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SUCCESS AND ITS INDICATORS

I have learned to define success on my own terms and to focus my work where possible on the areas where I can make the most effective contributions.

(Ruth Cameron quoted in Bostock, 2014: 9)

I want to break the mould of what you need to be like to be successful.

(Ottoline Leyser quoted in Bostock, 2014: 12)

I have never seen work as the main element in my life. It's very important and I give it my all when I'm there, but life is about much, much more.

(Laurie Friday quoted in Bostock, 2014: 18)

Gaining personal promotion was a real vindication of the effort that I had put in – despite one colleague telling me, 'It was just because they needed to promote women.'

(Anon quoted in Bostock, 2014: 23)

What is success in academic work (Bostock, 2014)? Who doesn't want to be successful, right? References to success are everywhere in academia. Papers published, doctorates attained, large and small grants won, teaching awards accrued, student feedback received: all documented in résumés, trumpeted in talks, regaled on webpages and tweets and wedged into seemingly causal corridor conversations.

Success is accordingly integral to how academic workers see themselves and are seen by peers. Reputations, credibility, job offers, promotion, awards, relationships, and collaborations are all founded on success (Bostock, 2014). If a newly employed academic worker does not address, consider or otherwise work toward success, a career can quickly drift and stall. If an established academic worker, firmly in their mid- or later career, does not actively consider the nature of success, disengagement and disappointment, a prevailing apathy can result. Considering success and incorporating what being successful 'is' into academic work is therefore key.

REFERENCES TO SUCCESS ARE EVERYWHERE IN ACADEMIA

Yet, despite the centrality of success, it is also slippery. We will consider some of this slipperiness and elusiveness in this chapter. As extreme knowledge work, academic work is immensely diverse. Values and identity are both expressed and formed in successes; variations abound by person, discipline, career stage, and country. Academic workplaces also claim successes for the people who work in them to further institutional reputation and sustainability. Indeed, who should define and evaluate success, from what basis should this be done and with what implications? These are profound and difficult, yet key, questions.

This reflects a challenge we hear repeatedly about in our workshops: a perceived lack of fit between the success indicators which academic workers aspire to and those of today's academic workplaces. Commonly, this potential disjoint is grounded in concerns not only for career progression but also around more fundamental conflicts between academic worker and employer values. Many perceive these conflicts around values and success indicators not only to exist and be prevalent across workplaces but also to be inevitable. While we disagree, reconciling these often palpable tensions seldom happens without deliberate thought and calculated action. Incorporating our own passions and talents with a careful and nuanced analysis of what employers wants and broader needs is vital. This can provide a means to identify your purpose, ikigai (Garcia and Miralles, 2017), or 'sweet spot' (Figure 3.1) – a fit between ourselves and our workplaces that ensures there is less conflict and more mutual benefit from academic work.

While specifying success can seem straightforward, such as completing a doctorate, success can also seem too lofty. A recent analysis of adverts for starting academic positions (Pitt and Mewburn, 2016) identified that academic workplaces increasingly demand that workers publish work in the most reputable journals in their fields; be accessible, organized, and engaging teachers; communicate well with peers and public alike, directly and via social and mass media; organize and lead teams, projects, and work initiatives; manage people, budgets, and heavy workloads; mentor students and junior colleagues … and on and on. The demands and skills required of such academic workers to be successful across these domains are, indeed, immense. The supercomplexity of the academic workplace (Barnett, 2011) is transposed into a supercomplexity of expectations for academic workers.

So, it is on this challenging basis that this chapter considers success and its indicators in academia. Our approach aims for inclusivity and optimism about success in academic workers
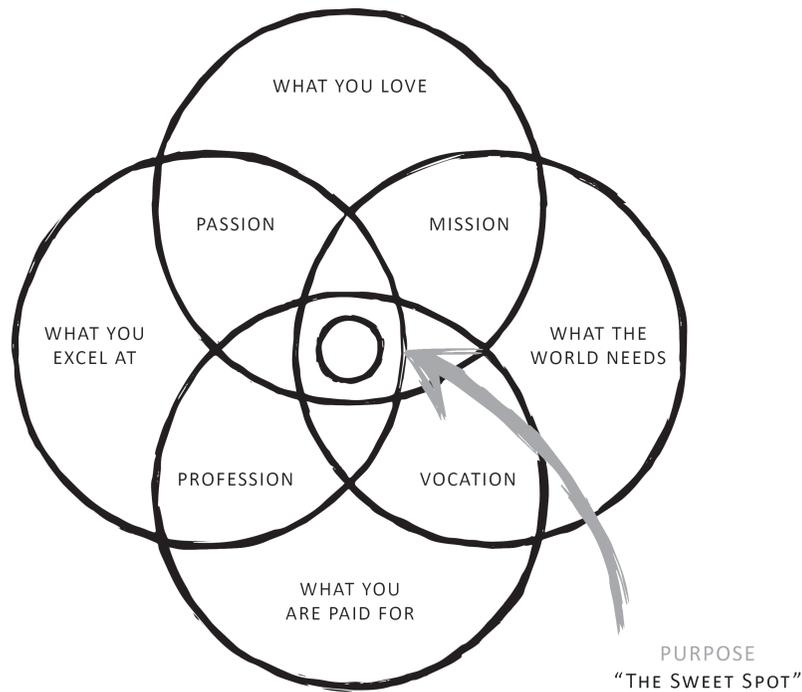
Figure 3.1   What is Your Purpose?

