

# Ten Great Cultural Career Lies

by Stever Robbins

## 1. You can plan your career (or would even want to).

- That's not my experience, nor is it the experience of anyone over 35 I've talked to.
- Maybe it worked in the 1950s...
- Maybe it works in careers driven by successive degree requirements (e.g. medicine)
- We get trained to think in terms of one-step-leads-to-another by 18 years of linear schooling.

## 2. Being the boss makes for a good life.

- Have you ever worked closely with a CEO? It can be a great job, but it can also suck. Like any job, it requires a certain temperament and set of skills.

## 3. "Self-made" people exist.

- The most self-made person alive still relied on millions of others to provide financial markets, schools, sewers, and the infrastructure that allowed them to go off and become "self-made." Recognize interdependency and build your life around positive interdependency.

## 4. Hard work and skill will be appropriately rewarded.

- Bear Sterns CEO cashed out for "only" \$60 million. Cleaning lady @ \$8/hour must work two jobs just to pay rent and still doesn't make enough to save anything. 'Nuff said.

## 5. Do a good job and you'll get ahead.

- See #4.



[www.steverrobbins.com](http://www.steverrobbins.com)

© 2008 Stever Robbins, Inc.

Stever Robbins, Inc.  
PO Box 400158  
Cambridge, MA 02140-0002  
617-354-1446  
[stever@steverrobbins.com](mailto:stever@steverrobbins.com)

## Ten Great Cultural Career Lies (continued)

### 6. I'll work now and do what I love when I've accomplished (made my first million, cured cancer, etc.).

- Management consulting firms and investment banks use this lie as a recruiting tool.
- Dangerous strategy, and I know very few who've pulled it off. If you don't do it, you're left at mid-life trapped in a career you don't like, with a non-transferable resume, and a network composed of people who are the last ones in the world who could help you do what you love. But boy, could they help you get even further in the career you despise.

### 7. Intelligence matters.

- Up to a point. After that point, it can threaten people. It's only useful insofar as you have the people/political/marketing skills to get your ideas in play. Even then, unless you're perfect, you run the risk of overconfidence.

### 8. Achievement matters.

- Actually not. Who you know and who thinks well of you probably matters at least as much as what you've achieved, if not more.

### 9. We can control our lives.

- Sickness, death, lotteries, luck, and love all happen. My friend just moved from Washington D.C. to Las Cruces, NM, where his snuggle-bunny has a job. *That* sure wasn't planned for.

### 10. Success (money, power, achievement) brings happiness.

- This has been disproven by tons of research. See the books *Happy for No Reason* by Marci Shimoff, *Are You Ready to Succeed* by Srikumar Rao, or *Authentic Happiness* by Marty Seligman.
- This lie causes great unhappiness. See the decision tree on the next page.

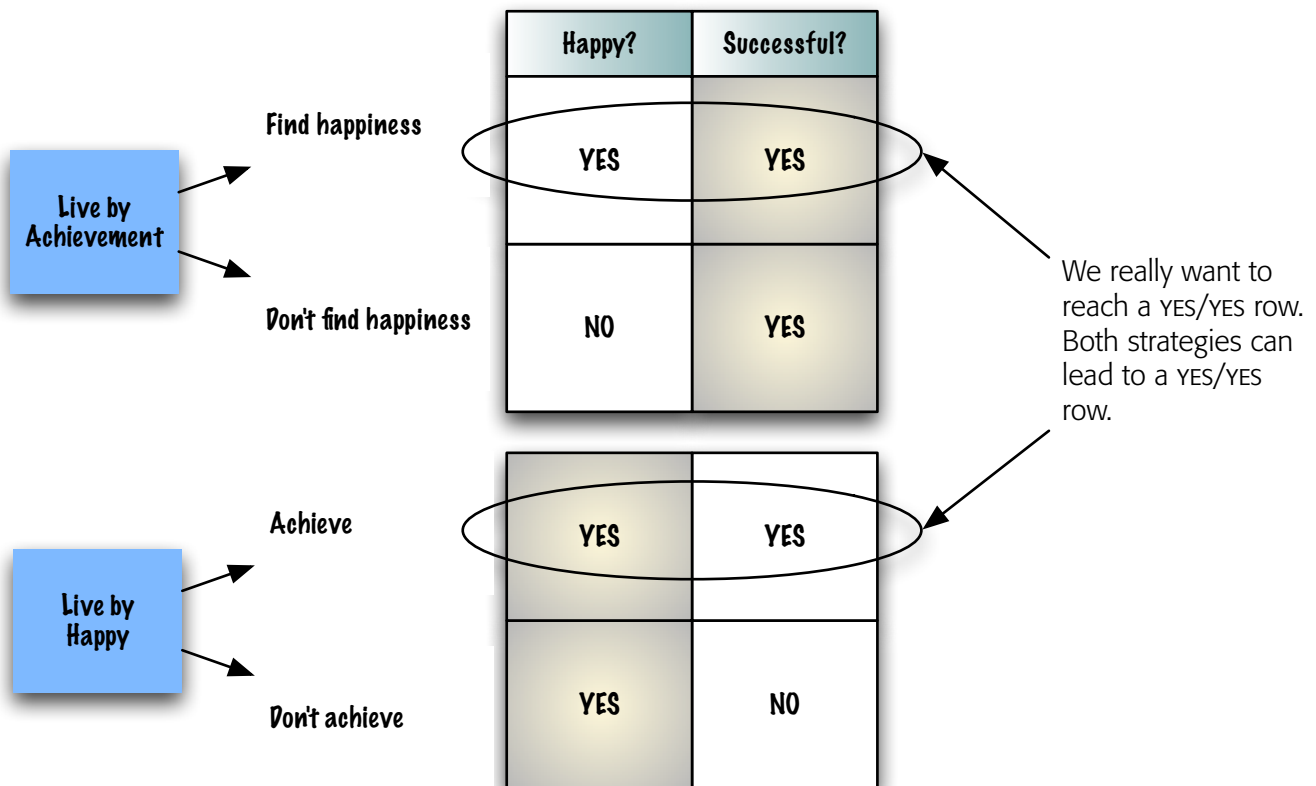


[www.steverrobbins.com](http://www.steverrobbins.com)

© 2008 Stever Robbins, Inc.

Stever Robbins, Inc.  
PO Box 400158  
Cambridge, MA 02140-0002  
617-354-1446  
[stever@steverrobbins.com](mailto:stever@steverrobbins.com)

# Consider carefully: **HAPPY** or **SUCCESSFUL**



Most people organize their lives around the yellow **successful** column and conclude they should live by goals.

Actually, what people really want is to end up in the yellow **happy** column. To do that, find happiness first.