

TALENT IS OVERRATED

What Really Separates World-Class Performers From Everybody Else

GEOFF COLVIN

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MAIN IDEA

The assumption has always been that the world-class performers in any field are born with what it takes to excel – it’s a gift you either have or you do not have. A growing body of scientific research is now showing this is not in fact the case at all. Genuinely superior performance is based on what researchers term “deliberate practice” – a very well-defined set of activities which world-class performers pursue diligently. The more deliberate practice they do, the better they perform. To deliver a genuine world-class performance, tons of deliberate practice is put in well past the point at which other people give up and it is this which tends to be the differentiating characteristic of top achievers.

Put another way, success is 99 percent hard work. High achievement in any field isn’t reserved for those few who are genetically equipped one way or another. It’s available to anyone and everyone who is willing to pay the price. As individuals, if we learn how to harness the principles of deliberate practice more fully, we can become much better at everything we do. And similarly, if organizations become better at deliberate practice, a sustainable competitive advantage can be earned and ultimately enjoyed.

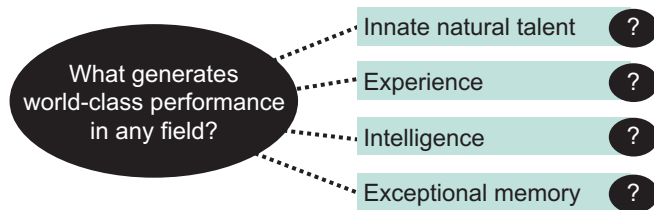
The central question remains not what we were born with but whether or not we are willing to pay the price that is required for greatness.

“It turns out that our knowledge of great performance, like our knowledge of everything else, has actually advanced quite a bit in the past couple of millennia. Scientists began turning their attention to it in a big way about 150 years ago, but what’s most important is the growing mountain of research that has accumulated in just the past 30 years. These hundreds of research projects have converged on some major conclusions that directly contradict most of what we all think we know about great performance”.

– Geoff Colvin

The Mystery – What generates world-class performance in any field? Pages 2 - 3

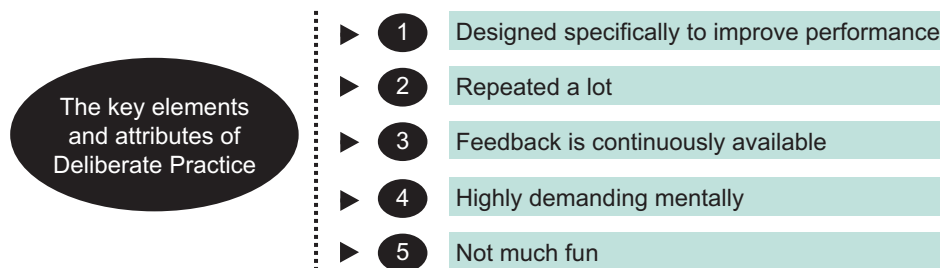
What is it that sets world-class performers in any field apart from the average performers? All kinds of theories and suggestions have been put forward including:



The only problem is none of these suggestions turn out to be correct when you examine the data.

The Answer – A specific style of development training termed “Deliberate Practice” Pages 3 - 5

Scientific evidence has shown the real key to world-class performance is to engage in a specific style of development training termed “Deliberate Practice”. Deliberate practice has some very specific attributes which are part and parcel of its overall effectiveness:



Application – How to make deliberate practice work Pages 5 - 8

Evidence abounds deliberate practice is a genuine performance multiplier. It is not, however, a panacea for any and all problems. It simply takes too much work and effort to be considered a short cut to success. If you’re smart, however, you can and should apply the general principles and practices of deliberate practice in several key areas:

