

Dale Carnegie

The name of Dale Carnegie is synonymous with success and influence. Yet if you knew his story, you would be amazed that he succeeded at all. Born in poverty on a farm in Missouri, Dale Carnegie (as it was originally spelled) came from humble beginnings. Yearly floods devastated the family farm and kept the Carnegie's poor.

As a boy, Dale was known for one thing: reciting. He used this talent locally in church functions and local events. In high school, he joined the debating team, but never won a debate. He was determined to go to college and attended a state teacher's school. Since he couldn't afford to live at the school, he attended a nearby college and rode a horse to class each day. Because he still loved reciting, he practiced reciting to the horse!

While in college, he heard a Chautauqua Speaker tell his own personal story of triumph and Dale was captivated. Chataugua was an organization known for great speakers around the country. This speaker changed Dale's life. He adopted that speaker's mannerisms, style and voice intonations.

Upon graduation from college, Dale worked at several different jobs. First, he worked as a salesman of correspondence courses, but only sold one. He then he worked for Armour and Company in their lowest-producing territory, South Dakota. Dale turned it into their most profitable territory. But he was making so little money that he was only able to save \$500. He decided to use that money to go to New York to take a public speaking course and become a Chautauqua Speaker.

On the train ride to New York, he met a minister who became his traveling companion on the long ride. As they talked, the man advised him to go into acting instead of speaking when he reached New York. Dale followed the stranger's advice, but after many attempts, he only got one role in a play and it was a minor one at that. So Dale decided to quit acting.

It was a difficult period for him. He was so depressed at one point, that he later admitted he had contemplated suicide during this time. But then he remembered his original idea of going into public speaking, Dale gave it one more try.

Since he knew how to recite well and needed to make a living, he applied at the New York City YMCA to teach public speaking, even though he was in New York to learn public speaking himself! The YMCA manager was not overly impressed with him at first and offered him work only if he could get people to take the class at night. The manager also required 80% of his net proceeds. Dale agreed and, at age 24, he was making \$2 per night. This became the first night public speaking classes in history at the YMCA.

Dale became such a success that he soon was drawing \$25 per session. Within two years, he was making \$500 weekly. His ship was coming in! He began lecturing to packed houses. When he was booked at New York's famous Carnegie Hall, he officially changed his name from "Carnegey" to "Carnegie" to help capitalize on the location and notoriety of the more popular spelling of the name (a good lesson in branding). Dale did so and soon proved himself to be a master at taking advantage of opportunities.

As his popularity increased, Dale lectured all over the country and in Europe. He began to write pamphlets on speaking and famous people's lives to sell in addition to his speaking services. After several years, he was able to turn the pamphlets into his first book, *Public Speaking: A Practical Course for Businessmen*. Next, he wrote a book on little-known facts about famous people, similar to and predating Paul Harvey's popular "Rest of the Story" series.

The success of these two works inspired Dale to author his most famous book, *How to Win Friends and Influence People*. It became a bestseller overnight and launched Dale Carnegie to worldwide fame. Dale's book went into 17 editions and made \$125,000 within a few months. Most of all, he was helping people overcome their fears and depressions to succeed in life.

He began to do radio shows and columns in numerous newspapers giving personal achievement advice. He also wrote marriage and family advice columns. This prompted Dale to develop one of his trademark themes -- the "assault on worry." He used that theme in his next bestseller, *How to Stop Worrying and Start Living*. All of his success was built on helping other people find the information they needed to lead happier, more productive lives. Despite his humble beginnings, Dale Carnegie became known as the man who knew how to communicate with and inspire people.