

Success at Work

Tony Buzan and Christine Miller

"What would you do if you knew you couldn't fail?"

How many times have you seen or heard that question, and how do you feel about it? Does it invoke a jaded and unconvinced "Oh yeah, sure" response, or...when things don't work out - can you say instead that *it's great, and simply fascinating feedback to learn from* and apply when you try again? Find out how Tony Buzan thinks of success in his life and work.

Success at Work

"Fancy getting to talk to Tony Buzan - that man should be Prime Minister, at least."

Justin Tipper, NLP Trainer

"The article on Tony Buzan inspired me to buy a couple of his books that I am now working through, and I think that the processes suggested will be of great use to me in all areas of my life."

Julie Evans, Life Coach

Would you believe yourself successful if you received messages every day acclaiming you as a powerful and positive influence whose work helps people achieve their dreams?

In the case of Tony Buzan, there's no doubt that his renown as an icon for Brain-Friendly Learning in the 20th century is growing unstoppably into the 21st, and his success is without question. As a multi-million best-selling author with a global audience, a sought-after speaker with several TV series to his name and a member of an Olympic coaching team, there are few who haven't heard either of Tony or of his Mind Maps®.

You'll also see from the comments above that readers of the first edition of Resource were highly enthusiastic about our feature on "Mind Maps® at Work" with Tony Buzan. Many of you told us that the article prompted you either to re-visit Mind Mapping books you already owned, or to invest in new books. So, as far as pleasing our readers and getting great exposure for our authors and their products is concerned, our work was definitely successful in fulfilling the intentions we have for ReSource!

In this edition, Tony tells us what "Success at Work" means to him. When we talked about his continuing passion for his work, Tony told me that his greatest inspiration and true

affirmation of his success at work come from "*seeing that light in people's eyes when they suddenly realise the immense capabilities of their brains.*" Here are some more of his thoughts....

Tony's success at work

".....Success at work for me is a multiplicity of things. It is certainly having a balance in my life, and for me the real success in work is when I cannot distinguish whether I am working or playing, so that my work becomes play for me. That also tends to give me an extraordinary amount of energy because you seldom find people who are playing getting tired quickly, and yet people who "*work*" in the traditional sense of that word will often get very tired and then need to go out to play. Normally, nine hours work can be completely enervating in a traditional work environment – and yet children will play for eighteen hours a day.

The great geniuses, the leaders and ultimate achievers, the pure successes, the beacons of the human race, were known for a tireless work ethic. I believe it wasn't a tireless **work** ethic, it was tireless **play** ethic – their laboratories, their writing, their music, and their explorations were for them, as for children, a gigantic playground. For me, when my work is play, that is the best sign. There are many other signs as well.

One is that my life is in balance while I work. I try to make sure that every day I exercise, that every day I rest, that every day I have recreation and time with my friends, that I have some good thinking time, and some walking time on my own.

Another personal criterion for success is whether I have accomplished the goals that I set myself, and I try to manage myself so that I will meet those goals.

Another measure is that during any particular day I have been happily and satisfyingly creative, so that if I have done a particularly good piece of writing if I have written a poem if I have created a really excellent new Mind Map ...that for me is also a criterion for success.

An important signal of success is if I see the light in a child's or a person's eyes literally turn on and blaze out as result of something I have done to help them learn. One big criterion, therefore, is helping other people to help themselves to learn and to be the successes of which they dream. I believe every human being is designed to be successful; it's just a matter of helping them guide themselves, or guiding them to guide themselves, to become the successes that they know that they are.

And that would summarise for me a very successful day, week, year, life"

Exploring "Success" – and the Myth of "Trial and Error"

The error that was made for many years was the assumption that human beings are a trial and **error** mechanism. What that tends to do is emphasise the error – we think of ourselves as making errors, and learning by correcting our mistakes; therefore when a student writes an essay of 2,000 words and makes 20 mistakes, the pages that are handed back are festooned with red circles and in the margin, a comment saying "*spelling needs significant improvement*". The teachers and the educational system have therefore focused on the errors; when essentially, that student has spelled **1,980 words** correctly, which is **99%**. So had we looked for the successes, we would have written at the top of that essay:

*"Spelling! Brilliant!! 1980/2000! 99%!!!
Summa cum Laude!!!!*

You are going to be brilliant at English and have only a few minor corrections before you're absolutely perfect in spelling."



