questions. Don't assume anything, always double check professionally, or keep your supervisors informed of your thinking and what you're doing. Actually learn things, don't just assume that you know things that you never actually learned. Learning never ends, and it has little to do with school. You will learn until you die. Take diligent notes all the time, as the best memories are unreliable.

Interviewing is a skill, like any other. If you are getting interviews but not landing jobs, find friends who do land jobs in their interviews and go into detail with them about how they answer questions, the responses they give, and their demeanor.
