As research managers, we should be in the business of building long term, successful research operations at our institutions and a respected profession. But what does success mean? What does long term success mean? Building upon the general concepts in the book *Success Built to Last*, by Jerry Porras, Stewart Emery, and Mark Thompson (Penguin Group 2007), this article seeks to stimulate thought about how we can make research management more successful, both on campus and profession-wide.

Porras, Emery, and Thompson interviewed 200 enduringly successful people (“Builders”) between 1996-2006, including such individuals as Madeline Albright, David Barry, Bono, Bill Clinton, Sally Field, Rudy Giuliani, Peter Jennings, Carl Lewis, Condoleezza Rice, Charles Schwab, Barbara Walters, and Dieter Zetsche (pp. 263-270). The authors then analyzed the interviews to find the most frequent patterns of behavior and thinking. From my perspective, and in light of our recent Leadership UTSA presentation, I want to focus on the following aspects of Builders:

**Integrity.** Merriam-Webster defines integrity as the firm adherence to a code of especially moral or artistic values (Merriam-Webster online dictionary, March 20, 2012). Based upon the interviews, the authors say that Builders are those who exhibit integrity over the long term, in their professional and personal lives (p. 69). People who lack integrity may have short term or isolated success, but not enduring success.

Integrity is a critical component of research administration in particular and higher education in general. All university employees, whether faculty, staff, or students, must exhibit integrity on a daily basis. In the area of research, funding by the American taxpayer of discretionary R&D projects is based upon the public perception that faculty research projects are objective and hence have integrity. If the American people perceive federal research projects as lacking objectivity and/or integrity, then the political underpinnings of such funding is eroded.

This issue of *NCURA Magazine*, focusing on conflicts of interest, is a natural fit with the concept of integrity since it is possible that a conflict of interest can also be illustrative of the lack of integrity. These are serious matters and all employees in the research enterprise should aim for the highest integrity possible.

For research managers, what does integrity mean in the workplace? I can name several examples: 1) Respect and civility towards colleagues; 2) Following through on what you promised; and 3) Keeping your word. These characteristics define research managers as professionals. And as the authors say in their book, acting with integrity in all aspects of your life is a hallmark of a Builder.

**Passion.** Another trait of Builders, which is the topic of Chapter 3, is that they possess a “portfolio of passions” that they build their futures around. These are passions that bleed the lines of what is the professional and what is the personal. We see this sort of passion in medical faculty, who became an expert in a field because they wanted to cure a disease. This portfolio need not be large, but it is one that you are drawn to, that taps into your inner being. And, as we all
know, if we are passionate about our work, it does not seem like work.

**Alignment.** As discussed in Chapter 11, Builders align meaning, thought, and action, both professionally and personally, into a lasting engagement (p. 204). If you want success built to last, create a life that matters to you. How can research managers align meaning, thought, and action in the workplace? Balance between the personal and professional is part of the puzzle, but balance is not The One Thing. Alignment is more important. Builders create lives which go beyond the traditional societal indicators of power, money, and status.

**Failure.** Builders are not afraid to trip or fail. The key is to rise above tripping or failure and use the experience in a constructive manner toward accomplishment of your passions and goals (p. 129). And when you do fail, don’t deny your emotions. The authors quote Archbishop Desmond Tutu on page 130 of the book: “Emotions are a storm that sweeps through your life.”

**Personal Weaknesses.** Builders embrace their weaknesses and use them in a positive manner, e.g., don’t let them rule/ruin their lives (pp. 146-47). Builders claim that it is your choice whether to be a victim or beneficiary of what there is to harvest from difficult circumstances (p. 159). For research managers, it seems that the message is this: We all have weaknesses in the management of research but use them in a positive manner so that research is facilitated at your institution. No one in the university environment is perfect—we have to manage our weaknesses in a responsible way and with integrity.

**Luck and Hard Work.** Builders work hard in their professional and personal lives, and their hard work creates serendipity. All enduringly successful people have worked hard for the luck that came their way, according to the authors (pp. 168-69). To the authors, goals and plans are necessary to Builders because those goals and plans put Builders into a serendipitous position (p. 169). As we all know, people cannot be lucky all the time, and in general they will not succeed if they do not work hard. In other words, work hard and Lady Luck will find you.

**Naked Conversations.** Naked Conversations are brutally honest conversations, often difficult, that Builders seek out—also called “Creative Contention” in the book by Mike McGavick, former Chairman and CEO of Safeco (p. 188). Naked conversations must be focused on issues, not people, so that people do not become defensive and unwilling to engage in the conversation(s) (p. 192). How can this be applied in the research management context? One clear example is having staff meetings where new and exciting ideas come from such contentious discussions. Would this work in your environment? Would staff accept contentious meetings without becoming defensive?

These themes—integrity, passion, alignment, failure, personal weaknesses, luck and hard work, and naked conversations, are critical ingredients in building enduring success in our professional and personal lives. As research managers, how can we more fully build these themes into our daily work, thus becoming enduringly successful research managers?

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**Appendix A: Success Built to Last Chapters**

Chapter 1: From Great to Lasting—Redefining Success
Chapter 2: Love it or Lose—Passions and the Quest for Meaning
Chapter 3: Portfolio of Passions—It’s Not About Balance
Chapter 4: Why Successful People Stay Successful—Integrity to Meaning
Chapter 5: The Silent Scream—Why It’s So Damn Hard to Do What Matters
Chapter 6: The Cause has Charisma—You Don’t Have to Be Charismatic to Be Successful
Chapter 7: The Tripping Point—Always Make New Mistakes
Chapter 8: Wounds to Wisdom—Trusting Your Weaknesses and Using Your Core Incompetencies
Chapter 9: Earning Your Luck—Preparing for Serendipity by Using Big Hairy Audacious Goals
Chapter 10: Naked Conversations—Harvesting Contention
Chapter 11: Creating Alignment—The Environment Always Wins

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