Source: Adapted from multiple online sources

and workplaces but not naively, subjectively or indulgently so. In approaching success, we seek to be personal but not prescriptive, and to recognize elusiveness, diversity, and standards in success. For, while there is so much variation, success should be the end, the reference point and horizon for everything an academic worker should do.

Despite growing pressures in some countries to codify and centralize success (for example, through national research performance assessment exercises), success is, nevertheless, easier to recognize than to describe, define, and codify. Inescapably, what success looks like depends on who defines it, what values guide this and also at what cost. Like so many facets of modern academic workplaces, the difficulties of adequately defining success in academic work is a blessing and a curse.

WHAT SUCCESS LOOKS LIKE IN ACADEMIC WORK

While success seems taken for granted in academic work, it is also contested. 'Success' thus demands a more detailed and careful consideration here.

Success varies but needs values

Success in academic work can come through research, teaching, and engagement, takes a plethora of different forms and can be achieved in so many ways via so many paths.

The nature of extreme knowledge work of academic workers means that success is and will always be contested and context-bound. Sometimes, success is visible and extremely tangible: getting your first academic job, completing a doctorate in five years, publishing a key paper in a target impact journal or getting favourable teaching evaluations from students. Sometimes, success is also when nothing ostensibly happens: when personal burnout is avoided or a long-term project with a troublesome team is completed without damaging relationships. For some of us, the reality is that success during some periods is getting by: holding life and work together and paying the bills. For others, success is the Nobel Prize, international recognition, curing disease and redressing social ills.

Different views of academic success can also vary by many other factors. Female academic workers in the UK report that, while conventional measures of academic success, such as promotion, publications and reputation are important, so, too, are broader factors, such as the inherent merits of the work itself, the states of one's wider life and being an important and influential colleague (Bostock, 2014).

Success can also vary around values. Our own personal favourite papers may not be those that are most cited or used by colleagues or make the biggest media splash. A department chair may frown on an academic worker spending three years writing a definitive textbook, worried that this work will not be counted in the department's national research assessment. Teaching that challenges students' assumptions may lead the students to be discombobulated and nervous before they work through this to new insights. Views of success can and are often in conflict, especially when we move beyond academic workers to address the views of success espoused by academic workplaces, governments at various levels, the media and the public.

As it pertains to extreme knowledge work, the more open we can be intellectually and emotionally to consider different views of academic success, the better. As with values, if talk of academic 'success' provokes intense reactions in you – particularly strongly dismissive or hostile reactions – that in itself is a clear impetus for further reflection. For example, despite huge potential variations in what success can look like for academic workers, some academic workers aggressively shun references or framing of their work around 'success'. Usually, this is a reaction to supposed external or 'corporate' standards of promotion or evaluation that invoke concepts of 'impact' and 'influence' or 'satisfaction' and short-termism or other seemingly pejorative standards.

This apparent rejection of 'success' is itself a stance on success taken to symbolize the lack of power academic workers and even their workplaces often have in modern societies. While a university president may appear dynamic, striding and all-conquering to those working within a university, in terms of external political influence of decisions by government, they usually have despairingly little sway (Tuchman, 2011).

SUCCESS IS NOT EQUAL (ESPECIALLY AROUND GENDER)

> Perhaps men are just naturally better at research than women. (Savigny, 2014)

Concepts of academic success are contested and influential, though hopefully misconceptions, such as the one above are now long dispelled. While national assessments of research impact influence institutional funding in many countries, these exercises tend to esteem work more likely to be done by some groups over others (Back, 2015; Smith and Stewart, 2016a). Academic success is not a fair playing-field – particularly around gender. There is persuasive consistent evidence that female academic workers are: under-represented in paid academic roles in many disciplines and countries (but especially in the sciences and in senior roles) (Metcalfe and Gonzalez, 2013; Henley, 2015; Equality Challenge Unit, 2016), publish less (Aiston and Jung, 2015), and are even less likely to receive grant funding in some competitions (Payne, 2016). Female academic workers also get paid less (Equality Challenge Unit, 2016).

Many factors contribute to these inequalities. The difficult experiences and challenges that female academic workers face in this work have been documented for over 30 years (Aisenberg and Harrington, 1988). A more recent study of 26 successful senior female academic workers at the University of Cambridge (Bostock, 2014) highlighted continued awareness of gender-based inequalities in opportunities and outcomes of academic work but also evolving conceptions of what success is and can be. Success for these extremely successful academic workers was seen to be consistently challenging, not only around their gender but also because academic work is difficult. Gender-based challenges came from every realm: from family demands outside of work to an enduring imposter syndrome about ongoing success. While some contributing factors are well known, others are startling, such as the tendency for male academic workers to cite their own work 70 per cent more often than females (King et al., 2016).

These challenges can seem dizzying, but faced with them as Sheryl Sandberg reminds us, women must be forceful in maintaining high aspirations for their progression:

> In addition to the external barriers erected by society … we (women) hold ourselves back in ways both big and small, by lacking self-confidence, by not raising our hands, and by pulling back when we should be leaning in. We internalize the negative messages we get throughout our lives – the messages that say it's wrong to be outspoken, aggressive, more powerful than men. We lower our own expectations of what we achieve. We continue to do the majority of the housework and child care. We compromise our career goals to make room for partners and children who may not even exist yet. Compared to our male colleagues, fewer of us aspire to senior positions. (2015: 8)

It's because of the distinctive challenges that academic work sets for women that the tools, approaches and resources here are so important. Women must be all the more clear on their values and their own definitions of success. While there are many and varied remedies to address these challenges and inequity institutionally – including examining types of contracts that are less accessible to different categories of academic workers, reviewing hiring and promotion procedures and doing institution-wide pay audits – this is a complex issue. But what is clear is that success is not just a matter of your abilities, natural talent, or efforts.

