

Successes & Strategies - October 2009

by Larry Rice, Director of Strategic Consulting

Issue #57 - Electronic Edition #6

Practice, Practice, Practice!

In his book 'Outliers,' Malcolm Gladwell takes to task the idea that the best of the best in our society, those who achieve great fame and success in a given business pursuit or artistic skill or sport, are products of innate greatness and predestined to their place in history. While he does not discount the benefits of great genes that help produce these exceptional characters - these "Outliers", he only sees that as part of the story. By peeling the onion back a bit, he discovers two more significant factors to be considered:



- Outliers often are products of extraordinarily unique opportunities and circumstances that allowed them to better exploit the gifts they did possess.
- A dedication to investing significantly in practicing and perfecting their skills.

Without going into great detail, Gladwell examines how icons like Bill Gates, The Beatles and Mozart while indeed highly intelligent and talented, they were also the beneficiaries of being in the right place at the right time to exploit those talents. Most interesting to learn was the significant amount of practice that each invested in honing their skills before they truly became great. Gladwell references a "10,000 hour rule" which indicates that an investment of 10,000 hours of practice is needed to really master a given skill, be it composing music, playing music, writing software code, you name it.

This may be a depressing revelation for some. If there is something you'd like to be great at, the thought of investing 10,000 hours to get there may be daunting. For me there is good news for the average entrepreneur in all of this. First, if you compete with a genius, that factor alone won't dictate the winner. Second, if you are willing to practice the skills of business

ownership and management, it isn't necessary to invest 10,000 hours. You just need to invest more time than your competitor.

Let's use our national pastime to further illustrate the lesson here. Let's assume you play shortstop and you would like to improve your skill of fielding ground balls without error. To best do that should you:

1. Visualize yourself fielding ground balls cleanly over and over in your mind?
2. Read books on the subject of fielding and learning the experts' methods of best fielding ground balls?
3. Get out on the field and have someone hit you 200 ground balls each and every day?

The answer is (3), obviously.

This example illustrates an important thing to consider. Is your practice as good as it can be? A popular axiom most know is that "practice makes perfect." In martial arts that axiom is improved on to state "perfect practice makes perfect." Returning to our ground ball example, could we improve on the practice of fielding 200 balls to make the practice more effective? One way would be to include a runner with each ground ball. You would better simulate an actual game situation by having each ground ball accompanied with a runner that would need to be thrown out in addition to just fielding the ball. You could go on from there to better improve the practice but I think you see the process.

For the entrepreneur that wants to be a better leader, salesperson, manager or any other of the numerous required skills, the best way to get there is to practice those skills diligently. Practice them in ways that mirror actual circumstances you will face. Practice those skills more than your competitors and you will be better than your competitors. No real shortcuts here - just a clear path for outperforming others. Nice.

See you next month.



[To forward Successes & Strategies](#)

[SafeUnsubscribe®](#)

This email was sent to jessica@rodmancpa.com by info@rodmancpa.com.

Email Marketing by

[Update Profile/Email Address](#) | Instant removal with [SafeUnsubscribe™](#) | [Privacy Policy](#).



Rodman & Rodman, PC | 3 Newton Executive Park | Suite 101 | Newton | MA | 02462-1433