

# Chapter 1

## The Summit Advance™ Model

**I**N SOUTH CENTRAL TIBET, just a few kilometers from the Nepal border, sits an imposing mountain. It's not the tallest mountain in the world. In fact, it ranks as number 14 in the list of the world's tallest peaks. The summit rises 26,289 feet above sea level, shorter by almost 3,000 feet than the famed Everest, the tallest above sea level on the planet. It isn't the official height of this mountain that makes it worth mentioning. It is the name that is noteworthy.

Commonly called Shishapangma (officially Xixiabangma), the Tibetan name literally means "crest above the grassy plains." A crest is like a summit — the highest place on the mountain. This mountain was named because it is the highest point above where most of the people live, on the "grassy plains." And that is essentially what the Summit Advance Model is all about — working and living higher, moving steadily upward toward the summit above the grassy plains.

Attaining this crest, or summit, of any mountain is a significant achievement, granting the climber an immediate place of significance. For the record, and to honor such a significant feat, the first to successfully advance and reach the summit of Shisapangma was a Chinese expedition lead by X Jing, in May 1964. Every story about this mountain will carry a note about this significant accomplishment, which will affect all others who attempt to advance this summit. In many ways, a successful summit advance translates into significance.

### Of Mountains and Models: The Basic Summit Advance Model

As the Summit Advance Model was being developed, it was noted early that its shape, graphic depiction and concepts were strikingly similar to those of a natural mountain. So much so, that it was decided that this model would be best understood if some of these natural comparisons were highlighted. It begins with the understanding that for each person, the "mountain" is his or her individual personal and professional life — goals, aspirations, behaviors, achievements, contributions, challenges and victories.

Some may wish to use the mountain analogy to define only their professional life, "working" the model to advance that professional summit. Others may wish to compare it to

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every area of life, an integrated wholeness that defines all they *are* and all they *do*. That is the beauty of this model. It can be used to travel single paths or multiple journeys.

It is the human condition to be on a quest of some kind, seeking to advance a summit of sorts — hence the name of this model. “Summit advance” is the term mountaineers use to define their attempts to reach the summit of any mountain. To advance the summit means to climb to the top, or at least make a valiant effort to reach that high place. Each physical mountain has its own summit, the place that is higher in elevation than any other point around it. It is the maximum height of that mountain. A summit is unique to each mountain,

and measured only against itself, not other mountains.

Quite simply, the summit is the absolute top of any particular mountain. And the summit for all humans is the absolute top of their individual mountains — the highest place of personal and professional significance. This summit will be different for every person, and the climbing experience will be solely theirs. No one else’s mountain and no one else’s climb will look just like yours.

## Mountain Levels: Life Zones

All mountains have summits, and all mountains have various levels where certain kinds of vegetation, conditions and even weather can be experienced. On a very high mountain you would encounter scrub growth at the bottom, and as you gained altitude you would climb among the trees, growing in size with elevation. Eventually, if you kept climbing, you would rise above the tree line. The summit may or may not be snow covered. Once the summit is achieved, the vistas are far beyond what could be seen from anywhere below this



place. These mountain levels, often called life zones, are usually different for every mountain, and are typically based on elevation and climate.

Generally, a mountain will have at least three basic levels, beginning with the parkland or prairie zones that originate at the base of the mountain, extending all the way to the highest peak, considered the alpine or arctic zone. Climbing is more complicated, technical and challenging, the higher you go. Your last steps to the summit will take you beyond the tree line into the snow-capped region of the summit where the air is thin and crisp. The Summit Advance Model also has three levels, rising above the “grassy plain”: **SURVIVAL, SUCCESS**

**and SIGNIFICANCE.** These levels may also be considered life zones, as the experiences, views and climate — life itself — are vastly different in each zone. Please note that the terms “level” and “zone” will be used interchangeably throughout to describe these distinct levels.

The Summit Advance Model was designed in color for easy *application* (*see the back cover to view the model in color*). The lowest level, Survival, is brown, for somewhat obvious reasons. This is where you encounter more “dirt” and sometimes even mud, which makes travel difficult. Yet the lessons learned in this place are often the most important and lasting, enabling a climb out into the green zone, the Success Level. In this mid-zone of the model there are many “trees” to climb through, and sometimes it takes time and effort to “see the forest for the trees.” After narrowing and nailing down goals, direction and passion in this place, we then make the upward climb into the blue zone of Significance, where skies of possibility really open up. Climbing is a bit steeper, but worth every step. The snow-capped peak of the white summit of pure motives and divine partnership is the ultimate destination. Periodically, as we explore this model in more detail, we will refer to the “Brown Zone” (Survival Level), the “Green Zone” (Success Level) or the “Blue Zone” (Significance Level).

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## Mountain Regions: Level Sides

Mountain climbers know that not only does a mountain have various levels, but it also boasts differences from one side to the other side. The vegetation, life forms and weather on one side of a mountain can be dramatically dissimilar from the opposite side. Climbing techniques, equipment and routes will change from side to side. Climate and weather patterns differ. The Summit Advance Model is composed of two different, somewhat opposing, “sides” to each level:

Level	Zone	Left Side	Right Side
SIGNIFICANCE	Blue	Best IN ( <i>Top Gun</i> )	Best FOR ( <i>Sherpa</i> )
SUCCESS	Green	Fame ( <i>Limelighter</i> )	Mastery ( <i>Master</i> )
SURVIVAL	Brown	Victim	Victor

Life is different, even *looks* different, for the climber on opposing sides of any given level or zone of a mountain, and this model.

For literary purposes, descriptors of the “dwellers” on each side at each level have been added to the Success and Significance levels. Those who seek Fame at the Success level are referenced as “*Limelighters*,” and those who seek Mastery, as “*Masters*.” At the top level of Significance, the far left side dwellers are “*Top Guns*,” with the opposing right side inhabitants considered “*Sherpas*.” All of these terms and descriptions will be further defined and explained in subsequent chapters.



## SURVIVAL: The Mountain Base

Survival is the place where all our efforts are directed at merely staying alive, existing, rather than advancing. Survival is, in itself, a good thing, but generally carries a negative connotation, especially when compared to forward progress. This survival zone is the place where the storms of life and work keep us from venturing out. We are too busy just keeping our heads above water in order to breathe. We don’t have time for living here. The Survival zone can be encountered just about anywhere on the mountain, when something happens to alter our

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status quo. These storms can take the form of work, family, health, or finances, and generally result in a loss of equilibrium or control in life. Our energy is consumed in attempting to regain control. All thoughts of advancing are gone, replaced with the urgency of climbing out of the pit we've fallen into. When a sudden blinding snowstorm blows into the path of a mountaineer, only the fool would continue an ascent. The wise climber breaks open the shelter and hunkers down until the storm has passed. But he or she does not sit idle. There is work to be done, even in the "hunkering" or survival mode. It is work sometimes just to stay alive. Constructive work consists of building the ladder to climb out of the hole and continue the journey. Storms can last for hours, days, weeks, months and even years. At the survival level, however, storms may appear to be never-ending. Part of transitioning out of the Survival level is realizing that storms eventually end, perspective can be regained, and we go forward richer for the experience. Our true character is often revealed in survival, and sometimes it's not very pretty. The Survival level is where we most likely learn our hardest — and best — life lessons.

## **SURVIVAL LEVEL SUMMARY: Victim and Victor**



<b>LEFT Side: "Victim"</b>	<b>RIGHT Side: "Victor"</b>
<p>Life and work here is somewhat self-contained, dominated by events of the past (either “good” or bad” in nature), and concerned with own personal story. There is a need to be recognized, yet working with others is not a priority. Self is the focus, being heard and understood a constant effort and need. There may be a feeling of being “wronged,” and the need for retaliation.</p> <p>Personal entitlement is strong, and being perceived as always right is paramount. This is the place where the individual literally feels like a victim, is consumed with being a victim, and generally does little to move out of this place without outside intervention or guidance. Leaving this left side of the mountain base requires a firm decision and commitment, or it will become a place of wallowing and whining, with no gain in altitude.</p>	<p>The former Victim has now taken responsibility for his or her own actions, and is committed to a progressive upward climb. While the mind-set may still be predominantly on self, there is more of a balance to include others. This is a place of personal empowerment to achieve, not waiting for others to do it or provide it. Values and goals are identified, with aligned actions and behavior. The Victor is a hard worker who has transformed personal drive and focus from the past to the future. Authenticity is important here, and will act to help overcome the ex-Victim’s previous tendency to avoid accountability. Resolving the past is a critical element on this right side of the mountain base, and includes seeking resolution, offering forgiveness and releasing grudges.</p>
<p><b>The main distinction between these Survival sides is the contrast of dimness vs. increasing light.</b></p>	