SUCCESS IS ABOUT WORK *AND* LIFE

Success for academic workers is always personal. It interfaces with personal values and life. Work can both impinge on wider life and be affected by it. 'Work–life balance' is an issue for academic workers of all ages. For example, research with academic workers born in the late 1960s and 1970s (so-called 'Generation X-ers') report a high degree of commitment to their careers but also strong desires to live balanced lives that emphasize quality over quantity of work and express values around pursuing stimulating and interesting research in more prestigious journals. Work success, for them, is not defined by face time 'in the office' but on using time effectively:

> There's really nothing to be gained by closing your door and working until 11:00 o'clock at night, other than the tenure hurdle that is somewhere out there. If you want to pole vault over it, you go right ahead, but no one here is going to back up the Brinks truck and start dumping all this cash on you, simply because you've decided to work like you have three jobs. So that's the approach I take – sometimes you have to know when there's this point of diminishing return, where if I keep pounding at this one front, then yes, I may nail it, but at the same time, it will then be for a very high cost in other areas. (Helms, 2010: 9)

In her book drawing together the accounts on their life and work of 11 Generation X academic workers, Elwood Watson contrasts the views of success implicit in these views:

> many of us are not willing to sacrifice our family, health, or private life simply to obtain certain goals. The desire of many … to maintain a healthy personal life while climbing the company ladder is not due to a sense of narcissism; it is due to a rational concern. Many of us have seen the price that too many of our peers, as well as a number of our Boomer and in some cases Silent Generation coworkers, have paid by putting family second to career or failing to maintain valuable personal relationships. (2013: xiii)

Despite these strains, most academic workers desire and seek more balance in their life but also want to be successful in both personal and work realms (whatever that might look like) (Helms, 2010). All the participants interviewed by Helms (ibid.) indicated that at least some aspect of their work–life balance was unsatisfactory.

Too often, this desire for more balanced 'life-work' success is less a reluctant compromise than an empowered informed trade-off. As an academic worker expressed in her response to a call for female workers not to 'opt for the less stressful and challenging role for an easy life':

> My decision not to try and climb higher on the academic ladder comes down to precisely this – I don't want the stress, thanks. I want to have a life outside my job. Those of my colleagues (male or female) who are getting to the higher positions are those who spend all their waking hours working. This is a problem with the culture of academia as a whole; I don't think women (or men) who reject it should be criticised. The whole culture should shift. (Guardian Higher Education Network, 2014)

As numerous delegates from our workshops have reminded us, the challenges posed with reconciling balance in 'life' and 'work' defy age and career stage. Children, siblings, parents, and all manner of other family and friends exhert wider social demands for our care, time,

and presence. Discussions over what success should look like will come later but, for now, our conception of success is firmly that academic life and personal life (and their attendant 'successes') are so inextricably linked that they should be seen as either symbiotic or even unified. As success in academic work links to wider values and personal life, including family, relationships and well-being, 'work–life balance' has become an important and difficult challenge for most academic workers.

SUCCESS AND QUALITY ARE DIFFERENT

Academic work may appear similar in nature, but as with wine and whisky, we all know that quality matters. Yet, what quality is or how it can be inferred is far less obvious. Success links to quality but in indirect ways. Peer acclaim, awards, social kudos, reason: all can be invoked to claim or signify success. This risks negating the importance of values in academic work. What may constitute success for different academic workers may, therefore, be very different.

Should academic workers focus on success or quality in their work? While an academic worker has a strong role in determining the inherent quality of their work, their influence on its success is less direct. Quality is, arguably, neither necessary nor sufficient for success. Some academic workers can take lower-quality work and squeeze every ounce of 'success potential' out of it. It garners influence on the world, not through its quality but via the positioning of the academic worker to ensure that it influences policymakers or government (Smith and Stewart, 2016b). A department may privilege a volume of papers published over their visibility or quality, thereby giving a localized success – albeit likely at the cost of external reputation. Citations and acclaim can also be out of step with the quality of the work (Greenhalgh and Fahy, 2015). Similarly, our own personal sense of 'our best papers' often differs from those of our peers, based on citations, downloads, and awareness. Work that provides an incremental but definite shift to a new way of seeing may get lost in a flood of new papers by others. With growth in the number of journals in which research can be published, some have argued that there is just too much 'research' out there – most of it of insufficient quality (Bornmann and Mutz, 2015), and published in so-called 'predatory' journals that lack basic peer-review and quality standards. An agenda on 'more outputs' can lead to expedience, with more substantial work being chopped up, demarcated and compromised to ensure that more papers are published.

Many academic workers are supportive of the concept that good work is influential work but sceptical of narrow conceptions of success with quality (Smith and Stewart, 2016b): academic research can be influential despite its low quality, superficial attractiveness to the mass media or its ready applicability. Conceptions of influence themselves can be too simplistic, such as equating influencing a guideline or policy with *really* influencing the world (Greenhalgh and Fahy, 2015). Moreover, success of research in influencing this world may be less about the quality of the research per se than the positioning of the academic workers(s) involved, particularly in relation to forms of privilege, such as time, positioning, and proximity to power (Smith and Stewart, 2016b). This further raises deeper issues about the degree to which academic work should address the interests of society and government or retain a strong sense of independence and academic freedom from these interests. In both teaching and research, distinctions need to be drawn between short-term and longer success (ibid.).

