

*Fantastic: When Being Good Is Not Enough*

By Alan Austin-Smith

# Introduction

## Summary

In *Fantastic*, author Alan Austin-Smith attempts to answer the age old question of why some people are consistently more successful than others. There are seven characteristics held by all fantastic, successful people and though many of us feel we lack some, or all, of these characteristics, and so are doomed to a life of mediocrity, Austin-Smith shows how they can be learned. If you are ready to make changes in your life which will spark your passion, your creativity, and will lead to having more fun, then you are ready to be fantastic!

## What You Will Learn

*Fantastic* will teach you the seven characteristics of people who are successful in whatever it is they choose to be doing:

- Having Passion
- Expressing Creativity
- Sharing Delight
- Performing
- Feeling Alive Inside
- Learning Always
- Having Fun

You will learn tips and tools for adopting the seven characteristics in order to have success in your chosen area of life.

- Fighting fear and negativity with the DAGASHI method will teach you how to push through the doubts and fears that hold you back
- Daydreaming will be shown as a powerful tool that can help to turn the dream into reality
- Directing the movies you play in your mind over and over will let you change them into powerful motivators instead of inhibitors

## Success – What is it?

Why is it that some people just seem better at gaining success than others? In *Fantastic*, author

Alan Austin-Smith shows us the traits of successful people which he feels allows them to rise above the rest, consistently. Are they more intelligent? Do they have a monetary advantage?

Austin-Smith says that the most successful people know about, and take advantage of, the 50% rule. Many people are good at what they do, even great, but those who rise above use “the other stuff” to leap past their competitors consistently. This advantage includes attitude, confidence, motivation and communication.

In order to move forward to being fantastic, rather than merely good, Austin-Smith proposes that the journey start with taking responsibility for making changes in our own lives that lead to our own version of success.

What is success? According to Austin-Smith, success is getting the rewards that you want. Rewards come in many forms.

- *Community* – These include the rewards people get from helping others. Not only through service and charity but the reward that comes from seeing someone else happy.
- *Personal* – Personal rewards involve the personal sense of satisfaction that comes from an achievement.
- *Security* – Being able to provide food, shelter, clothing, and a comfortable life are sometimes reward enough.
- *Material* – Most associated with ‘success’, material rewards are cars, money, homes, and designer clothing.

We all know that despite our best laid plans, life can change in a second, showing us that we are not in control of our future. In addition, we cannot go back and change our past. So why dwell on an unchangeable past and worry about an uncontrollable future? Austin-Smith suggests that our lives are made up of millions of small moments and the only way to be successful is to take control of those moments.

One way to learn to become consistently successful is to apply the methods of the Total Life Concept tool. The Total Life Concept is a map which defines how value, and therefore success, can be added to any idea.

At the core, or center, lies the main reason for doing what you do. For instance, you are a receptionist because the phone must be answered.

Beyond the core lies the expected ring that defines all the basic expectations that go along with the task. A receptionist may also perform typing or transcription duties.

The model moves into the added ring when someone goes further than expected or takes the extra step. This produces the feeling of exceeding expectations, a very good place to be.

However, Austin-Smith argues that to be consistently successful you must move into the potential ring of the model. This is where you are always moving from the added ring, growing,

learning, and creatively looking for what's next.

## Learn From Fantastic People

The success pyramid is a tool which can be used as a reminder of the steps that lead to success:

- Act
- Learn
- Discipline
- Responsibility

The foundation of the pyramid is responsibility. Once you take responsibility for your own success and find the discipline and determination needed, you can act upon the knowledge you gain from studying other fantastic people.

If you look around, you will see many people who are not achieving their own success and are blaming this on all sorts of excuses. Instead of blaming circumstances or others, true change toward success comes with making changes, even if things are not your fault.

