

Promoting Performance

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Enhancing Expertise in Business, Sport & Life

On the cutting edge: *Talent + Practice + Age = Expertise*

A recent study investigated talent, environment, and critical periods for the acquisition of expert performance. Argentinian chess players (N = 104), ranging from weak amateurs to grandmasters were studied.

The connection between practice and skill showed a reliable pattern; but practice accounted for less than 50% of the skill difference. The results suggest that practice is a necessary but



not sufficient condition for acquiring expertise and that the starting age of practice is important. Starting to play seriously no later than 12 years of

age, carrying out individual practice such as reading books, playing with others, and receiving feedback from a coach all seem to be important factors in attaining a high level of expertise.

Source: Gobet, F., et al. (2008). The Role of Domain-Specific Practice, Handedness, and Starting Age in Chess. *Developmental Psychology*, 43, (1), 159-172.

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Strategy Problems

In a *Harvard Business Review* article, John Camillus identifies several techniques to cope with strategy problems in organizations:

Involve stakeholders, document opinions, and communicate. Go beyond obtaining facts and opinions from stakeholders; and involve them in finding ways to manage the problem.

Define corporate identity. Identify your: *Values* (what

is important?), *Competencies* (what do we do better than others?), *Aspirations* (how do we see and measure success?)

Focus on action. Abandon the convention of thinking through all options before choosing a single one, and experiment with a number of strategies that are feasible even if they are unsure of the implications.

Adopt a "feed-forward" orientation. Describe the external and internal circum-



stances that you would like to see in the next 10, 20, or 50 years. This opens executives' minds to the range and unpredictability of future possibilities.

Source: Camillus, J. (2008). Strategy as a wicked problem. *Harvard Business Review*, 86(5), 98-106

Mrs. Zubatsky's Law

"One day when I was a kid, our house caught on fire in Milwaukee. A large section of the wood shingle roof was burning as the fire trucks pulled up. The firemen ran into the backyard with a large hose and began assembling their metal ladders and positioning them against the house. Mrs. Zubatsky was our next door

neighbor and, at the time, she was standing on her upstairs porch taking in the laundry. She watched anxiously as the firemen struggled with their ladders. Suddenly she leaned over the balcony and shouted down to the professional firefighters, "Forget the ladders! Just point the hose at the fire!" The firemen, to their credit, responded immediately. They dropped their

ladders, pointed the hose at the fire and extinguished the blaze in about 40 seconds. There are two morals to this story. One, never assume that just because it's someone's job, they know how to do it. And two, don't let yourself be intimidated by professionals or their uniforms." Source: Jerry Zucker. (2003) *Graduation Speech*, University of Wisconsin, Madison, WI.

A superior man is modest in his speech, but exceeds in his actions

-Confucius

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How things get done...

5 STEPS TO EXPERT

How to Go
from Business Novice
to Elite Performer



PAUL G. SCHEMP

Routines help high performers minimize time devoted to everyday, mundane, repetitive tasks. Routines form the bedrock of how we orchestrate the daily tasks of living and working. For most of us, routines help complete the everyday tasks of getting dressed, getting to work, preparing meals and the like efficiently and with

an economy of effort. Unfortunately, we also tend to develop routines that result in unproductive outcomes—gossiping, surfing the internet, watching television. Elite performers avoid these empty routines by focusing on ‘getting things done.’ That is: Proficient individuals develop routines structured around knowing how to get things accomplished. They have a large toolbox of tactics they routinely use to accomplish important tasks. For example, when performing the

routine of reading a newspaper, they may skim the paper in search of information to solve a pressing problem or gain an advantage. When picking up the paper, they may say “So what might be in here today that I can use?” Proficient professionals not only learn a great deal, but they know how to get things done. It is a matter of routine.

Source: Schempp, P. (2008). *5 Steps to Expert: How to go from business novice to elite performer*. Mountain View, CA: Davies-Black Publishers.

