
Dream your way to success



By [Grace Segran](#)

It's not all about business plans and spreadsheets and getting to the next goal. The picture of real success is at least partly in your mind.

Business schools give you the tools: financial literacy, management and economic theory, marketing... it's how you put it all together in the working world that determines success or failure. And that ability to combine is not necessarily a logical function, but one that involves a certain amount of creative thinking - the kinds of right brain activity we think of as having minimal importance in the office or on decision making.

However, [Marc le Menestrel](#) believes that psychology and emotions have everything to do with the business world. He describes the complex web of forces that drive decision making as “dreams”.

“Dreams,” the decision scientist says, “are connected to the source of your motivation, what is really important for you. What do you dream about? What can you accomplish at your full potential? What is really motivating you to live this life fully?”

Le Menestrel who teaches business at the Universitat Pompeu Fabra (Barcelona) and is a Visiting Professor of Ethics at INSEAD, studies how desires and impulses influence people when they make important decisions both in business and in life. He spoke to INSEAD Knowledge on the sidelines of the INSEAD Social Entrepreneurship Conference in Jakarta recently.

What do you *really* want?

In his work, le Menestrel encourages business people to integrate different parts of their identity into their professional outlook. He says the framework of dreaming can be a useful tool that allows people to activate the non-cognitive parts of themselves into their business lives. “Dreaming and visioning are techniques that connect the rational framework with the non-cognitive dimensions such as the spiritual, cultural and personal dimensions,” he elaborates.

Through his work, le Menestrel found that the majority of people dream of being deeply loved, of being part of a community that reflects their values, and of contributing to the lives of other people in some way. Yet, to date, management practice has tended to separate the personal from the professional. Le Menestrel shows executives how to incorporate these dreams into their professional lives.

To this end, he conducts “dreaming sessions” at business schools and at companies that allow executives to think carefully about who they are and what they want from life. He then helps them to develop plans that allow them to achieve these objectives and, more crucially, find satisfaction in life. “Dreaming sessions are practical sessions,” says le Menestrel. “We dream about your life and we structure how to live your dreams. It is very impactful, and often a tipping point for people.”

Using dreams to make better decisions

So how does this work in practice? Take the example of an entrepreneur who wants to develop his own business. It is vital for the entrepreneur to integrate aspects of his own personality into the entrepreneurship project, says le Menestrel. “It does not have to be a trade-off between his personal life and his professional project. To make sure the two are aligned and nurture each other, we connect the entrepreneurship plan with other aspects

of his life, such as his family or passions. This ensures that he is able to keep an eagle eye on his entrepreneurship project, while remaining emotionally nourished.”

According to Le Menestrel, the process of clarifying the vision we have for our lives empowers us to make decisions that more fully reflect our values and aspirations.

Long-term effects of dreaming

The other major benefit of using the dreaming framework is that it forces us to take a long view of our lives, beyond our immediate project or job, says Le Menestrel. He argues that success in life is not just achieving the next immediate goal, but rather, as finding satisfaction in the many dimensions of your life.

“By having a clear sense of your dreams and your personality, you can be prepared for unexpected situations, and reassess your goals when things don’t go according to plan,” says Le Menestrel. “You want to be the master of your goal, not the prisoner of your goal. You can live your life using the unexpected as an opportunity for self-accomplishment and not as a failure to reach your goals.”

Developing adaptive capabilities

Le Menestrel believes that taking this perspective allows you to remain nimble in the face of changing circumstances and also to see your life in broad strokes, allowing you to rebalance the components in your life as your life evolves. By being in touch with your dreams, you become conscious of the process of transforming yourself.

“The ability to transform is particularly vital in the business world,” says Le Menestrel. “Companies and individuals who understand and manage their transformation process are more likely to succeed and stay ahead of the competition. Many failures arise from being prisoners to our goals when the situation requires us to liberate ourselves from our goals and modify them to adapt to the changing context.”

“Having a clear and articulated dream beyond goals offers new adaptive capabilities that create resilience in changing environments.”

Marc Le Menestrel is Associate Professor at Universitat Pompeu Fabra in Barcelona and a Visiting Professor of Ethics at INSEAD.

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