## SUCCESS: The Mountain Mid-Zone

Success can be classified as the achievement of a clear set of defined aspirational goals. The Success level is really about achievement, regardless of how achievement is defined. It can be self-defined, defined by others through various specifics, or defined by the world. Each mountain climber establishes certain targets, or goals, toward which they advance. For one it may be the highest possible camp in a certain area. For another it may be to achieve an ascent without the aid of bottled oxygen. We may view certain people as successful, according to our own definitions, but these people may not see themselves that way. Success can be measured either quantitatively, or qualitatively, by “numbers” or by experiences. An individual only reaches the Success level of this model when that person truly *feels* successful. To pitch camp in the Success level, you must indeed view your own achievements as meeting your definition of success. This must be measurable; it is not some vague or indefinable place. Success, however, is not just measured by the quantity and quality of experiences found there, it is measured by the satisfaction of the soul as well. Success can also be a moving target. Personal definitions may change, and may be elusive.

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## SUCCESS LEVEL SUMMARY: Fame and Mastery



LEFT Side: "Fame"	RIGHT Side: "Mastery"
<p>Here, on the Fame side of the mountain mid-zone of Success, life is all about achieving goals, racking up “points” and striving toward that elusive definition of “success.” Recognition and visibility are very important, and this person is in the game to win. There is an excitement, adventure, even an adrenaline rush, that drives behaviors and actions. There is more interest in self needs, purpose and desires than those of others. Self is number one, and must come out on top. Randomness and spontaneity are more common than planning. Goals may be loosely defined, but whatever they are, there is a need to push to the front and get noticed. Personal power and financial wealth are important, as well as being publicly recognized and acknowledged. There is an underlying sense of personal advancement in this place, with public recognition.</p>	<p>Living and working on the Mastery side of the Success Zone is more about expertise and excellence in chosen pursuits, rather than recognition and prizes. It is important to work with others to achieve community goals. The quest is more for life purpose and achieving meaningful goals, rather than wealth or status. The desires of others frequently eclipse those of self. This person is driven and principled by spiritual and heart purpose and passion, with a preference to plan and organize to thoughtfully pursue goals. There is more of a steady push toward mastery than positioning for the front of the line. Recognition and acknowledgement is not as important as personal fulfillment of goals. The climber on this side of the mid-zone of the mountain has a broadness and depth of character, well-rounded and fully-developed. The path is lighter and clearer. This person will endure to the finish line.</p>
<p><b>The main distinction between these Success sides is the contrast of ego-driven vs. diminishing ego.</b></p>	

## SIGNIFICANCE: The Mountain Alpine Zone

Significance is where the hard lessons of Survival combine with the achievements of Success and together are thoroughly mixed with the added ingredients of inspiration, purpose and passion. It is the place where we live our highest purpose for the benefit of the world. That “world” can be as small or as large as we choose to define it. In the Significance Zone, our contributions are bigger than our rewards. The most important rewards are joy, alignment with purpose, and the clean, non-self-polluted fresh air of community, where our passion and purpose is working for the betterment of others, rather than self. The view from this place is sharper, and the future is more important than the past. Reaching Significance often requires that the backpack of self is emptied, but this does not mean self is sacrificed. Self care is critical if we are to serve others well. The focus now, however, is on others, making a better world — again, however small or large that world may be. The lessons of Survival allow us to be more disciplined, more mature, wiser and able to endure longer. The achievements of Success enable us to know and use our best abilities and gifts in service, for a higher purpose. In Significance, not only do *we* endure longer, but *what we do* endures longer.

Significance is where the hard lessons of Survival combine with the achievements of Success and together are thoroughly mixed with the added ingredients of inspiration, purpose and passion.

