

The Formula for Success: Grabbing the Brass Ring

Success is shown in a chart by the extent to which we assume the role symbolized by the MC voluntarily and constructively – Lois Rodden, Money: How to Find It with Astrology (Data New Press, 1995)

Success is symbolized in the horoscope by the Midheaven (MC). Success is: 'the attainment of a goal and recognition for it; a favourable outcome of something attempted; the attainment of wealth, position, honours.' The etymology of the word lies in *succedere* (to come after, to ascend, to mount) and *successus* (an advance, a coming up; a good result), and both corroborate the MC's astronomical position as an elevated point in the horoscope close to where planets culminate (*culminatus*: to top, to crown) and reach their peak.

The MC sign (as well its aspects from the planets) spotlights **the sort of success that gives us personal fulfilment**, as well as those **aims that we define as success** (be they money, stability, family, love, fame, etc). And in turn, what we would consider failure – what we'd significantly miss if we weren't able to achieve it. Ideally the MC is a **place of triumph**; where we are crowned for our achievements.

When we look at our Midheaven sign – and particularly any planets conjunct the MC – it gives us an idea of **the images or tableaux we have around achievement**: winning an award, being CEO of a company, having a book published, becoming a millionaire, receiving standing ovations, gathering together with our loving family, making the world a better place, etc. Nowadays people associate success with money and fame, and to read some astrological texts on the subject we imagine all we'd need was the Sun in the 10th House or Jupiter on the Midheaven to be famous. But whereas the MC *does* speak of our type of 'fame' and our most notable achievements, a planet on the MC (or in the 10th House) does not guarantee any measure of success or fame – neither does a weakly or 'badly' aspected MC (or ruler) suggest the opposite. The more charts we read, the more we realize that there is no simple formula. People become successful or 'famous' (locally, nationally or globally) for as many reasons and in as many ways as there are planetary combinations and astrological indicators to describe them. The chart says far more about our motivation, talents and our approach to any field of endeavour than it does about what 'makes' a successful astrologer, politician, teacher or famous person.

Most of us will work without a moment of fame (or interest in it, perhaps), but it is important for us all to have some measure of acclaim for our contribution to the world around us. Ultimately, I think the keys to any sort of success are the three Ds: Discipline, Determination and Drive. In short: Courage. We all have some kind of talent and a level of energy to accomplish tasks, but without courage we can't truly express our potential. Here's a formula I've written before in my books: **Talent + Energy + Courage = Success in Life**.

Back to the Midheaven. Whether we're aiming for the world stage or to make an impact on our local, social environment, this angle shows **the best pathway to success and outer recognition**. Unlike the Moon, which speaks of primal needs and habits formed in childhood, the MC takes time (the Saturn, Earth angle) to formulate, build and to bloom. The MC acts as a gateway, a portal to 'out there', beyond ourselves. Its sign and whole complex reveals **the types of behaviour and image we need to cultivate in order to receive acknowledgement from others and form a successful reputation in society**. The MC-IC axis also warns of the types of conduct that can get in the way of our own successes, ruin our reputation or thwart our accomplishments.

This guide to 'best behaviour' (as shown by the MC and its aspects) may be in conflict or in harmony with our temperament (as shown by the Moon) or our personal philosophy and core life direction (as symbolized by the Sun). And our horoscope will reveal whether other chart factors clash with or support the message of the MC complex. Lois Rodden writes in *Money*: 'The extent of the contradiction between the MC and our basic nature shows the extent of distress or inability to function in a successful societal role.' But no combination 'denies' success – in fact, contradictions can spur us on, or we will find that 'hard' discordant aspects to the MC mirror the determination and backbone we have that helps us succeed. But some combinations work together more easily and then we start to see the 'triumvirate' between the Moon (needs), Sun (core character) and MC (societal conduct) complementing each other. We'll be looking at a few examples later.

Yes, S.I.R.! Status, Image, Reputation

What one has to do usually can be done – Eleanor Roosevelt

The MC is linked to our **status** – our social or work position, **our professional standing**, our station in life. These come with certain rights, obligations and responsibilities. Do we need (or command) respect? How do we appear when we're 'on show'? Astrologer Jackie Slevin calls the Midheaven our 'personal marketplace' and 'our state of public presentation'. Being linked to Saturn, Capricorn and the 10th House, the MC speaks of **our relationship with authority and hierarchy**. Although planets residing in the 10th can clearly describe our authority figures and bosses, the MC has much to say about **how we assume our own authority in the world**, and our approach to 'the system'.

How willing are we to fit into a societal role and handle **our reputation, responsibilities and expectations** (as well as those of others)? This all requires energy and striving. In some ways, we must prove our Midheaven complex to the world in order to earn our place in it and to be of genuine service.

What do we stand for? Our vision of what we want for ourselves is tested at the Midheaven. Astrologer Michael Munkasey warns, 'If you feel you have a meaningless role in life, then the fault lies with you, not with your 10th House or astrology. Accomplishment and recognition in life are given for work done, not work promised.' It is a sign of maturity when we discover that we must work within certain constraints, rules and laws (Saturn) and cannot have everything handed to us without question.

Success is not the key to happiness. Happiness is the key to success.

If you love what you are doing, you will be successful – Albert Schweitzer

Success is getting what you want; happiness is wanting what you get – Dale Carnegie

Our public image can take years to build and, like the true message of the Sun in our chart, it can take a long time to truly recognize the meaning of our Midheaven. Earning our position over the years is the best way to comfortably 'grow into' our MC complex and master the qualities it represents. Identifying – and then feeling comfortable with – **our mission** and our trajectory is essential to avoid comparison and unnecessary expectation (recipes for unhappiness in our relationships with ourselves and others). But if we assume the role of the MC too soon or create a false or surface image, we may