High-quality teaching may impact on students over the long term, but receive weaker student feedback at the immediate end of a course.

IS SUCCESS SUBJECTIVE OR OBJECTIVE?

Academic success is, like culture, both very real yet simultaneously very tricky. While success may immediately seem as real and as concrete as the chair you are sitting on, on closer examination it is a lot more elusive and socially bounded. Peer reviewers of scholarship and funding applications will discuss and often argue at length around the relative success of an applicant's career based on their academic outputs. Factors such as career stage, disruptions and method, all come into play. Furthermore, conventions around academic work vary so much across disciplines. John Swales (2009) captured these differences in astounding detail in his qualitative research ('ethnography') of a single three-storey-high university building at the University of Michigan. In the building, he uncovered the nuances of three areas of work there: the Herbarium (a place of research for systemic botany using dried plants), the English Language Institute (helping students and staff with English) and a centralized computer support facility. While clearly the nature of the work is different, the nature of success was very different, too, along with the practises, conventions, norms, preoccupations, and annoyances in what amounted to three different scholarly worlds.

Such differences mean that success is best approached as a social construct. While success incorporates personal values, it is not mind-determined – one cannot become successful in academic work just because one believes that one is successful. Rather, success is 'out there' as a form of social perception and is influenced by many social factors, many of which particular groups or individuals will disagree with. For example, degrees of success in academic work can be inferred by examining the work against contextual standards and conventions, but these tend to be specific to disciplines, organizations, and countries. Judgements can be made regarding the quality of teaching against peers' assessments or the amount of innovation in research or from quantified metrics of teaching quality, citations, and impact. Yet, many are sceptical of the simplistic use of such measures. How much can these incorporate the nuances of knowledge development in particular fields, let alone the values of the individual academic worker? More basic conceptions of success are still contested. Governments are consistently seeking for academic workplaces to broaden their conceptions of success (Bornmann, 2013). Research is increasingly evaluated, less in terms of publications and more in terms of 'returns on investment', 'innovations accrued' and 'societal impact' including, 'third stream activities, societal benefits, societal quality, usefulness, public values, knowledge transfer, and societal relevance' (ibid.: 217).

Success in this way involves the diverse perspectives of multiple stakeholders, agendas, and conventions. Sometimes, these variations create conflict between types of research, notably applied research (with seemingly more ready application) versus 'basic' or discovery science that may take decades to be influential, if at all (Bornmann, 2013). Similarly, research that may have a high degree of local application and according influence may not receive many citations or recognition as a contribution to knowledge by national and international peers (Smith and Stewart, 2016b).

While success in academic workplaces is slippery, neither is it wholly subjective. Not everything becomes successful just because it is produced or done, nor does something become successful because an individual perceives it as such, wants this or believes this to be. Many of us, I am sure, know of colleagues whose views of their own relative success are at odds with those of their wider peers. An academic worker does not become successful just because they set goals and meet them. Nor can they be deemed to be successful simply because they see themselves as being 'successful'. The new PhD graduate may believe that their thesis will revolutionize their discipline but this does not make it so. It is important, too, for success not to be too parochial. Van Gogh's society during his lifetime did not recognize him as a successful painter. Was he then not successful? Few would argue that this is the case. His success could not be appreciated in his lifetime. Similarly, academic workers who collaborate with commercial organizations will quickly realize that success comes in many forms beyond the academic realm, including products sold and intellectual property protected. The researcher may lament: 'But does it actually work?!' while the profit-focused retailer gleefully counts the units sold.

Success in any field is then neither totally in the 'eye of the beholder' nor objectively 'out there' for all to see and agree with. Success will ultimately be determined via a complex fusion of factors, easier to see in their specifics but hard to define in generalities.

APPROACHING SUCCESS IN ACADEMIC KNOWLEDGE WORK: OCCLUDED GAMES AND GENRES

We live fairly effortlessly with elusive social concepts every day of our lives and quite readily make trade-offs in decisions about quality, quantity, and visibility around all manner of things. Should I buy one expensive pair of designer shoes (like Bailey) or three bargain-bin pairs (like Alex!)? Of course, a lot depends on what we value, what we need these things for, and the perceived financial and social costs of your choices. Nor is there one inherent 'right answer'. Even though some people may have strong opinions, there can be a wrong choice for each of us, depending on circumstances, but there is no one inherent right choice for all of us.

We can choose to pretend that this ambiguity and social dimension does not exist or always seek bland moderation. Academic approaches that provide tricks and tips for success can hold such normative assumptions about what success in academic work should look like. We don't believe that this reflects the nature of academic work as extreme knowledge work, particularly around the place of values in it. How then can we best approach how we work toward success in our academic work? Approaching academic work as a series of 'semi-occluded' games is the best framing that we have come across for conveying the challenge of doing academic work successfully.

Hermann Hesse describes The Glass Bead Game in his novel of the same name. This game is played in a fictional place around about the twenty-fifth century and involves an isolated community of intellectual scholars who devote their time to running a school for boys and mastering and playing The Glass Bead Game, the main challenge of which is that rules are never specifically stated but can only be inferred. The game involves a synthesis of knowledge from the arts and sciences with progress dependent on making deep connections between various often seemingly unrelated topics. The challenges of playing The Glass Bead Game

well are similar to those in being successful in academic work (Swales, 2004; Christensen and Eyring, 2011). Many of the rules can only be inferred from the behaviour of others and consequent successes or failures in the game. There seem to be manifold exceptions and considerations to take into account when playing.