Detecting your errors

One key to learning any skill is the ability to self-detect and self-correct errors. However, despite their importance, relatively little research has been done on these topics. One unanswered question that was recently addressed by David Sherwood is whether error detection is a general ability or one specific to the task to be learned. To investigate this issue, 66 college-age participants (49 women and 17 men) performed four motor learning tasks: an anticipation-timing task, a slow arm-positioning task, a rapid arm-movement task, and a tone-duration production task. 50 practice

trials were provided on each task, 35 with knowledge of the results and 15 without knowledge of the outcome results. Participants verbally estimated error on all trials prior to being told the results of their efforts. Error detection was developed for each task but transfer of this ability only occurred when two tasks shared the same movement pattern. Men performed better on anticipation-timing than women, but men and women detected errors equally well on all tasks. Dr. Sherwood concluded that error detection is primarily task dependent and not generalizable to other skills. Because someone may be skillful at detecting their errors in one skill, they will not necessarily be able to detect



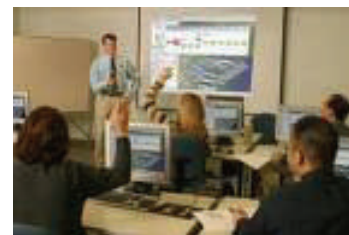
errors in other skills. Therefore, if error detection in a skill is necessary, performers should learn to do so for each important task they must master.

Source: Sherwood, D. (2008). Generalization of error detection across motor tasks by men and women. *Perceptual and Motor Skills*, 106, 557-572.

Even a little training...

A recent study examined the effect of three types of brief training on the use of automatic external defibrillators by 43 lay users. Because defibrillators were recently approved for home use, brief training for nonprofessional users needs investigation. During training, the exposure training group read an article about defibrillators that provided no information on how to operate them; the low-training group inspected the defibrillators and read the operating instructions in the manual but did not use the device; and the high-training group watched a training video and performed

a mock resuscitation using the defibrillators but no manikin. All participants returned 2 weeks later and performed a surprise simulated defibrillator resuscitation on a manikin. The results revealed that most participants in each training group met acceptable performance criteria as measured by time to first shock, pad placement accuracy, and safety check. All participants committing errors were able to recover from them to complete the resuscitation. Compared with exposure training, the low and high training had a beneficial effect on time to first shock and errors. It was concluded that untrained users were able to adequately use this defibrillator, but additional brief training improved user perform-



ance. In conjunction with other findings, the current study helps demonstrate the need for well-designed training.

Source: Mitchell, K., et al. (2008). Effects of brief training on use of automated external defibrillators by people without medical expertise. *Human Factors*, 50, 301-310.

“It’s crazy the things you remember...”

Founder of MicroSolutions and owner of the Dallas Mavericks professional basketball team, Mark Cuban wrote in his blog on May 7, 2004: “It’s crazy the things that you remember . . . I remember reading the PC DOS manual (I really did), and being proud that I could figure out how to set up startup menus for my customers. I remember going to every single retail store in town, BusinessLand, NYNEX, ComputerLand, CompuShop . . . and introducing myself to every salesperson to try to get leads. I would call every single big



computer company that did anything at all with small businesses, IBM, Wang, Dec, Xerox,

Data General, DataPoint (remember them?), setting meetings, asking to come to their offices since I couldn't afford to take them to lunch. I didn't need a lot of customers, but my business grew and grew. Not too fast, but fast enough that by the time MicroSolutions had been in business about 2 years, I had 85k dollars in the bank....”

Source: Mark Cuban, *Success and Motivation, Part 3*, (www.blogmaverick.com, May 7, 2004) .



