



SECRET TO SUCCESS

The Secret *No One Told You About Success*

What is it that makes someone great? Is it some innate ability? Some unique skill sets that they were gifted with.

Is greatness something that is bestowed upon some but not others? Is the ability to be great at something, at anything, woven into the DNA of a select few?

When we look at those who have achieved greatness in life, we see how easily they can execute a given skill; what are we seeing?

Listen to Warren Buffett dole out investment advice. Watch a video of Eric Clapton as he rips through a blues guitar or Michael Jordan dunking a basketball.

The gap is so big between what these people are capable of and what we can do; it is easy to convince ourselves that they must have some innate and naturally gifted talent that we don't possess.

That's why they can excel and be great, and we can't.

Right?

Wrong!

Michael Jordan once said:

"Maybe it's my fault. Maybe I led you to believe it was easy, when it wasn't. Maybe I made you think that my highlights started at the free throw line and not in the gym. Maybe I made you think that every shot I took was a game winner. Maybe it is my fault that I didn't let you see that failure gave me strength, that my pain was my motivation. Maybe I led you to believe that basketball was a god given gift and not something I worked for every single day of my life. Or maybe, you're just making excuses."

The single most pervasive and destructive self-limiting belief is that of natural talent. The myth is that some people are naturally gifted with a level of talent, an aptitude for doing a given skill set. This myth makes people believe they have either "got it" or "they don't". And therefore, if they are not naturally gifted at playing chess or guitar, selling a product, doing business presentations, or anything else, they will never be able to excel.

Just imagine how different life would look to a person who had not been conditioned to believe in the concept of natural talent. They would approach learning anything with an open mind. They would willingly practice however much was required to excel. The more they practised, the better they would become.

This would be true for anything they desired to learn.

If they wanted to excel at math, they could.

If they wanted to be great at playing an instrument, they could.

They could be their best at playing a given sport if they wanted to be their best at playing a given sport.

If they desired to be a great salesperson, they could.

They could become good at whatever they set their mind to achieve.

Imagine how limitless their life would be. Imagine what they could accomplish and succeed if they genuinely let go of this limiting mindset.

The fear of failure, the fear of not being good enough, and the fear of making a mistake would cease to exist within their consciousness.

Rather than being ruled by fears and self-doubts, they would view life as a virtually limitless opportunity to learn, grow and improve themselves.

Yet, for most, this perspective is highly foreign. Most people see their shortcomings with incredible clarity, but they see their potential to learn through a fog-like haze.

So how does this happen to them? How do they come to believe that the only people capable of achieving high levels of success are those who have been fortunate enough to be naturally gifted?

You don't have to look far to find countless examples of the insidious conditioning process that perpetuates the myth of natural talent.

Watch any sporting event; more than likely, you will hear one of the announcers speak of an athlete's incredible natural talent. Pick up a newspaper, watch television and sooner or later, you will find reference to some child prodigy, some wunderkind whose extraordinary natural ability allows them to excel.

Over and over, we hear stories of natural talent until, eventually, people start to believe the myth.

Just imagine a child prodigy. He was a child so naturally gifted that he won eight USA national championships in chess by the time he was 14 years old. A child who earned the elite title of International Chess Master by 16.

This child was Joshua Waitzkin, a child who was so uniquely gifted at playing the game of chess that they made a movie about him. "Searching for Bobby Fischer"

Indeed, this child must have possessed incredible natural talent. Some innate gift that allowed him to excel the way he did. He must have had some advantage that others didn't.

These are the types of stories that the media highlight. Over and over, they tell of the incredible natural talents of others who succeed. They convince us that if we weren't born with these abilities, we shouldn't even bother trying; we would just be wasting our time. Why? Because success is preordained, it is innate. For those who are gifted, success comes easy. Relatively effortlessly even. At least, this is what the media would have you believe.

Yet when you begin to dig deeper. When you study the back story of these people labelled as "naturals", you invariably find that it took excessive hard work to become "naturally gifted." The media often fails to talk about all the work, hours of practice, and countless setbacks and mistakes.

Rarely, if ever, do they tell the whole story.

Look at our young chess prodigy; the media does not mention the chance meeting when he was six years old and just learning to play the game. They don't tell about how one day, when this young boy was playing chess in his local park, a man who is a United States Chess Foundation National Master stopped and said hello. This gentleman has been called America's top chess teacher. He took a young six-year-old, Joshua Waitzkin, under his wing and taught him to become a chess grandmaster.

Together they played chess, hundreds of matches, and young Joshua learned from each. Hour upon hour, more practice. He was honing his abilities, perfecting his craft. Until finally, thousands of hours of training later, he became a chess grandmaster.

So what does Joshua Waitzkin, the young chess prodigy, believe about his natural ability?

Here is what he had to say:

"The moment that we believe that an ingrained level of ability predetermines success, we will be brittle in the face of adversity."

The myth of natural talent convinces people that it would be impossible to develop if they weren't born with incredible skill. So they don't permit themselves to try.

Swedish psychologist Dr Anders Ericsson was fascinated with the question of 'talent.' Was talent naturally gifted, or was it the result of something else?

With his team of researchers, he went to the West Berlin Academy of Music, a school renowned for producing international soloist-level violinists.

Without the students knowing, Ericsson asked to split the class of violinists into two groups – those that would make international soloist level and those that were 'merely good enough to be 1st or 2nd Violin in internationally renowned symphony orchestras.

Then they conducted detailed interviews with the students, the student's teachers, and the students parents. These interviews resulted in collecting data about each student, which Ericsson and his team then analysed.

They found that the violinists from both groups had remarkably similar stories. They'd all started playing at around the same age. They had all won similar competitions as they were getting older. They were all currently putting in equal practice time honing their playing skills.

Only one statistic separated the first group, those destined to be international soloists, from the second group, those only good enough to be ensemble players.

And that was lifetime practice hours. On average, those destined to become soloists had racked up **7,410** lifetime practice hours. Those destined to be ensemble players had only managed **5,301** lifetime practice hours.

That's a differential of 2109 hours. *That's 30% more practice.*

Imagine practising 3 hours a day, six days a week, every week of the year; it would take you over two years to make up those 2109 hours.

Think of it this way – if you played chess against a friend who had played 2000 hours more than you, whom would you expect to be more 'naturally' talented than them? Of course not. Indeed, the extra 2000 hours of practice would give them an edge. Why wouldn't you expect their skill level would be better than yours?

Take the word "chess" out of the paragraph above and substitute any other activity – speaking a language, skiing, computer programming, writing, painting, selling, leading a team, investing, etc.

Do you think someone with 2000 more hours of practice would appear more "naturally talented" than you?

Of course, you would!

Dr Anders Ericsson found that it takes approximately 10,000 hours of deliberate practice to become our best at any skill.

Peel back the layers, look beyond the myths and hyperbole that make for great fodder in the media and truth becomes readily apparent.

No DNA or gene automatically makes someone a great chess player, a superstar athlete, a world-class musician, a top salesperson, or a great leader.

Imagine what you could accomplish if you genuinely believed you could be good at anything you set your mind to.

What could you achieve if you truly believed that you could not fail? If you would willingly practice a given skill set for 10,000 hours, there would be nothing that would stand in the way.

Think how much having the right mindset would matter.

James Fleming

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