

How you learn has more to do with your business success than any talent you were born with...

Start by asking yourself:

What aspects of your business need to work better or faster than they are doing now?

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STOP allowing yourself to freewheel and miss out on the value of repeating deep practice

START encouraging yourself and your people to make mistakes and use those errors to signpost better performance

1. The one 'Repeatedly Reaching For Success' question you must ask yourself if you want to achieve world class results for you and your business...

If an U14s football team from a village in Yorkshire (Chapelton) can beat the Scottish national U14s team and the Irish national U14s team too, can't you beat your competition?

What aspects of your business need to work better or faster than they are doing now?

Where is the value in this question?

The value lies here...

...the degree to which you and your team learn to do the mission critical jobs in your business better and faster than your competition is the degree to which you'll be successful.

The research in Daniel Coyle's book, the neuro-science he quotes, shows that speed and accuracy of any skill comes from repetition. Not, 'going-through-the-motions' type repetition but repetition at the edge of your current skill level.

The research shows that:

- talent is entirely overrated
- repetition is the key to success

So, what areas of your business need to work better than they do now? And how do you make it easier and more likely that you and your people practice at the edge of your capabilities so you get better?

Warning: In sport, **repeated** practice is expected. In fact, if you want to be any good, you need to practice more often than you play.

Business works differently.

In business, practice is seen as a cost. And if costs are to be kept to a minimum, practice is often avoided. As a result your business fails to improve.

If you think differently and apply a little regular, repeating **deep practice** (practicing at the very limit of your capabilities) every day or every week, your skill and expertise will improve. So will your results!

2. Simply knowing how your brain works improves performance...

The science of learning at the edge of your skill level is called deep practice – simply understanding the neuroscience of myelin helps you achieve much more.

Learning at the edge of your current skill level requires struggle. Struggle is good.

You struggled, and all kids struggle, when learning to ride a bike or learning to drive a car.

When you stop struggling the progress also stops.

Struggle plus repetition has a powerful impact on your brain.

Specifically, repetition and struggle grows myelin in your brain. Myelin is the insulation that wraps itself round your neurons when you perform an action, especially if the action is at the edge of your current skill level.

As Daniel Coyle succinctly puts it:

“...practice makes myelin, and myelin makes perfect.”

“...myelin doesn't care about who you are. It only cares about what you do.”

Talent is entirely overrated.

“Skill is insulation that wraps neural circuits and grows according to certain signals.”

Knowing that repetition changes the brain is the key to success.

700 children prove it beyond doubt...

Carol Dweck is a well-respected Stanford professor and an expert in learning and motivation (check out her book 'Mindset' - it's brilliant too).

Dweck split 700 low-achieving children into two groups. Both groups were given an 8-week study skills course but only one group received a 50-minute session about how the brain grows when it is challenged. The teachers were not told which kids had received the 'brain' session but within one term could tell the difference. The kids who'd learned about the brain had improved study habits and significant grade improvements.

Knowing that repetition at the edge of your skill level changes the brain is the key to success.

Anders Ericsson put forward, in the 1990's, the idea that 10,000 hours of practice delivers world class performance. But it doesn't if the practice is freewheeling practice. Practice that stretches the learner makes all the difference and even delivers a month's worth of practice in just 6 minutes if your attitude about mistakes is right...

3. Your attitude, your answer and your actions after a failure determine your success...

Your attitude to mistakes (failure) decides whether you try again wholeheartedly, whether you try again half-heartedly or whether you just give up.

Your attitude determines whether you stretch yourself or not.

For example: Why does a young student at the top their class in spelling refuse to enter a regional spelling competition? Is it because they enjoy being a winner - so why would they risk being a loser?!

Failure either signposts smarter, harder and more effort on your chosen task. Or it signposts your inability to perform the task. The neuroscience proves that repetition at the edge of your capability stretches you. This results in mistakes, errors, failures but also adds more myelin to your brain connections and eventually makes the quality and speed of your actions jump 10-fold or even a 100-fold.

