



## Tact, push and principle



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This year marks the 40th anniversary of our company, so I was asked to share some thoughts on running a successful business to last that long. Not that 40 years is such a long time – in the grand scheme of things, these years are but a blip on the radar screen. But for us mortals, it’s a generation – a lifetime we’re given that can either be squandered wandering in the desert of life or enjoyed living in the Promised Land.

My first thought is that I cannot take all the credit for success in business. I’ve done my part, but there is not enough space here to mention the many teachers, mentors, friends and colleagues who all contributed to my development and growth. I can truly say I could not have done it without them.

My next thought is how to define success. To the writing of books, there is no end, and the business section of a library is no exception. There are plenty of good reads on formulating good business plans, effective marketing and business leadership, with financial performance being the critical measure of success. While I can’t disagree on the importance of these things, in my experience, success in business – as in life – is simply doing the right thing in the right way and getting the right result.

One interesting book on the subject is *Tact, Push and Principle* by William Makepeace Thayer, written in 1888 “... to prepare a volume for young [people] that would be what they need, for what the times demand.” The book is illustrated by facts and incidents from the lives of successful people, and suggests that the most practical way to learn the elements of success is by study of their lives.

Thayer writes that success is not the mere gratification of personal ambition or gain by deceitful means. To accumulate wealth, to win the highest office or to become famous, does not equate being successful if these were acquired at the expense of principle and honors, or if won by chicanery. The highest success is achieved by making the most of one’s powers for a greater good beyond one’s own fulfillment. For that to happen, one needs the elements of tact, push and principle. Webster defines these terms as:

**Tact** - adroitness and sensitivity in dealing with others or with difficult issues.

**Push** - a vigorous effort to do or obtain something.

**Principle** - a fundamental truth or proposition that serves as the foundation for a system of belief or behavior or for a chain of reasoning.

Whether a business is relatively new or has lasted generations, regardless of changes in technology, business practices and cultural morals, these are the fundamental principles that do not change: honesty, integrity, hard work and respect. These are the trademarks of a successful business, summarized in that one title: Tact, Push and Principle. 