If we were to focus on the success, we would produce a lot more of it – when we focus on the error, we produce, sadly, a lot more errors. I am agreeing here with the "Pygmalion Effect", which says that when you expect success, then success is what you'll get. When you expect error and failure, then error and failure are what you'll get. In other words, the expectation of the leader or of the manager, of the teacher, or of the parent predicates the result.

From "Trial and Error" to "Try-al and Success"

When you are learning, and you start a task, and when you repeat a task - when you practice – what do you think is the underlying goal? When you start your *next* trial, what should you be trying to do? What do you think – define what you think is the perfect goal for *every next trial* in *every learning situation*.

Hundreds of thousands of Buzan Centre students from over 100 countries have answered this question in the past thirty years - and over **99%** of the world's brains gave this reply:

"To get better with every trial"...

What do you say? Do you agree, or are you going to adopt the route of the maverick?

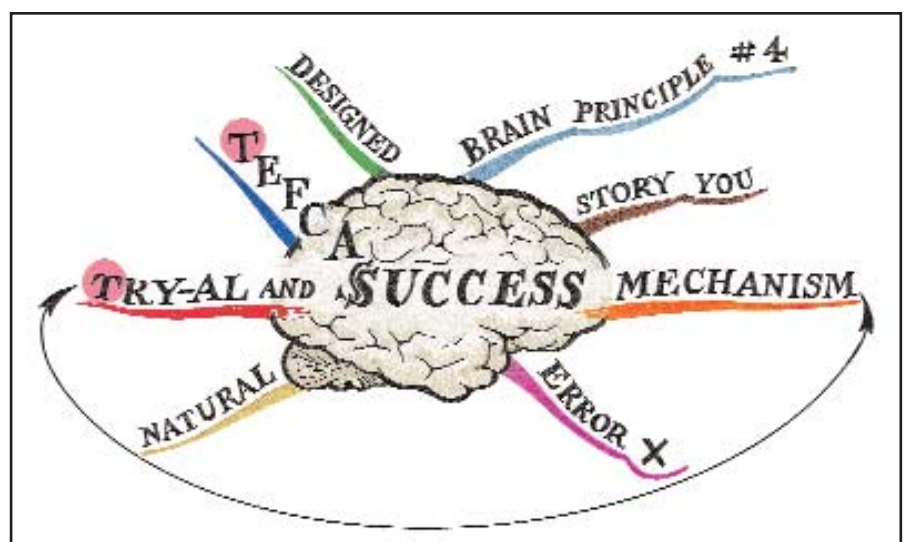
If you chose the "maverick" option and you disagree - *you were correct!*