Without a 'learning' attitude you are unlikely to do what Daniel Coyle, in his book, refers to as a month's practice in just 6 minutes. 6 minutes of myelination of your brains routines of the actions you want to be brilliant at. For this to work, mistakes need to be seen as friends!

We know it's as old as the hills and even a bit corny but the phrase...

"Mistakes are your stepping stones to future success"

...is actually neurologically correct.

Here are a few sample videos showing some inspiring responses to failure:

- Lewis Hamilton talks about his change of attitude towards mistakes and how making mistakes has helped him drive at a higher level. And how losing has helped him become a better faster driver. Enjoying the fact he hasn't won feeds the next stage of his growth - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TZiZ6uvbZwQ>
- Michael Jordan is one of the greatest basketball players of all time. This video about his failures, including missing 26 game winning shots, is worth the 31 seconds it takes to watch – <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CgW48mBQJ14>

Practice safely...

How do you perform deep practice and make mistakes without wrecking customer relationships, wasting valuable production time or losing revenues?

Pilots learn to fly safely thanks to the use of flight simulators.

In business, you can't have people train by practicing on customers or using precious equipment when it's needed to deliver customer orders. So, what's your equivalent of a flight simulator?

In sales it might be role play exercises. In doing technical work it may need a mentoring approach where your people do work with you watching and supporting closely.



Repeatedly Reach For Success

Support tools and resources

Practice and struggle...

“Staggering babies embody the deepest truth about deep practice: to get good, it’s helpful to be willing, or even enthusiastic, about being bad.”

It’s why a school that introduces violin practice, but has to hold a lottery to see who gets to play, outperforms a school where all students get a violin. The school running the lottery means that the students feel lucky, honoured and privileged to receive a violin and invest themselves wholeheartedly in practice. The wealthier school fails to tap into the upside benefit of the struggle and students mostly treat practice half-heartedly. There’s more on this subject in Coyle’s brilliant and entertaining book.

And for another reference point consider David Maister’s insights from working with accountants and other professional service firms. Maister suggests that 4 things positively influence the success of a firm:

- A sense of job **SATISFACTION**
- A sense of **ACCOMPLISHMENT**
- A sense of **COMMITMENT**
- A sense of **CHALLENGE**

Two of these, accomplishment and challenge, also suggest that struggle at the edge of your capabilities is necessary for success.

Are you and your team stretching yourselves enough? Are you practicing enough too?



Repeatedly Reach For Success

Support tools and resources

The 'repeatedly reach for success' exercise

Here is a fun exercise you can do with your team.

Put this list of words up on a slide

Column A

window / sill

sugar / salt

black / white

mobile / phone

car / keys

horse / saddle

leaf / tree

turkey / stuffing

Column B

bread / b_tter

hand / gl_ve

c_w / milk

bird / s_ed

letter / b_x

sh_e / sock

music / l_rics

winter / s_ow

Give your team 30 seconds to look at the words, but they cannot write them down. After 1 minute ask them how many of the words and the links they can remember. Make a note of their scores.

How many words and links did your team remember from Column A?

How many words and links did your team remember from Column B?

Discuss the results together and what they mean.

It is proved, after testing thousands of people that most people remember the words from Column B.

In fact, most people remember 300% more from Column B!

This is not because for that 30 seconds they were 300% more talented or that they concentrated on Column B 300% more.

The reason for the results...

We gloss or skim over Column A as all the words are there, so although we read it we don't really read it! We have nothing to focus/concentrate on as all the words are there. We have nothing to 'reach' for, or a point of reference to remember.

But Column B requires us to work out the word with the missing letter, it's not a simple as reading. We have to take time (even just a micro-second) to work out the missing letter and therefore the word. We experience a micro-second of struggle until we reach the word.



Repeatedly Reach For Success

Support tools and resources

And in that micro-second we are hard wiring our brain circuits...