Mastering the game is challenging enough, but in the absence of entirely clear explicit formal rules, being successful can be extremely difficult. There are many occluded games in academic work. Swales (2004) concludes that these extend to include the genres represented in academic book and grant proposals; journal reviews; examiner discussions; book and proposal reviews; peer evaluations; all manner of letters for applications, responses, and invitations; even phone calls and emails. The ability of emerging academic workers to tune into the stated and unstated rules of academic games and genres that they navigate is key to being successful at these games. Crucially, games and genres differ in different settings; what makes for clear success in one setting may not be as successful in another. Mastering success in academia is about mastering its games and its genres – mysterious, challenging, and infuriating as they sometimes are. Again, this is why tricks-and-tips approaches to academic writing and work are limited: they simply cannot deal with the scope and range of variations at play across disciplines, organizations, countries, and … and … and … and ultimately people. However, pointedly we also say that at any one time, each and every academic worker should be aware of what success in their research, teaching, and engagement should look like: what, in short, is indicated by success indicators.

SUCCESS INDICATORS AND THE SUCCESS PYRAMID

Success indicators are at the apex of The Success Pyramid. For every phase of their work, academic workers should specify, work toward and evaluate their progress against their own success indicators. These indicators identify what will stand for success; they allow for the nature of success to be specified and its presence to be determined and are long term, transcending and responsive to career stages. Your success indicators can and should also express many different facets. The foci of indicators can be more within the walls of academia and academic workplaces (such as being the national authority in a particular approach to teaching or finishing your PhD) or more outside in other communities or organizations, such as influencing national policy or practice in an applied discipline you work in. Motivations can be intrinsic: related to the qualities of doing good academic work for good work's sake or because of your passion for the kind of academic work you do. They can also be focused on extrinsic motivations: financial reward, reputation in your field or status from peers. Most academic workers consciously either make a choice to prioritize a focus on teaching, research or engagement, or to mix the three into a viable set of success indicators. Motivations can be very personal (such as self-improvement) or focused more externally on influencing disciplines or other organizations, including one's own academic workplace. Success indicators are also likely to vary in terms of attainability and ambition, which may, in turn, be dependent on individual attitudes to workload preferences, personal energy levels, life circumstances, vision, and/or motivation.

The appropriateness of one's own success indicators around all of these factors is very dependent on personal context and values. Choices about indicators and our approach to them are not 'zero-sum' games; indicators may leverage or otherwise help each other.

Nevertheless, understanding that we need to make choices around what success looks like is important. It is the vital first step to developing a plan using The Success Pyramid to taking actions to further success.

These indicators should be specific, stated, and unambiguous enough to directly inform the selection of priorities. While successes clearly can happen in the short term ('I answered all my emails today!'), in The Success Pyramid, these short-term successes are better conceived as 'tasks' that, when completed, indicate progress toward the meeting of subsequent goals and priorities and ultimately *attaining or furthering* one's success indicators. As such, success indicators should reflect longer phases of academic work lasting 3–30 years and are verifiable. Success indicators are essential to help evaluate, map, and monitor success. While such indicators can also exist at the department and institutional level, the focus here is on the personal. What does success look like for you, at this time and at *your* career stage?

SUCCESS INDICATORS OVER ACADEMIC CAREERS

Determining what constitutes or can help us to be successful in academic work is vital but also challenging. We are consciously wary throughout this book of being too prescriptive about what success should or must look like in academic workers. It is not for us to say what *your* success should look like. Some academic workers are conscious of entirely assimilating the seeming goals of academic workplaces – and react against these – while others pragmatically assimilate to these workplace success indicators almost intuitively. Each has implications, trade-offs, and potential benefits, harms, and costs.

What factors should academic workers consider when specifying their success indicators? It is almost impossible here to provide an exhaustive list – our values, contexts, disciplines, countries, and aspirations are so diverse. To be successful in academia requires a mindful tuning into the games and genres involved within your 'academic worlds' (Table 3.1).

Table 3.1   Example Success Indicators over Career

Success indicators by career stage

Emerging	Establishing	Established
• Attain my doctorate • Build a distinct area of expertise • Impact, enrich, and support my students • Become a leader in my faculty/department	• Be nationally known in defined research area • Impact, enrich, and support my students and mentees • Become a leader externally	• Be internationally known in a defined research area • Impact, enrich, and support my students and mentees • Do work I love that impacts _____ • Obtain a senior administrative role within my institution

Success for the emerging academic worker

For doctoral students and early career academic workers, success indicators are often clearer and more consistent. The doctorate remains the common requirement for achieving career

progression in most countries, and in many countries is the entry qualification for the academic worker. However, it is increasingly becoming an expectation, too, that students will already have had work published when their doctorates are finished; in some disciplines, this involves a significant number of papers and independent funding (Semenza, 2014). As noted, the expectations for many even early career academic jobs are considerable to the point of intimidation (Pitt and Mewburn, 2016).

As such, for doctoral students, getting their doctorate is likely to be the primary and vital success indicator of this period, but is increasingly accompanied by other success indicators related to teaching, publications, and leadership. In relation to values, the period of graduate study is when emerging academic workers often start to establish their scholarly identities: their personal sense of who they are, what their work seeks to do, and what they will stand for in their work (McAlpine et al., 2008). However, in many circumstances, it is also a time of establishing evidence of credibility in meeting the challenges that come during careers around publishing, grants, engagement, and service. Almost immediately, in the face of these demands, choices need to be made regarding time, effort, and energy – this is why success indicators need to be set early in academic careers. We know, too, that many (sometimes most) doctoral students do not intend or subsequently choose academic career paths. This is important and can also be embraced at this stage with the aim of tuning into the success indicators required for work in any particular field, industry, or job.