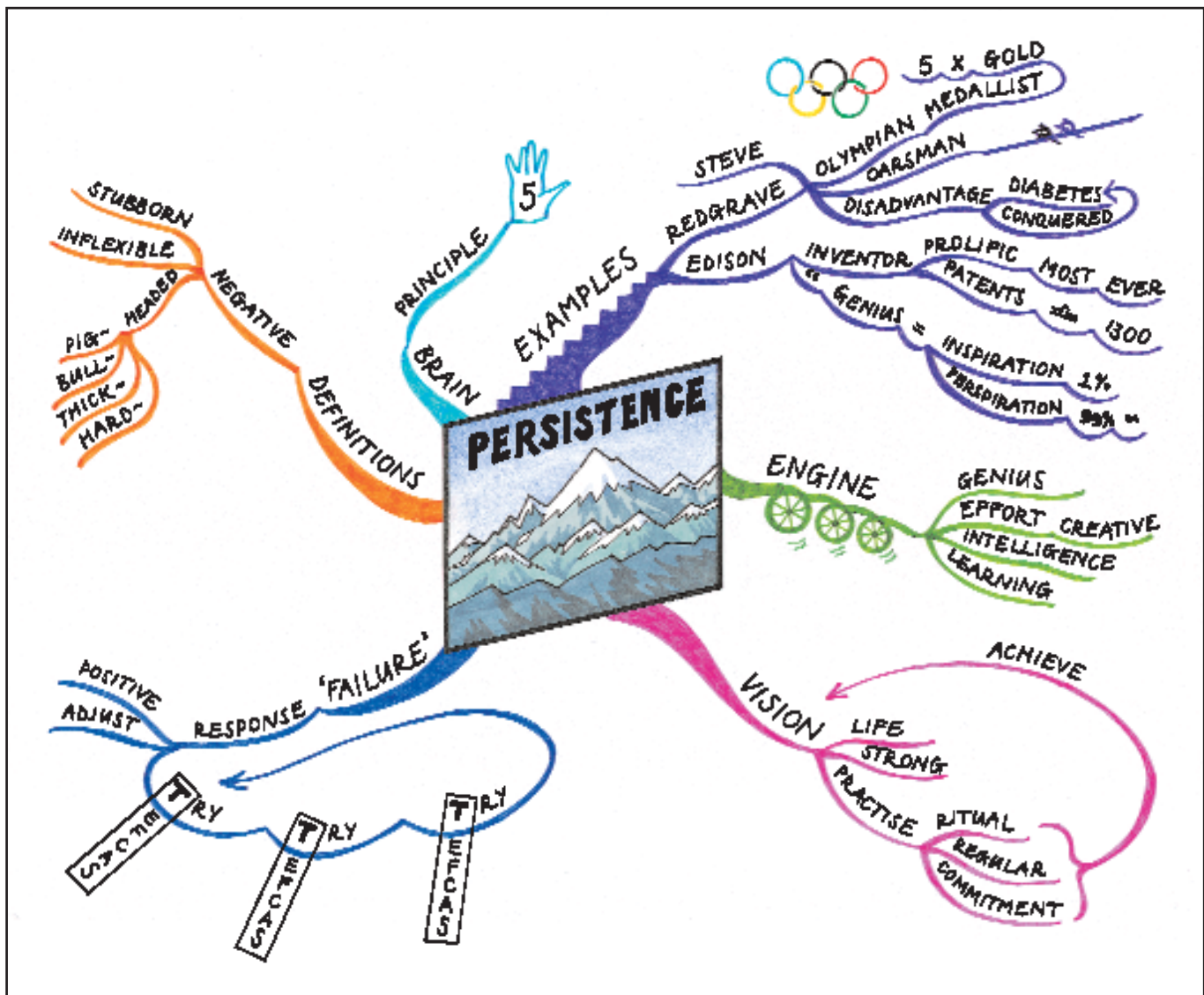
The fact is that it is impossible to get better with **every** trial. At some point, you (and everyone else) will experience a failure, whether it's at trial number 10, 25, or 95. If your response to a failure is negative, and produces overwhelming fear – the fear of failure – then it is logical for you to think of quitting. If you hold the belief that you must get better with every trial, then whatever activity you undertake will eventually deliver a failure – because you are searching for an impossible dream.

The dream is impossible because the human brain is *not designed* to get better with *every* trial!

Your brain is designed on a far more realistic, experimental, explorative, and exciting model known as The Success Formula – TEFCAS.

When you understand TEFCAS, you will understand the true nature of learning, and the proper nature of "failure"; and you will have the correct formula for accelerating your own successes.





The Human Brain as “Success”

Mechanism (See Mini Mind Map to the left)

TEFCAS is an acronym made up of the first letters of the six major words that define the fundamental steps your brain *has* to take while learning *anything*.

- Trial (TRY-AL)
- Event
- Feedback
- Check
- Adjust
- Success

I have been working on the TEFCAS concept since the mid 1970s, but it had its first airing in *Headstrong*. I frequently applied the process in my Olympic coaching, where even at the highest levels of sport and competition, many coaches and many elite athletes still have major chinks in their thinking armour. It is through these chinks that negative thinking unwittingly creeps in, and success is therefore dramatically diminished as a possibility in those athletes. I was working

on the development of the process while I was working with the Olympic athletes for the Korean and the Sydney Olympic Games.

From try and improve - to Try, Try, Try and Learn

TEFCAS is more physics than psychology. It traces, step by step, the steps your brain is obliged to take while learning in the physical universe; the laws of which it must both follow and use to its advantage.

The trial, or TRY-AL, is the first step. Persistence is one of the key factors, and is in fact the engine of learning and intelligence. It is the engine of all creative effort, and of all genius. Most importantly, it is the **TRY** in TEFCAS. (See Mind Map above)

In order to learn anything, whether it's playing a musical instrument or juggling –

nothing will happen if you don't first Try.

So let's take juggling as a metaphor:

Trial: you have to try it; you have to throw the ball.

Event: when you throw the ball there will be an event, the physical absolute, and the event will be that the ball will land on your head, on the ground, in your hand, or in your partner's coffee cup: it is a physical event and the universe doesn't particularly care about what the event is, there just **is** an event.

Feedback: Your brain, through its extraordinary senses, gets feedback from that event, and the feedback comes in light waves, in sound waves, in vibrations, in aromas.