Austin-Smith presents the Fantastic Revolution which shows the seven characteristics of fantastic people and how they work together. The seven characteristics are:

1. *Passion* – Being passionate about what you want to achieve and why
2. *Create* – Being creative about how you are going to achieve it
3. *Delight* – Being delightful so those around you support you
4. *Perform* – Being a performer, someone who takes the required action
5. *Alive Inside* – Being self-motivated
6. *Always Learning* – Being interested in constant learning as there is always change
7. *Fun* – Having fun fuels the beginning of the revolution, the passion

## Fantastic People Are Passionate

Why do we often lose passion for a job, a project, or a relationship? Austin-Smith suggests that a lack of focus, or a focus on the negative, and a lack of clear direction are to blame.

Fantastic people know why they are doing what they are doing and are able to focus on the positive. A janitor may not love cleaning up after others, but if he sees his job as providing an important service, he will be a fantastic janitor.

Similarly, if the janitor is doing his job so that he can spend his days pursuing a passion which might not pay well, he may still be a fantastic janitor in order to have the opportunity to do what he loves.

It is important to know why you are doing something and to have clear goals for achieving your success. Goals need not be realistic and achievable as taught in so many other programs. In fact, fantastic people often set goals that are completely unrealistic and with a high potential for unattainability.

Fantastic people work backwards from the big dream to making it happen. More importantly, fantastic people suspend their fear of failure and get on with the business of trying to make it happen. As the saying goes, you can't win the game if you don't even play.

## Fantastic People are Creative

Creativity is a necessary tool in our rapidly changing world. There are no signs of a slow down, so we must all learn to embrace change.

The Creative Revolution presents ways to not only handle change, but to thrive in a changing environment. When situations change, it is important to begin by focusing on solutions rather than problems in order to generate new ideas.

In addition, listening to the world around you with an open mind will spark new ideas and solutions. Don't let prior knowledge produce a closed mind. If you are selling a product, focus on what your customers want to buy rather than what you want to sell them.

Focusing on solutions and gathering information from as many sources as possible through open-minded listening will spark creativity. Once the ideas are flowing it is important to engage others who will support, help, and have the same passion.

Most importantly, you must be able to set aside fear of failure and act toward the goals. All the while, a sense of fun and adventure will ensure the passion remains, even when the going gets tough.

## Fantastic People Delight

It is time for a Customer Revolution. It is good enough to serve people but to be fantastic you must delight people. Providing exceptional value for price is one way to make a happy customer. Customers will pay decent money for things, as long as they are receiving the experience they deserve. If not, they will not return.

The FLOW method is a tool that can be used to improve customer delight. To start, always create a fantastic **first** impression. Always leave the customer with a fantastic **last** impression. In between, handle the **ouch**'s as positively as possible and always strive to **wow** the customer.

Fantastic people are also fantastic communicators. Knowing how to really listen to your audience with attention, empathy, and sympathy allows them to feel good about themselves and thereby more willing to support you. If you want others to be interested in what you have to say, you must first be interested in what they have to say.

Borrowed from Transactional Analysis, Austin-Smith presents the House of Understanding, which consists of four rooms, each with different levels of communication. The best room to be in is room number one, where both parties are hearing and being heard.

Listening is the most important communication skill. It is important to give your full attention and focus, to make eye contact, to acknowledge that you are listening, to keep from interrupting or finishing sentences, and to respond thoughtfully.

Using positive language and having the confidence to give sincere compliments helps others to respond positively and to be supportive of you and your ideas.

## **Fantastic People are Performers**

Many people can agree with the concept that in order for change to happen, action must be taken. Yet, so many do not take the first steps. Most often, the reason is a lack of confidence.

How do we gain confidence? It starts with acting. The secret of confident people is that they act confident even when they are not. Acting confident begins to bring the feeling of confidence. Once this happens, others will also begin to believe.

Fantastic people perform in this way consistently. They know that the world is a stage and when they are called upon to be fantastic, even when they are not feeling up to it, they make the choice to put aside doubt, fear, or lack of enthusiasm and get on with it. Becoming consistently fantastic builds trust with other people. People who are capable, but not consistently so, cannot be relied upon.

Consistency and the discipline to act consistently stems from the passion of knowing why we are doing what we are doing. If the reasons why are powerful enough, it is easy to be disciplined and consistent.