To develop the right success indicators at this stage, it's essential (and often challenging) to try to establish even basic elements, such as whether to aim for an academic career. While there are variations across disciplines and countries, attaining first-rung jobs in academic workplaces usually involves the demonstration of an early credibility in teaching and research. It is not uncommon for PhD students in the medical sciences to need around 10 publications with some grant-funding successes to be competitive for postdoctoral funding, whereas other fields will look for publications only from the doctorate. Likely, the best insights for choosing success indicators will come from talking to more experienced academic workers, supervisors, and mentors – particularly those who are well placed to comment via sitting on review and selection panels. They have special exposure to the occluded games that go on there around productivity and competency discussions.

Success for establishing academic workers

Yet, as careers progress, scholarly identity continues to evolve, success gets murkier (and messier), and the facets that are essential or necessary to academic work and workers becomes less clear and arguably more diverse. This reflects the diversity of activities (and roles) in academic workplaces and the nature of the extreme knowledge work that academic workers engage in with increasing independence over time.

It is difficult to argue that academic workers with research in their roles should not publish. But whereas, traditionally, this has meant writing books and manuscript articles, emphasis on each differs by discipline. Furthermore, dissemination can also now occur through a myriad of other channels via blogs, social media, and mass media. Success for academic workers still involves writing, but where and how this occurs is varied and contested. This realization comes even before the relative success of particular types of publications are considered

within these realms. Some disciplines place extremely high emphasis for manuscript success on journal impact factors, whereas other disciplines place little emphasis on this. Success in teaching is also diverse: while institutions routinely measure teaching quality via student satisfaction, such measures are done in the short term and may struggle to capture the quality of teaching that is challenging, disruptive to core beliefs or otherwise transformative. The ways in which academic workers engage with internal and external communities becomes more diverse with career progression. Expectations within disciplines tend to increase around both volume of work and visibility. As careers progress and diversify, success becomes ever more diverse. At this stage, the degree to which success indicators assimilate or reflect those of the workplace is a matter of individual choice. But even when a career is framed as a triumph of personal academic freedom over external pressures (and attendant institutionalized oppression), this is itself a success claim. Academic work is never mere activity but is always predicated on assumptions about success.

While those at this stage are likely to have transgressed and been involved in a wide range of the occluded games and genres of academic work, mysteries remain to be uncovered and risks taken. Membership of committees that decide on promotion and funding may influence many factors of importance for this stage, but also be closed until some success has also been demonstrated in these. This catch-22 is challenging but can often be offset via wider relationships and networks that position the individual better for being included, including perceived successes in other areas and/or other perceptions of competency and relationships. Talking to others, listening and tuning into the formal written and informal hidden rules and conventions of the games and genres is key.

Success for established academic workers

Academics who have been in positions for longer tend to produce more papers of lower quality and impact (Gingras et al., 2008; Ebadi and Schiffauerov, 2016). Academic workers in full-time salaried positions for over 10 years face different challenges than those who are emerging or establishing. Progress is likely to have been made in skills, learning, and confidence in teaching, research and engagement activities. Promotion, career progress, and other notoriety as an expert and/or mentor may be evident. More deeply, scholarly identity is established with a clearer sense of what the scholarship should stand for, aspire to, and be founded on. All so easy? Reasons for variations in academic work over generations include availability of funding, the ease of creating collaboration (for example, before social media or email versus after) but also because success indicators are different.

Leadership or administration roles and their attendant complexities and challenges are likely to be far more common in this group. So are academic workers who want to change course from one focus to another, or to leave the academic workforce entirely. Likely, the peaks and troughs of academic life may be respectively less high and less low, but demands, expectations and responsibilities abound for this senior group. The challenge of staying true to one's values and scholarly identity are likely to be particularly tested with these roles. Demotivation is more likely less due to employment fears than facing and tackling seemingly similar barriers to progress and success over weeks, months, and decades.

Academic workers at this stage are likely to be well placed at being adept at the various games and genres associated with academic success, and also at gaining access to seemingly

'closed' groups to master new ones. High-level lobbying, persuasion, and relationships are likely to be influential at this stage. Reputation can be harnessed and leveraged to further ends. With reduced motivation not uncommon at this stage, wanting to play academic games at all is likely more the issue than how to do so well.

CHALLENGES IN SELECTING SUCCESS INDICATORS

Selecting success indicators is the first step in deciding what the right thing to do is. However, it is not easy, and those you choose should reflect your values but also take account of your career stage, context, and circumstances. Once you have established your success indicators, these can then inform your priorities, goals, and tasks. There, nevertheless, remain a number of common pitfalls around success indicators.

Confusing success indicators with goals or tasks

The most common mistake we see when academic workers attempt to set success indicators is confusing these overriding aspirations with smaller, shorter-term goals. While achievements like 'answering all my emails', 'keeping Monday free for my research', or 'developing teaching skills' may be important, they themselves cannot represent larger success indicators. This confusion often occurs because, at that time, these smaller issues are the ones preoccupying time and attention, but their resolution does not, in any reasonable form, represent an indicator of career success.