The brain requires us to reach, requires us to struggle, perhaps make a mistake - we might have said 'Winter / Slow' - but then we have to correct our self and insert the correct letter to make the correct word.

The struggle and reach make all the difference. The struggle/reach is the reason that more people remember Column B.

"When you operate on the edge of your ability, when you are reaching, failing and reaching again, learning velocity goes way up. It goes way up." *Daniel Coyle – 'The Talent Code'*

When we struggle we get smarter.

Use this simple fun exercise to demonstrate to your team that reaching, failing and struggling will make them smarter.

4. Leaders and managers create the environment for deep practice. Are you coaching well enough?

Because of an amazing track record and 88 unbeaten games across three seasons, the sports channel ESPN made John Wooden the greatest coach of all time in any sport.

A study of 2,326 of Wooden's coaching comments revealed the following:

- 6.9% were compliments
- 6.6% expressed displeasure
- **75% were pure information** – what to do, how to do it, when to intensify an activity.

Wooden's insights were mostly practical. He **guided**. He **advised**.

Are you around your people often enough to behave like Wooden?

Are you spending enough time with your people to share your knowledge, insight and skill as they do their work? Or as they practice?

Are you mostly giving practical 'what to do' and 'how to do it' guidance?

5. The 'Repeatedly Reach' checklist – When you or your people learn a new skill or advance an existing skill, are you applying the essentials of deep practice? – use this checklist and increase your chances of success.

a. Be good at CHUNKING

➤ **Are you providing an overview of what's needed or expected? YES / NO**

If you were coaching music you'd listen to the whole piece to give an overview. You might play different artists playing the same piece. In business you might watch an expert do the job.

➤ **Are you dividing the whole into smaller, manageable parts? YES / NO**

If it was music you'd chunk the piece into phrases or bars to practice. In business it might be machine preparation or where to start or when to finish or what questions to ask.

➤ **Are you slowing things down? YES / NO**

Going slow makes it easier to recognise and attend to errors and brings a focus on precision. This makes sense in music or sport. In business you might get 'trainees' to refer to checklists before acting or responding. Or you might get them to tell you 'what they intend to do' before they do it to slow them down.

b. Be good at REPETITIONS

➤ **Are you helping your people do repetitions every day? YES / NO**

➤ **Are you helping your people do their repetitions at the edge? YES / NO**

In sport and music repetitions are a way of life. In business this gets lost. But can you see how 30 or 40 minutes a day repeating key skills or actions at the edge of your existing skill level will eventually give you a competitive advantage?

c. Be good at RECOGNISING MISTAKES

➤ **Are you choosing a goal for your practice? YES / NO**

Be clear on what you and your people are aiming for in each practice.

➤ **Are you encouraging mistakes early on in practice? YES / NO**

It pays to hear a bum note before you start practice. It pays to hear someone ask a clumsy question or mess up setting up a machine or start with the wrong checklist. Encourage mistakes.

- **Are you recognising mistakes early on in practice?** YES / NO

Help your people see and hear the mistakes as they happen. Do not glance past them.

- **Are you recognising the difference between success and failure?** YES / NO

It pays to compare and contrast right and wrong, success and failure so your people start to see, hear and feel the error themselves and so recognise success themselves too.

6. The book and other powerful resources: *'The Talent Code – Greatness isn't born, it's grown, here's how'* – Daniel Coyle

If you'd like to watch an amusing but insightful 17 minute video of the author sharing key insights from his research and his book **go here** (watch the first 6 minutes at least and have a few laughs and see the source of future success) -

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Aq0pHpNy6bs>

Just knowing about myelin is enough for a win. But if you want serious wins for you, your people and your business get yourself a copy of Daniel Coyle's simply brilliant and insightful book.

We strongly urge you to read this book from cover to cover and start applying the talent code insights to your business. You can get the book here -

<https://www.amazon.co.uk/dp/B004EYSXT8/ref=dp-kindle-redirect?encoding=UTF8&btkr=1>