

BUSINESS INSIDER

This Is How Americans Define Success

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According to Merriam-Webster, success is “the fact of getting or achieving wealth, respect, or fame.” But a new survey from Strayer University suggests that it may be time to update the dictionary’s definition.

The school recently released findings from its national “Success Project Survey,” which was conducted to determine what success means to Americans today.

A whopping 90% believe that success is more about happiness than power, possessions, or prestige.

“This indicates a clear change in the way Americans are thinking about their personal journey,” says Dr. Michael Plater, president of Strayer University. “It’s no longer about the car or the house. Instead, people are focused on leading a fulfilling life, whether that means finding a better career, achieving personal goals, or spending more time with their families.”

The survey, which was conducted by Ipsos on behalf of Strayer, interviewed 2,011 Americans ages 18 and up and found that 67% of surveyed Americans associate success with achieving personal goals; 66% cited “good relationships with friends and family”; and 60% said “loving what you do for a living.”

Meanwhile, just one in five respondents said monetary wealth is what defines success.

“I think people will be surprised to hear that the vast majority of this country no longer views traditional wealth- and fame-based notions of success as having ‘made it,’” says Plater.

He explains his team’s goal in con-

ducting this survey was to spark a much-needed national conversation about success and how there’s no “one size fits all” definition.

“It’s challenging to quantify and pinpoint what defines success, since every individual has his or her own unique view and personal experience,” Plater explains.

He says one big takeaway from the study is that success today is much more about setting personal goals and achieving them, than anything else. “It’s the feeling you get when you reach a new physical activity goal, connect with friends you haven’t seen in a while, see your child succeed, ace a job interview, and many other small but incredibly significant life moments. It’s the feeling that you have accomplished something bigger and better than yourself.”

Plater attributes the universal shift in what is valued in the US to economic, social, and cultural changes.

“With the prolonged challenges we’ve all experienced in today’s economy and the socio-cultural shifts that are brought about by today’s lightning quick developments in technology,” he says, “I believe that Americans are taking a close look at their individual situations and priorities and creating new, personalized definitions of success for themselves.”

Plater says so many Americans are now focusing on their well-being, rather than just “conventional or textbook meanings” of success. “Through this redefinition, individuals are also finding that multiple paths to success do exist.”

