



# Ray Almgren

BS '87, VP OF PRODUCT MARKETING AND ACADEMIC RELATIONS FOR NATIONAL INSTRUMENTS AND VP FOR THE NI FOUNDATION. PREVIOUSLY VP OF PRODUCT STRATEGY, DIRECTOR OF R&D FOR THE MEASUREMENTS PRODUCT GROUP, AND DIRECTOR OF SOFTWARE MARKETING AT NI. HELPED GUIDE THE LABVIEW PRODUCT FAMILY TO ITS INDUSTRY-LEADING POSITION IN MEASUREMENT AND AUTOMATION, PIONEERED NI'S ACADEMIC AND UNIVERSITY RELATIONS PROGRAMS SUCH AS THE ROBOLAB PROJECT, WHICH COMBINES LEGO® MINDSTORMS® WITH LABVIEW TO INTRODUCE ROBOTICS AND CONTROL IN GRADES K-12, 2005 OUTSTANDING YOUNG TEXAS EX

Success is really a journey; it's not a status. It's that combination of having achieved something in the eyes of other people, but then using the reputation and respect you've earned to serve and educate others. If success doesn't drive you to do something more than you've already achieved, then it's not really success. This is a philosophy I've learned from the leaders here at NI, and it's how the company moves forward. Success is fleeting, in the end, so it should always be viewed as a stepping-stone to something better, to a higher level of service. Conversely, I think unsuccessful people are just those who have not yet figured out what attributes and skills they can use to serve others.

There are all kinds of theories on great leadership, but there's one I like that says leadership is a decision. You decide whether you want to take on a leadership role.

The success I've achieved so far, I believe, is because I've *decided* to make each position that I'm in a calling — no matter what job I have, I decide that it is the most important job in the company. It's a mind game, but it helps me to achieve. To use a sports analogy, I've got the ball, and I'm going to run with it in whatever position I'm playing.

I also believe that luck has a lot to do with success, but not luck in the lottery sense of the word. Most successful people put themselves in positions to be lucky: they have a lot to do with that luck finding them. Luck happens because you're at the table, and you're at the table because you spent the time to develop a relationship with someone.

There are many different dimensions to success, and I think that most people are successful in one area or another of their lives. But I think to be truly successful, everything has to balance out. If any one aspect of your life gets too out of whack, your success is going to be a house of cards. That's not to say there's not friction among work, family, and service. In the end, life is a series of trade-offs. So the key is to balance those tradeoffs to optimize the result for all of the stakeholders — yourself, your family, your community, your company, and your friends.

I had the opportunity to give the commencement address at the College of Engineering a couple of years ago. I told the graduates: all of you are going to be successful. You figured out years ago to attend The University of Texas and enter a strong program, and you now have an engineering degree — you've already made so many great decisions! You've proven that you can exist, compete, and add value. So now you have to figure out how you can serve, in whatever way that has meaning for you. Because you're among a privileged few — having graduated from a prestigious school like UT — you have an obligation to society to do something with your education. That might be accomplishing something for your company, city, nation, church, or whatever. When you figure that out, you will have made a great impact.

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*The "Success to Me" series is prepared by Aruni Gunasegaram, BBA '92, MBA '98, an entrepreneur, and Pam Losefsky, an Austin writer and editor.*