ROUTES TO SUCCESS IN ACADEMIC RESEARCH:
A PERSONAL PERSPECTIVE

John W. Bandler

McMaster University, bandler@mcmaster.ca
http://www.sos.mcmaster.ca
Bandler Corporation, john@bandler.com
http://www.bandler.com

SUMMARY

When you hear the words MIT, Berkeley, Harvard, Cambridge or Oxford, what associations spring to mind: innovation, privilege, influence, envy, pride, or the Nobel Prize winners on the faculty?

All communities are interested in the success of their local academic institutions. Concerns extend far beyond the walls of the institutions: like the stature of the faculty, the quality of the students, the value of the education, the impact of the institution's research, and the ability of the institution to attract leading faculty, good students, and sufficient research grants.

What promotes successful research? Is it available facilities, imagination, opportunity, leadership, IQ, charm, packaging, or good luck? How can you measure success? Is it by the number of enrolled students, the size of the team, the number of publications, the volume of citations, the size of the budget, the awards received, the number of fellowships gained in learned societies?

It may seem surprising how much of one's recognition in a field of endeavor is attributable to the subjective perception of others. So, in addition to the specifics of advanced research in academia, this talk includes issues of impressions and subtext that are essential to human behavior and discourse. Researchers must learn to navigate the minefield of ethics, over-exposure, secrets, confidentially agreements, contracts, collegial envy, and more.

Beware of "experts" who claim to see no future in your proposed research. And, rather than taking that well-trodden path and being instantly understood and accepted, you should follow your pioneering instinct even if you find yourself initially ridiculed and rejected.

In suggesting ways of inspiring and managing successful research, I draw on personal successes and failures in both my technical and non-technical domains.

June 8, 2012