



YES, YOU CAN!



5 STEPS TO
BECOMING THE CEO
OF YOUR LIFE

DR. PAUL G. C. HECTOR
CERTIFIED COACH AND MENTOR

Yes, You Can

5 Steps to Being a More Effective CEO of Your Life

Dr. Paul G. C. Hector

Copyright © 2023 by Paul Geoffrey Cuthbert Hector

All rights reserved

No part of this publication may be reproduced, adapted, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, scanning, or otherwise, without the prior written permission of the author.

Limit of Liability/Disclaimer of Warranty:

This publication is designed to provide accurate and authoritative information in regard to the subject matter covered. It is sold with the understanding that neither the author nor the publisher is engaged in rendering legal, investment, accounting or other professional services. While the publisher and author have used their best efforts in preparing this book, they make no representations or warranties with respect to the accuracy or completeness of the contents of this book and specifically disclaim any implied warranties of merchantability or fitness for a particular purpose. No warranty may be created or extended by sales representatives or written sales materials. The advice and strategies contained herein may not be suitable for your situation. You should consult with a professional when appropriate. Neither the publisher nor the author shall be liable for any loss of profit or any other commercial damages, including but not limited to special, incidental, consequential, personal, or other damages. The Publisher has no control over and does not assume any responsibility for the author or third-party websites or their contents.

ISBN 978-1-7781936-0-6 (eBook)
ISBN 978-1-7781936-2-0 (Hardcover)
ISBN 978-1-7781936-1-3 (Paperback)

Library of Congress Control Number (LCCN): 2022921215

Printed in Canada. The Oualie Consulting Group Ltd, Concord, ON.

www.oualieconsulting.com

Simultaneously Published in the United States of America. The Oualie
Consulting Group LLC, Dearborn Heights, MI, 48127

Yes You Can: 5 Steps to becoming the CEO of your life

By Paul Geoffrey Cuthbert Hector

Personal Success, Self-Help, Personal Transformation, Business &
Money, Business and Life, Motivation & Self-Improvement,
Religion & Spirituality, Spirituality, Personal Success, Motivational,
Personal Development & Growth, Business & Money, Management
& Leadership, Decision-Making & Problem Solving, Business &
Money > Management & Leadership Personal Management,
Management Skills, Systems & Planning.

Cover design by Chisom Ezeh

Edited by Chisom Ezeh and Eunice Smith

Preface

Each day, billions of white-collar workers around the world leverage cutting-edge tools, technologies, and processes to help their institutions achieve success by developing and implementing strategic, operational, and tactical plans. Yet many of these workers overlook the vast potential of their corporate knowledge to overcome their own struggles and transform their personal lives! Written by a mindset and performance coach, this book shows you how to apply business principles and processes in your life to catalyze your success.

Dedication

This book is dedicated to my first ever coaches and mentors,
my parents, Eugenie and Keithly Hector,

The members of my first ever mastermind group,
My siblings, Katherine, Sharon, Carol, and Stephen,

And last but not least,
to my one and only Helen, Aelan and Liam,
the members of my daily accountability group
who motivate me to push towards my goals
with their endless love and support,
who help me stay grounded through it all
and never hesitate to call me out when I don't live up to my
potential.

It takes an Island to Raise a Child!

I'd just like to recognize some of the incredible people who have, in so many different ways, on so many occasions, from various countries and walks of life, been a source of encouragement and inspiration or helped me in various ways on my life's journey. Thank you all! I wouldn't be here or the person I am today without you! Naturally, this list is a work in progress and incomplete:

