

Have you got what it takes to be exceptional?

“It’s hard to be humble, when you’re as great as I am.”

Muhammad Ali

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What if you can do more than just fulfill your goals, complete your task and add another tick on your check list? What if you could reach beyond competence and strive for excellence? Do you think you have what it takes to succeed?

The secret to doing great things and becoming an exceptional performer is recognizing a few things about yourself. Most important of all, is remembering that your potential is pretty much limitless, a point backed up by the world of science. It appears from years of research and observation that we only fully understand about 5% of how our minds and bodies work. The second is recognizing your limitations and your imperfections. You see no one is perfect and this is what stops people striving for greatness as they associate it with perfection and this something they feel they can’t achieve. Being great or exceptional has nothing to do with perfection and everything to do with doing the best you can.

Research now suggests that the lack of natural talent is almost irrelevant to achieving great success. It appears that we have the power and ability within ourselves to allow us to become any number of things, including truly great. So how can we achieve excellence and become exceptional?

You will recall that in the last two articles we have encouraged you to focus on setting your goals and planning strategies to help you achieve them. Have you started to work towards those goals? If you are finding it difficult, take a moment to think about the goals you’ve set for yourself. Ask yourself seriously, how committed are you to achieving these goals? What circumstances would cause you to give up? What if you could significantly increase your desire to achieve these goals? Suppose you wanted them so desperately that you knew with unquestionable certainty that you would absolutely,

positively never ever give up? When you are genuinely 100% committed to reaching your goals, you move from hoping you achieve them to knowing you will. If you truly want something badly enough, then quitting is simply not an option.

The successful individuals who strive to reach their goals with an intense, burning desire to achieve are often referred to as being “driven.” But this is a special quality that is not reserved only for a privileged few. With the right approach, anyone can cultivate a deep, burning desire within themselves and move to a state of total commitment, knowing with certainty that success is as inevitable as the sunrise.

“We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence, then, is not an act, but a habit.”

Aristotle



What are the qualities that exceptional people have?

- They love what they do and it's the doing of things they love.
- They enjoy a challenge
- They bounce back and learn from setbacks
- They always feel they can do better
- They listen
- They are relentless
- They never give up and always follow through

Most people never realise their potential because they do not realise they have any. The beliefs that you hold about yourself in relationship to your skills and abilities and the environment in which you live will determine how successful you will be.

Our beliefs act as a framework for our behaviour – in other words, what you believe forms the cornerstone of how you behave and what you get. To change a habitual behaviour, you will have to change your belief. This will require you to develop a way of thinking that will help you to believe you can behave differently. Just because you may have failed in the past, doesn't mean you will fail again. If you really want to change something in your life, know that if you truly believe it will happen, then you will find a way to make it happen. Belief is the fuel of ambition. In attempting to do anything new or remotely ambitious in your life, check in with your overall belief system to ensure that you are congruent. When you believe you can achieve great things, you will.

Research has also shown that many of the people at the top of their professions strongly believe that they are better than they really are. But this belief allows them to be better than they really are. And the more successful they are the more evidence there appears to be to support their belief in their greatness.

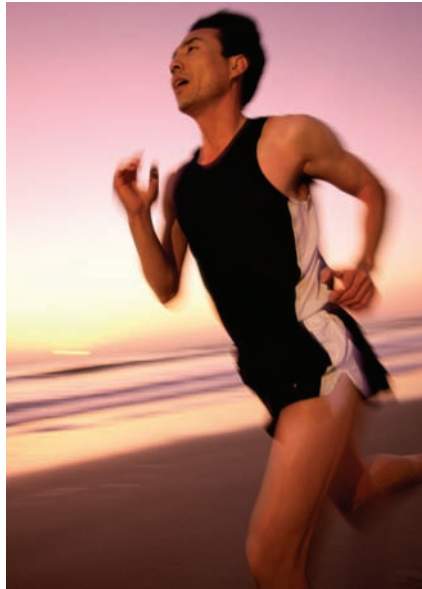
You are today where your thoughts have brought you; you will be tomorrow where your thoughts take you.

James Allen

It is also worth pointing out, that one of the functions performed for us by our mind is the validation of our ways of thinking about the world. We will tend to seek confirmation for what we believe, even if those beliefs are harmful to our well being and better good. If you believe that you are capable and confident, you pay attention to those signals from the outside world which reinforces those beliefs. If you believe that you are not as good as others or that you are being judged badly, you seek the confirming evidence just as readily. When this happens, often at the first sign of difficulty in achieving an objective, we are more likely to abandon our plans and shrink back into our comfort zone.

No substitute for hard work

There is no evidence to suggest that one may achieve high-level performance without either experience or practice. No matter how much we may wish that one day we will find an area in our life, in which we appear naturally gifted and hope to attain excellence. It appears conclusive that excellence can only be achieved if we are prepared to work hard



So greatness isn't handed to anyone; it requires a lot of hard work. Yet that isn't enough, since many people work hard for decades without approaching greatness or even getting significantly better. What's missing?

Practice makes perfect

I may have made my comeback in an England shirt on Saturday but, as far as I was concerned, I hadn't really been away. Every day that I'd been out of the game, I'd been training for the day when I was back in it. So I was absent, but not in some rugby wilderness. With every injury, I had a plan: different parts of my game or my physique that I could work on.

Jonny Wilkinson

Speaking of his return to international rugby after a 3 year absence, Jonny Wilkinson emphasises the importance of focus and practice to his game and for maintaining his status as one of the best rugby players of his generation in the world. Wilkinson's reputation precedes him, as well as being a truly great player he is also one of the hardest working professionals in the modern game, continuing with practice when many others have left the training ground. It has even been rumored that he continues to practice on Christmas Day

Wilkinson is one of many sporting legends, who dedicate their life to their

sport and achieving excellence. Tiger Woods, Michael Jordan and the Williams sisters are also examples of sports stars that go the extra mile and have reached the top of their chosen field. They have also devoted the most hours to what can be defined as "deliberate practice." Deliberate practice is an activity that is explicitly intended to improve performance, one that reaches for objectives just beyond one's level of competence. It involves high levels of repetition and provides the performer with an increased feedback on results and performance. In essence, deliberate practice equals better performance, copious amounts of it equals exceptional performance.

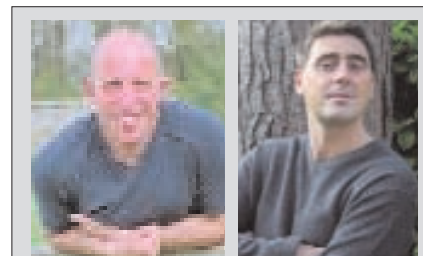
Keep the pressure on

The athletes we have highlighted are able to cope with pressure; in fact they thrive in difficult situations. They know that they can perform when the pressure is on as they constantly place pressure on themselves. Take a leaf out of their book and give yourself some pressure. Learn to push yourself harder, whether it is in the gym, in the work place or within your relationships. Strive for excellence in everything you do. Exceed expectations, never be contented with good, when you know with a little more effort, you can go for great. When you strive for excellence in everything you do, you will naturally surpass others and reach your true potential.

The secret of joy in work is contained in one word - excellence. To know how to do something well is to enjoy it.

Pearl S Buck

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