## SIGNIFICANCE LEVEL SUMMARY: Best *In* and Best *For*



LEFT Side: Best <i>IN</i> (Top Gun)	RIGHT Side: Best <i>FOR</i> (Sherpa)
<p>Being at the top of a chosen profession, with appropriate visibility and recognition, is a critical motivator on this side of the mountain top. There is a desire to assist others, but with tangible rewards and recognition that also benefit self. A lasting legacy is created here, generally in order to be remembered, or recognized. It is important to be considered as having significance, wealth, power, standing apart from others. This person needs to be the hero of the day or decade, the one who comes to the rescue, with appropriate recognition. Climbers here often seek inspiration from others that motivates them to do bigger and better things. Prestige and power are considered by-products of significance. This climber is the “best <i>in</i> the world” at what he or she does, and acts as his or her own boss.</p>	<p>A quantum shift in life purpose marks this territory. There is a true desire to live one’s purpose, being true to personal passions, and inspiring others to do the same. Life and work here is in service to others, not self. No rewards or recognition or self-benefit are necessary on this right side of the mountain top. Seamless integrity marks this climber’s pursuits, as well as community and family. Activities here are significant to the world at large, to the smaller community and to other individuals — personal significance is not necessary. It is no longer necessary to be “best <i>IN</i> the world,” but “best <i>FOR</i> the world.” Whatever material gain is acquired is meant for the benefit of others, to be passed on. These people love building strong bonds, working together and collaborating to achieve joint goals and objectives to benefit all. Material wealth is irrelevant to significance here. It is not about giving things, but giving self.</p>
<p><b>The main distinction between these Significance sides is the contrast of onstage vs. behind the scenes.</b></p>	

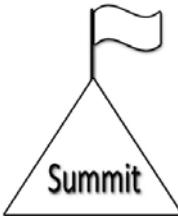
## THE SUMMIT: The Mountain Peak

There is one more level, a higher step beyond the zone of typical Significance. The white triangle at the top of the model represents the true summit, the very peak of the mountain, where the vistas are limited only by the curvature of the earth and human eyesight. It is in that small patch of ground that climbers like to plant flags and make claims to the mountain. But this place has no flags because claims are not necessary or wanted. By the time we have traveled through the level of Significance on the Summit Advance Model, we fully understand that this pursuit is not in chasing self reward or acclaim. We don't plant flags which merely announce our presence. We plant hope. This place is the very top of the mountain, the Summit, where the entire world can be seen, and the place where very few make their home. The people who come to this place breathe rarefied air. There is plenty of room here because not many make it this far. It is a place many speak of, and some even claim, but cannot sustain.

All the levels leading to this point so far are conquerable by mere mortals. To go to the summit and build a home there, however, requires something more. This is a spiritual place. It means — quite literally — that you will only achieve the summit with divine inspiration. In order to reach the Summit, the climber must rely on his or her “higher power,” to borrow a well-worn phrase. Some may even call it “holy ambition,” but that holy ambition comes only through divine intervention. The Summit is the place where you and your divine power, a Power higher than you alone, collaborate to achieve what mere mortals cannot. The things achieved here are sanctioned by that Power, which then provides the inspiration, guidance, direction, strength, resources and passion necessary to fulfill your calling. The work and service accomplished here is not for your benefit, but the benefit of others. You always gain, but mostly not in tangible ways. The tangible and physical results belong to others. You don't always get the credit, nor do you necessarily need it, though others may want to give it to you. You know in your heart that what you have accomplished in this place was not your work alone, and would indeed not have even been possible without the Power.

We don't plant  
flags which merely  
announce our presence.  
We plant hope.

## THE SUMMIT SUMMARY: Life at the Peak



There are no “sides” at this very top of the mountain model. Those who reach this place have grown beyond the need for any personal success or significance. These things matter only in terms of how they might benefit others. Life and resources are dedicated solely for the purpose of helping, growing, empowering, and advancing others, through divine inspiration, guidance and passion. Passion and purpose are about serving others, and a power higher than ourselves. Lasting significance will be in the lives of others. In the end, the only question or item of value to this summit visitor is whether or not he or she lived personal purpose and calling, and it lives on in others. It is only in this place where honest humility and service to others, a trim and healthy ego, and the partnership with your “higher Power” can achieve things beyond human accomplishment — true Significance. In essence, there are really two sets of hands that don’t just plant, but wave a flag of Significance from the Summit. The Summit life yields a lasting legacy, where any Significance we have achieved lives on in the lives of others. It continues producing, bearing fruit, long after we are gone.

**There is no distinction between sides at the Summit.**

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