

# Live Your Dash

by Linda Ellis

When I received an invitation to write a “how-to” themed article regarding the success of my small company, I began by reflecting on the many different avenues and routes I’d taken, which ultimately led me toward my own “Road to Success.”

Initially, I’d experienced a mental dilemma which involved the definition of the word “success.” My dictionary reads as follows: the achievement of something planned or attempted. Yet, my current success was neither planned nor attempted. It was more recognized and cultivated.

- Recognized because I perceived, and capitalized upon, an opportunity which required me to venture into a world completely out of the realm of my training and experience.
- Cultivated because I believed in it enough to devote my time, energy, and most importantly, my heart, to its development, growth and success.

Most columnists doling out advice on success would undoubtedly mention how important it is to set goals and have a strategy to help you achieve and accomplish each. I, too, feel it is important to set goals, yet I feel it is equally important to remain flexible and fully aware of opportunities that arise during life’s journey that may not follow suit with rigid plans and goals.

I had spent more than twenty years in the corporate environment, trying to get my hard work and dedication noticed enough to move up the ladder. I had always written creatively as a hobby and began sending my work to a syndicated radio show in town. Before I knew it, opportunity was knocking at my door and I opened it as wide as I could. By following my passion, instead of the plans and goals I’d set, I found my own success.

There is a quote by Norman Vincent Peale which reads: “Throw your heart over the fence and the rest will follow.” If I had to summarize this journey into one sentence, that would have to be it. Because true success, that is, complete success is attained when you find personal fulfillment in what you do, instead of just going through motions to receive a paycheck. It comes down to making a life versus making a living.

I once conveyed these thoughts in a poem to my daughter:

*I hope for you there is success,  
not in what you’ll buy or own,  
but in the pride you feel  
in the person you’re with...  
when you are all alone.*

As “The Dash” author, I’ve often had to walk a fine line between becoming a profitable business owner and owning up to the words of my poem. I truly believe that my legacy of success will be found more in the millions of lives and hearts that have been touched by my words than by the balance in my bank account.



## The Dash

*I read of a man who stood to speak  
at the funeral of a friend.  
He referred to the dates on her tombstone  
from the beginning...to the end.*

*He noted that first came the date of her birth  
and spoke of the following date with tears,  
but he said what mattered most of all  
was the dash between those years.*

*For that dash represents all the time  
that she spent alive on earth  
and now only those who loved her  
know what that little line is worth.*

*For it matters not, how much we own,  
the cars...the house...the cash.  
What matters is how we live and love  
and how we spend our dash.*

*So think about this long and hard,  
are there things you’d like to change?  
For you never know how much time is left  
that can still be rearranged.*

*If we could just slow down enough  
to consider what’s true and real  
and always try to understand  
the way other people feel.*

*And be less quick to anger  
and show appreciation more  
and love the people in our lives  
like we’ve never loved before.*

*If we treat each other with respect  
and more often wear a smile  
remembering that this special dash  
might only last a little while.*

*So when your eulogy is being read  
with your life’s actions to rehash,  
would you be proud of the things they say  
about how you spent your dash?*

*Author, Poet and Inspirational Speaker, Linda Ellis, spent many years working in the corporate environment, but after her first poem was shared on a syndicated radio program in 1994, an alternative career began to emerge and she soon came to the realization that her true passion was writing. She left the corporate world behind to pursue her dream, inspiring others through her writing, speaking, and her ability to make a special connection with her audiences through her insightful and thought-provoking presentations. Her first gift book, *The Dash, Making a Difference with Your Life*, co-authored with Mac Anderson, has sold more than 250,000 copies. Her second gift book, *Simple Truths of Life* is scheduled for publication this September, and *Every Single Day* is due out in 2010. Please visit Linda at: [www.lindaellis.net](http://www.lindaellis.net)*