Success indicators are too safe

While success indicators in academia are both personal and personalized, academic workers have a wider societal obligation to seek acceptable standards for their teaching, research, and engagement. Yet, this can look very different, cannot necessarily be judged in the short term, and should respond to personal circumstances. Spending extensive periods reading and thinking may be exactly the sort of preparation needed for a consequent substantial work breakthrough. Nevertheless, success indicators that are boringly safe, parochial, or lacking in ambition risk appearing to be indicators of anything but success. Success indicators should make you excited and feel renewed passion for your work. Being challenged and even uncomfortable is part of setting appropriate success indicators. The wide prevalence of failure across and throughout academic work can also lead us to set moderate success indicators that don't stretch us. We will address failure in a later chapter, but an openness to being challenged by the prospect of failure is important in setting indicators. It is normal for appropriate success indicators to lead to feelings of fear, consternation, or challenge.

Not incorporating your values

Academic work is so far from being easy. The work itself is very challenging in its nature and diversity, jobs, funding, and publication are extremely competitive. These factors and others

exert many heavy pressures on academic workers but in themselves do not produce success or help identify success indicators. In some situations, dwelling extensively on these pressures (real though they are) can lead us to develop success indicators that do not sufficiently represent our values. This may bring success in the shorter term, but over the longer term risks demotivation and burnout, particularly at the cost of other things that we may value such as family, friends, leisure time, or hobbies.

We recognize that for some academic workers this urgency to incorporate personal values in work may appear 'privileged'. Nevertheless, as extreme knowledge work, wherever and whenever you can, it's important to try to incorporate your values in your academic work. Failing to do this excessively downplays how academic work is done, its intense demands on creativity, endurance, skills, and time; in short, its status as extreme knowledge workers – characteristics that hold across disciplines and locations (Helms, 2010). Concerned claims that academic work has become routinized (so-called 'McJobs') do not stand up when compared to the reality of most academic workers' daily lives (Nadolny and Ryan, 2013). Of 14,600 academic workers surveyed by Kinman and Wray (2013), 79 per cent report always or often having to work 'very intensely' but with high autonomy: 92 per cent at least sometimes can decide how to do their work; 82 per cent at least sometimes decide what they do; and 93 per cent have a say over the way they work, while 86 per cent view their work time as being flexible. Indeed, there is good evidence that academic workers can do their work in private space (usually the home) away from the formal academic workplace (Kuntz, 2012). Freedom in how to achieve success, for now, appears to be more common than not.

Success indicators are not really about success

As entry and progression in academic workplaces involves being successful at occluded academic games involving occluded genres, knowing what success is is not even always straightforward. While it may be easier for emerging academics to specify indicators, such as getting a doctorate or permanent position within a particular timeline, for established academic workers without such major milestones, specifying success can be a lot more slippery. Success indicators can come to reflect less the academic work we do than our own needs for safety, stability, smoothness, and even control. Context can influence this, too. Workplaces that, for example, tolerate or even reward publishing in predatory journals may unintentionally foster concepts of success that are at odds with how success is conventionally conceived in academic settings. It is important that the success indicators selected are credible both internally and externally against norms and reasonable expectations of academic work.

Indicators are unclear or unstated

Success is always at stake in success indicators. It is easy to race to doing tasks before we are clear on what success for us should be. Take time to hone your indicators to ensure that they are overarching, unambiguous, verifiable, and explicit enough. In our experience, avoiding the 'trouble-to-task trap' is particularly difficult when people are faced with situations around which there are perceived social norms or expectations on academic workers that make them feel compelled to act hastily or be seen to 'do something'. Emotion, adrenaline, and ethics

come into play. As you develop your success indicators, take time to step back and consider them more objectively. Comments and input from credible insiders in the occluded games of academic work, including colleagues, supervisors, mentors, and trusted others, may all help ensure that success indicators are sufficiently clear. Academic work must, by nature, consider its success. It is not mere activity but is always a *focused* activity that should take account of its bigger purpose for students, society, the discipline/knowledge community, the workplace, and your values and circumstances.