Training Peak Performance

The authors propose a practice-specificity-based model of arousal for achieving peak performance. The study included 37 healthy male physical education students whom they randomly assigned to a high-arousal (n = 19) or low-arousal group (n = 18). In the high

arousal group, multiple motivational techniques were used during practice, including: pep talks, verbal encouragement, goal setting, spectators present, contests and rewards. The low arousal group received only their performance scores after practice. Both groups practiced basketball free throws for 30 minutes, 3 days per week for 18 sessions. Both groups performed a retention test at the 2 arousal levels immediately after the last exercise session, and in the posttest, and after 10 days. Results showed that both groups learned the task similarly and achieved their peak performance at their experienced arousal level. When tested at an arousal level that differed

from the one that they experienced throughout practice sessions, participants' performance deteriorated significantly. The findings of this study suggest a practice-specificity-based explanation for achieving peak performance. The researchers concluded that achieving peak performance depends on the resemblance between the arousal state through training and the arousal state during performance.

Source: Movahedi, A., et al. (2007). A practice-specificity-based model of arousal for achieving peak performance. *Journal of Motor Behavior*, 39, 457-462.

“**Indifference** can be tempting -- more than that, seductive. It is so much easier to look away from victims. It is so much easier to avoid such rude interruptions to our work, our dreams, our hopes. It is, after all, awkward, troublesome, to be involved in another person's pain and despair. Yet, for the person who is indifferent, his or her neighbors are of no consequence. And, therefore, their lives are meaningless. Their hidden or even visible anguish is of no interest. Indifference reduces the other to an abstraction. In a way, to be indifferent to suffering is what makes the human being inhuman.

Indifference, after all, is more dangerous than anger and hatred. Anger can at times be creative. One writes a great poem, a great symphony, one does something special for the sake of humanity because one is angry at the injustice that one witnesses. But indifference is never creative. Even hatred at times may elicit a response. You fight it. You denounce it. You disarm it. Indifference elicits no response. Indifference is not a response. Indifference is not a beginning, it is an end. And, therefore, indifference is always the friend of the enemy, for it benefits the aggressor -- never his victim, whose pain is magnified when he or she feels forgotten. The political prisoner in

Indifference

his cell, the hungry children, the homeless refugees -- not to respond to their plight, not to relieve their solitude by offering them a spark of hope is to exile them from human memory. And in denying their humanity we betray our own. Indifference, then, is not only a sin, it is a punishment.”

Source: Wiesel, E. *The Perils of Indifference*. Speech delivered at the White House, April 12, 1999



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PerformanceMatters

Performance Matters, Inc.
238 Covington Place
Athens, GA 30606
USA

Phone: 770 725-9199
FAX: 706 542-3417
E-mail: info@PerformanceMattersInc.com

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Have Dr. Paul Schempp speak to your organization
Contact us at info@PerformanceMattersInc.com
or call (770) 725-9199

The world cares very little about what a man or woman knows; it is what a man or a woman can do that counts

-Booker T. Washington, educator

Do or do not. There is no 'try'

-Yoda, Jedi master

Greatness is not where we stand but in what direction we are moving

-Oliver Wendell Holmes, poet

Still I rise

-Maya Angelou



You may write me
down in history
With your bitter,
twisted lies,
You may trod me
in the very dirt
But still, like dust,
I'll rise.

Does my sassiness upset you?
Why are you beset with gloom?
'Cause I walk like I've got oil wells
Pumping in my living room.

Just like moons and like suns,
With the certainty of tides,
Just like hopes springing high,
Still I'll rise.

Did you want to see me broken?
Bowed head and lowered eyes?
Shoulders falling down like teardrops.
Weakened by my soulful cries.
Does my haughtiness offend you?
Don't you take it awful hard
'Cause I laugh like I've got gold mines
Diggin' in my own back yard.

You may shoot me with your words,
You may cut me with your eyes,
You may kill me with your hateful-
ness,
But still, like air, I'll rise.

Does my sexiness upset you?
Does it come as a surprise
That I dance like I've got diamonds
At the meeting of my thighs?

Out of the huts of history's shame
I rise
Up from a past that's rooted in pain
I rise
I'm a black ocean, leaping and wide,
Welling and swelling I bear in the tide.
Leaving behind nights of terror and fear
I rise
Into a daybreak that's wondrously clear
I rise
Bringing the gifts that my ancestors gave,
I am the dream and the hope of the slave.
I rise
I rise
I rise.



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