Check: Your brain, whether you wish it to or not, checks that feedback, and on the basis of its checking of the feedback, will adjust automatically.

Adjust: If it's thrown the ball too far, your brain will try to throw it not so far next time; if it landed in the coffee cup, it will try to have it land in its hand next time - your brain is always making adjustments.

Success: The ball lands in your hand - you are juggling.

Another example is that literally every time we breathe in, the brain is doing a **TEFCAS** process:

TRIAL – the need to breathe in; then there is an EVENT – oxygen and maybe some poison gets into the system; there is immediate FEEDBACK – the brain CHECKS, ADJUSTS by expelling whatever substance is incorrect, towards the goal of SUCCESS – in this case, survival.

So the process is an absolute: it's like the Scientific Method, which is the basis of all the great discoveries in science, and is very similar, as Newton himself confirmed, to normal child's play!

In the Scientific Method, you start with a hypothesis, which is a **Question**; you then do your **Experiment**, which is the **Trial**; there are **Events** in the **Experiment** which are the **Results**, and there is **Feedback** from those **Results**. You then **Test** your **Results**, which is the **Check**, you come to your **Conclusions**, which is **Adjusting**. You then move to the next **Experiment**. So **TEFCAS** is very Newtonian; and the delight of it is that it tells you that on one level you have no choice at all – because **TEFCAS** is like the absolute law of physics – and once you know that, you have wonderful opportunities to swing your way through that, to be active in the process, rather than being clamped into it or carried along by the tides of it. With the **Trial**, you have the option of how focussed you are when you try. The **Event** you have no option in – the **Event** just happens because of your **Try**.

The irony here is that **TEFCAS** seems like a prison, when in fact it is a law that gives your mind ultimate freedom, as you are about to see.

From “Oh ****! I'm quitting!” to “Hmm...How Fascinating”

If you have no option in the **Event**, you do, however, have tremendous options in how you *check* the **Feedback** from that event. You also have tremendous options in how you *receive* the **Feedback**.

You can look without seeing, and listen without hearing. Or: you can decide to really observe that **Feedback** and focus on it, which is what you need to do.

You then have the choice of how to adjust to that **Feedback**:

Do you go and sulk if you haven't done very well?

Do you swear?

Do you give up? Do you quit? Or:

Do you say “**How fascinating**” - and absorb the **Feedback**, absorb your checking of it and then **Adjust**.

You have a choice in how you **Adjust**, and the adjustment can be negative:

It can be to quit, to sulk, to cry, to get upset.

Or - and this is a choice:

It can be to be proactive, to enter into that Feedback in more detail and to plan your next stage, which is your next Event.

There are two prongs of **TEFCAS**: there is the absolute “no choice” context in which we have to act, like gravity; there is then the *infinite* choice we have of movement and action, *within* that gravity.

