

---

# Characteristics Of A Successful Professional — *A Propensity To Take Risks*

by DAVE KAHLE

What sets the exceptional professional apart from the average? Regardless of what the profession, from sales to psychiatry, the exceptional professionals share certain characteristics. Here's one: the propensity to take risks.

**N**ow, don't get the wrong idea. We're not talking about sky-diving here. Nor are we talking about sinking your life savings in the new start-up dot com that your friend told you about. I don't mean taking risks that might endanger your health, safety or long-term security.

Instead, I am talking about taking risks that force you to move out of your comfort zone on the job — risks that will stimulate you to stretch yourself, to become more competent, to gain skills that you may not have, to expand your abilities and, maybe, in so doing, help you become more effective and more efficient.

Here's an example. When I began my business, my focus was 100 percent on consulting. I had never given a seminar in my life. But I read the books on how to build a consulting practice, and all the experts recommended giving seminars as a way to build your

consulting practice. So I determined to do so.

I developed a program, "How to Find, Interview, Select and Hire a Good Salesperson," and approached the local business college with a proposal to jointly present it. They agreed, and a few months later, I presented my first seminar. It was a huge risk — something I had never done before. It caused me to stretch myself and to learn a new set of skills. I could have failed miserably. But, the seminar was successful. And that one led to another, and that to yet another. Within a couple of years, I had discovered that speaking and training could be major parts of my practice. Today, my speaking and training income exceeds my consulting income by multiples.

If I hadn't taken that first risk, I would never have built a successful speaking practice. That practice has allowed me to travel all over the country, and to

present in many countries around the world. Not only has my income expanded, but my life has broadened as well.

---

## Personal Expansion

That's the kind of risk I'm talking about. It's the kind of risk that calls on you to expand yourself. If you fail, it can be emotionally painful, and perhaps financially troublesome. However, if you are successful, it can lead you to other and greater opportunities.

Test me on this. Talk to someone in your profession who has become exceptionally successful. Ask him/her about the risks they have taken in their professional lives. You'll find, I believe, that almost every successful professional has stretched themselves beyond their comfort zone at a number of different times. It's one of the characteristics of the highly successful professional.

---

## Outside the Comfort Zone

If you can build a propensity to take these kinds of risks into your mind-set, you'll grow faster and further than if you remain safely inside of your comfort zone.

You take risks in a lot of ways. As a salesperson, when you call on a different type of customer than that with which you have become comfortable, you take a risk. For example, when you call on the chief financial officer of a business instead of just the production supervisor, you've stepped out of your comfort zone and taken a risk.

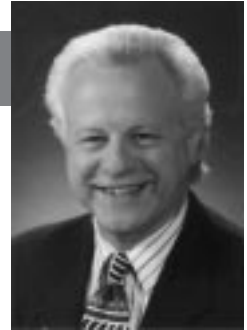
In every profession, when you choose to implement any new strategy or tactic, or you choose to do something differently, you take a risk. When you choose to

try a new way to make a presentation, contact your clients, or relocate your office, you are taking a risk. When you choose to question and then change some long-entrenched habit, you are taking a risk. When you expand your efforts in any direction that calls for you to stretch and attempt something new, you are taking a risk.

Some of those risks will turn out well, others will become failures. Regardless, the simple act of trying something different and new will help you. You'll gain confidence in your abilities, and you'll learn from both your successes as well as your failures. Your life will expand, you'll grow wiser, and you'll become more successful.

That is the sure payoff for every risk thoughtfully taken. ▣

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR:



*Dave Kahle is a consultant and trainer who helps his clients increase their sales and improve their sales productivity. He has trained thousands of salespeople to be more productive in the Information Age economy. He is also the author of 10 Secrets of Time Management for Salespeople, Career Press. For more information, or to contact the author, contact The DaCo Corporation, 3736 West River Drive, Comstock Park, MI 49321; phone: (800) 331-1287; fax: (616) 451-9412; e-mail: [info@davekahle.com](mailto:info@davekahle.com); web site: [www.davekahle.com](http://www.davekahle.com).*

Copyright © 2006, Manufacturers' Agents National Association

One Spectrum Pointe, Suite 150, Lake Forest, CA 92630-2283 • Phone: (949) 859-4040 • Toll-free: (877) 626-2776 • Fax: (949) 855-2973  
E-mail: [MANA@MANAonline.org](mailto:MANA@MANAonline.org) • Web site: [www.MANAonline.org](http://www.MANAonline.org) • All rights reserved. Reproduction without permission is strictly prohibited.