🖊 OVER TO YOU

Set Your Success Indicators

Work through The Success Pyramids (Figure 3.2). Use them to consider and specify what your three main success indicators will be for the next phase of your career. Taking account of your values and career stage, note down your top three success indicators and place one in each of the pyramids provided. Make the indicators individualized, real, responsive, and reflective of your values, career aspirations, and circumstances. Later in this book, you will again revisit The Success Pyramid and the success indicators that you noted here as you then work to set priorities, goals, and tasks based on them.
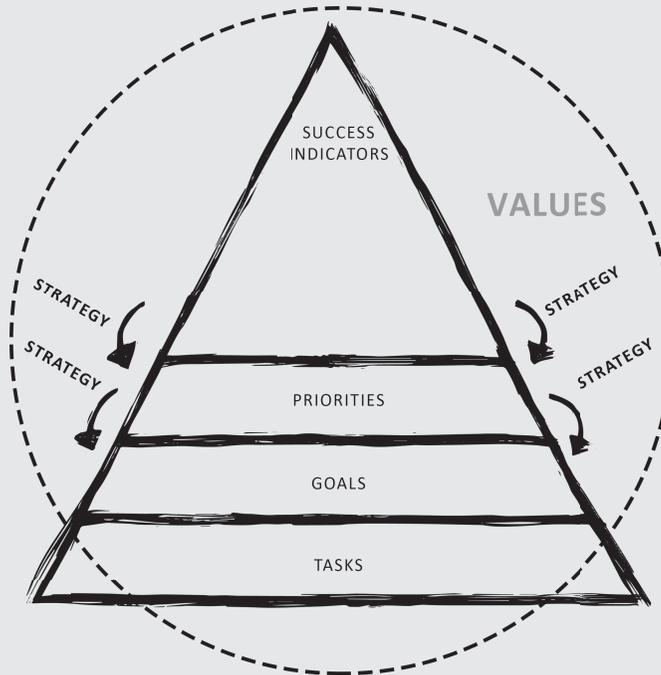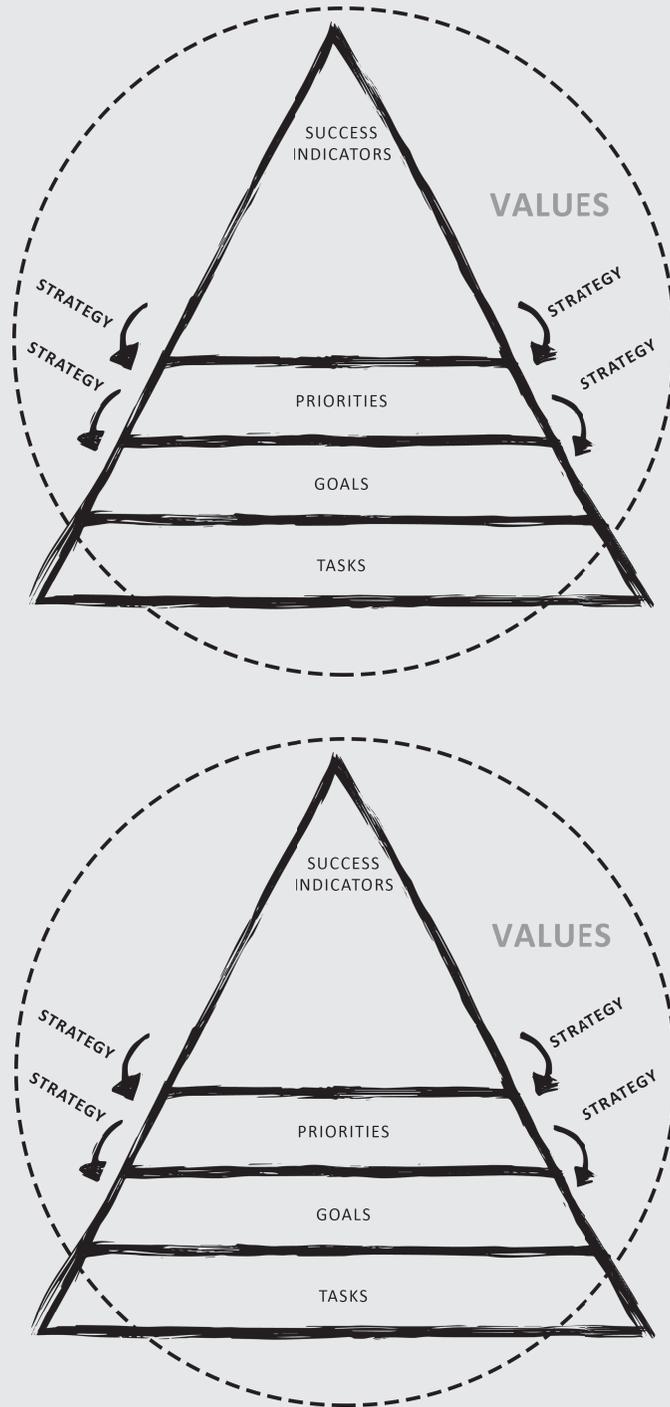

(Continued)

Figure 3.2   Setting Your Success Indicators

Now that you've spent some time noting down your success indicators, it's good to reflect on their appropriateness and come back to them periodically for revision.

━━━ REMARKABLE RESOURCES ━━━

Winners by Alastair Campbell

One of the UK's most connected commentators across politics, sport, business, and public life, Alastair Campbell (2015) distils the key mindsets, approaches, and reactions that characterize those who succeed in some of life's most competitive and demanding spheres and activities, including sport, business, and politics.

Key messages

- To be successful, a clear view of what constitutes success is necessary.
- Your strategy, priorities and actions must all align.
- Responding effectively to setbacks is as important as doing the right things.
- Many factors relating to your mindset, teamwork, leadership, and reactions to your use of data can help your success.

Key applications

- Inspiration and insights for academic work can be taken from success across many other fields.
- Make sure that an enduring focus on your success indicators inform your actions in your daily work.
- Don't get distracted by the noise of others' success indicators: reflection and clarity but ultimately a decisive focus will serve you well.

Leading by Alex Ferguson and Michael Moritz

Arguably the world's most successful football manager, Alex Ferguson and Michael Moritz (2015) share lessons on what it takes to achieve a quarter of a century of ongoing success in one of the world's most competitive sports.

Key messages

- Don't underestimate the importance of listening, reading, and observing to making yourself successful; talking is overrated.
- Set higher standards for success and owning these in your conduct; daily interactions and conduct is vital.

(Continued)

- Success is heavily dependent on consistently remaining hungry for success and working very hard, while avoiding complacency and drift.
- Focus and good use of time and failure are integral to success.

Key applications

- So much about success is not about wanting it but about your values, working patterns, and reactions. Ensure these reflect the best of you.
- To be more successful, read widely, find other interests, listen, and watch more.
- Try to react well to failure, distractions, time constraints, and criticism: all are potentially vital for future success.