Often we do not take action because of fear. Peer pressure and worrying about what others think is a common fear. Often the fear that we experience is not based in reality, but rather on the voices in our head. To be fantastic, it is important to quiet those voices and learn to distinguish when they are providing true wisdom and when they are just producing unwarranted fear.

## **Fantastic People are Alive Inside**

While we all enjoy being motivated, praised and encouraged by others this is an inconsistent

way to live our lives. We never know when motivation will come from an external source and we have no control over it. To feel alive inside, we must take responsibility for our own life and find motivation from within.

If finding internal motivation is difficult, it may be time for a talk with yourself on the edge of the bed. This simply means that it's time to sit down and figure out how to find internal motivation.

Often, we are discouraged for two reasons. First, we are focusing on our weaknesses and not our strengths. Second, we are focusing on problems, not solutions.

Have a talk with yourself and remind yourself of the things you are good at, the things that inspire and motivate you, and the things that you simply enjoy. If you find you are thinking about all the problems, try to focus on at least one solution. Finding a solution is in itself a motivator to take some other action.

Austin-Smith presents the following sentence to succinctly explain how we work:

“Our references create our beliefs which influence our state and determine how we act.”

The basis is our references or the movies we have in our minds. These in turn form our beliefs in any given situation which will determine our state of mind. We act based on our current state of mind.

In order to change how we act and become more alive, we must learn how to direct our moves. We must become a director and create new movies which will give us a new frame of reference in any given situation, which will then lead to new actions. Just be sure to make the new movies positive and fantastic.

## **Fantastic People are Always Learning**

Everyone, it seems, complains that they do not have enough time. Not enough time in the day, days in the week, or the year flies by too rapidly. But isn't the problem really that time is controlling most of us rather than the other way around?

Procrastination is the thief of time. Putting things off, rather than doing them immediately, guarantees they will take more time later. By adopting a “Do It Now” attitude you can take back some of that time.

In addition, time management is a matter of prioritizing and proper planning. If you are very busy but accomplishing minor tasks, in general you will feel very far behind on the important items.

Similarly, if you consistently allot too little time for tasks, you may be behind before you even begin.

Fantastic people are managing their time and are always learning. With so much information available in so many forms today, it can be hard to learn in a focused way rather than just randomly learning.

In order to focus your learning, take some time each month or maybe each New Year and set some learning goals for yourself. Focus on your strengths for rapid growth and decide how you are going to gain your knowledge. Most importantly, commit yourself to spending 15 minutes each day on your learning.

This adds up to 90 hours a year and can certainly contribute to becoming fantastic.

## **Fantastic People are Having Fun!**

In order to keep the cycle of the Fantastic Revolution going, the final characteristic of having fun must be enhanced. Without fun, the passion that fuels the rest of the revolution disappears.

Having fun means keeping a balance. Fantastic people know how to do things that make them feel good as well as things that simply must be done to move forward.

Spend some time each day to focus on the things that make you happy, that motivate you or excite you. Be sure to make yourself a priority while you are helping everyone else. Quiet the voices in your head that criticize for having fun or taking care of yourself. Lastly, stop procrastinating your fun. Enjoy yourself now, not when there is more money or when the kids are grown.

Stress can be a real fun killer. Learn to notice your own signs of stress and when you do, take a few moments to hit the pause button. Count to ten or breathe deeply in order to reset yourself. You may have to reset the movie playing in your head which may be the cause of the stress. Gain control and enjoy what you are doing.

There are two questions you can ask in any given situation to help gain control.

1. Do I want to feel like this?
2. What do I have to change then?

These two questions can help you to recognize and make changes in order to take control and have fun.

## **Be Fantastic!**

The Fantastic Revolution begins with passion. Passion comes from knowing what you are doing and why you are doing it. By being creative, always-learning, delighting people and

inspiring others you can begin to feel the energy of the cycle. Consistently taking action, being fantastic, and performing when necessary will help you feel alive inside and fuel you to just keep having fun!

The most important step to take is to *be* fantastic. Reading and learning are wasted if action is not taken.

The Fantastic Revolution Audit can be used to identify your fantastic characteristics that may need some work. If you want change, change something. Choose an area on the audit and make an action, change something and feel the difference.