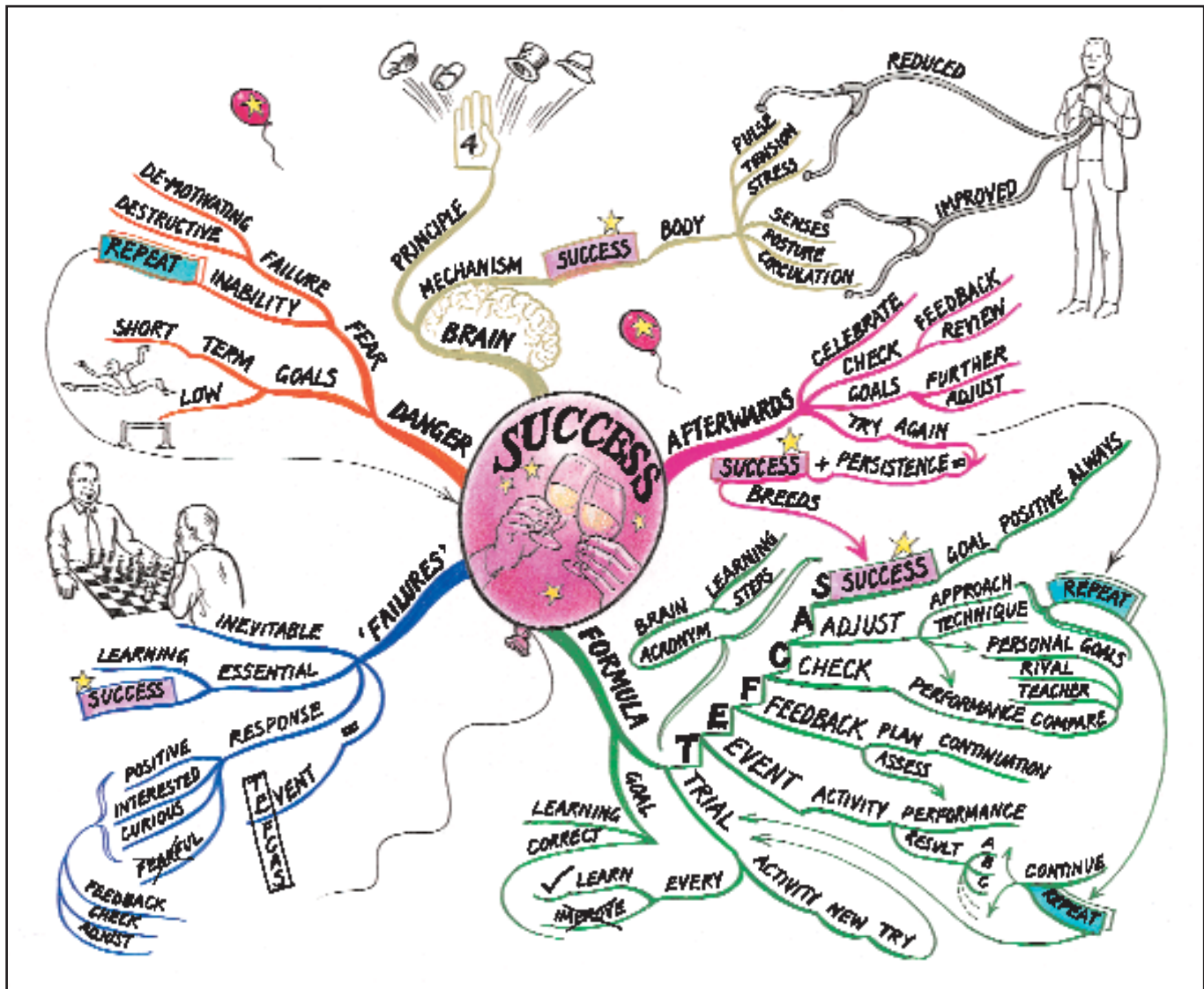
I was delighted to discover this, and it has helped me immensely, because when I realised that there were some aspects in which the process was an absolute, it was very relaxing and calming; I didn't have to do anything about the parts which were absolute - that is simply the way things are. From this, I realised that knowing what the **TEFCAS** process was *gave me a much greater ability to act freely within it*.

TEFCAS at Work

The **TEFCAS** Success Mechanism is a revolutionary business tool because it builds in failure and feedback as two vital ingredients for success. It works brilliantly in combination with **Mind Maps**: **Mind Maps** help you plan effectively and the **TEFCAS** success mechanism helps you monitor and react to the outcome that you had planned. Both tools keep you focused on your goals. (See **Mind Map** on next page).

Applying TEFCAS in business – a different way of thinking

Historically, the businesses which have been the most successful have been those that have offered something new. It might have been a radical way of serving customers, such as Amazon.com promising low prices and, crucially, the efficient delivery which seems to elude so many other dotcoms;



alternatively, it might be a brand that builds up a market presence and then a culture around that presence. Iconic clothes brands such as Levi's and Gucci are always striving to offer something original and attention-grabbing. Such business successes demonstrate a different way of thinking and you can clearly see how the **TEFCAS** Success Mechanism comes into play. When they have reached a successful point, the innovation doesn't stop there.

Whenever you plan anything, be it on a large or small scale, always refer to the **TEFCAS** mechanism to monitor the outcome of what you put into practice. This will help you identify the areas of your project that need attention and will give you the greatest chance of long-term success.

Now affirm to yourself:
"I am a **Success mechanism**"

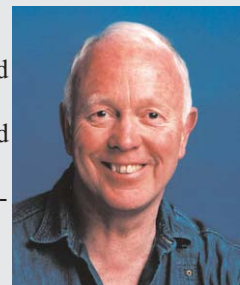
And, remember, you are a Being based on Trial and Success – you are designed for

SUCCESS.

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AUTHOR:

Tony Buzan is the author of the bestsellers *How to Mind Map*, *Mind Maps for Kids* and *Mind Maps at Work*. He lectures all over the world and is published in 100 countries and 30 languages. He advises multi-national companies (among them HSBC, Barclays International and Hewlett Packard), leading businesses, governments, educational authorities and international Olympic athletes.



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