Maude Crosse, Rhoda Archibald, Clive and Theresa Smith, Sylvie Prehu, Leonaldo Hector, Jennifer A. Morrissey, Almon Dasent, Vivian Highton, Bertram Gilfillan, Uriel "Patsy" DaSilva, Eugene McLaren Liburd, Egbert & Hillary Lewis, Vernon & Shirley Hendrickson, Purcell Ferguson, Gillian Hobson, Florence Ruan, Lilian Ruan, Lynette Ruan, Viola Ruan, Jan Lopez, Judeen George, Chidi Tobia, Nathalie Youngpong, Marie-Catherine Griffith, Christopher McBean, Olivia Scott, Claremont Brooms, Dr. Derek Gay, Dr. Phillip Dunston, David Doyle, Valerie Sargeant, Wilson Grant, Lawrence Richards, Billy Queeley, Lester Blackett, Michael Perkins, Nicolas Brisbane,, Maki Ichikawa, Boyan Radoykov, Roberta Zuchegna, Julia Stamiris, Leslyn Dore, Morrison Mills, Joseph & Yvonne Sutton, Desmond Herbert, Abdul Waheed Khan, Albertine Solomon, Rhondi "Quin" Hobson, Brian Warner, Vaughn Anslyn, Sean Henville, David Lawrence, Richard Titley, Cynric Carey, Harrison Beck, Von Michael Martin, Jamion Knight, Tapiwa Jongwe, Eunice Smith, Jaco Du Toit, Olaf Fontenelle, Helena Drobna, Margarida Tor, Theophania Chavatzia, Vida Habash, Olga Weber, Tsepang, Lily Neyestani, Feliz Aktaz, Anna Siderenko, Jules Mailhot, Catherine Wintrich, Joie Springer, Peter... Judy Hayden Lewis, Christine Wellington, Vincent Ribiere, Jean-Louis Ermine, Bhumika Gupta, Tantie, Dorothy and Oriel Hector, Kenrick Hector, Reginald Hector, Robelto Hector, Harcourt Hector, Chantal Amie,

Dr. Ahmed Bounfour, Waltraut Ritter, Alex Bennet, Dave Snowden, Feleke Assef, Bezaiet Dessalegn, Yigezu Atnafe Yigezu, My in-laws Tamara and Bekele Lemma, Tamrat Lemma, Dawit Bekele, Victor Montvillof, Liz Longworth, Hugh Miles, Axel Plathe, Hara Padhy, Xianhong Hu, Alton Grizzle, Indrajit Banerjee, Evgeny Kuzmin, Chafica Haddad, Hezekiel Dlamini, , Papa Makhtar Mbaye, Emile Glele, Noral Lescott, Suhas Joshi, Eldon Jones, Brian Kassab, Clive & Theresa, Greg Hughes, Elizabeth Taylor, Angela Allen, Tony Scatliffe, Vinetta Powell, Dorothy Kirnon, Christie Parris, Maizie Springette, Miss Martin, Ashley Farrel, Theodore Daniel, Dwight Morton, Hensley Daniel, Hastings Daniel, Sonita Barrett, Shirley Jones, Lou Davis, SamiaAshraf, Are Nyhus, Ravishankar Sharma, Gihan Osman, Fawzi Baroud, Davide Storti.

DISCLOSURES AND DISCLAIMERS

Affiliate Links notice

This book contains a number of links to external websites and resources, some of which may earn the author an affiliate commission. The author is also an Amazon Associate and may earn from qualifying purchases made via the affiliate links.

Table of Contents

Why I Decided to Write This Book

The Problem This Book Solves – Why You MUST Read It!

Introduction

Special Bonuses

CHAPTER 1 - Why doesn't my hard work translate into success?

- 1.1. Hard work is actually just one part of the story
- 1.2. Deliberate practice and a clear goal
- 1.3. Prioritizing and the law of focus
- 1.4. Embracing your desirable disadvantage – it's all about mindset
- 1.5 Chapter Summary

CHAPTER 2 - Why aren't people ready to invest in me?

- 2.1 Seek first to understand and then to be understood
- 2.2. Developing good habits
- 2.3 Are you surrounding yourself with the right people? Are you leveraging your networks?
- 2.4. Learn from others – Do not reinvent the wheel but be open to exploring your unique insights
- 2.5. Make a plan but also be prepared for the “unexpected”
- 2.6. Chapter Summary

CHAPTER 3 - How can I learn from those who are succeeding?

- 3.1. Provide value to those you wish to learn from

- 3.2. Leverage books and social media
- 3.3. Find a mentor or coach
- 3.4. Start or join a mastermind group
- 3.5. Chapter Summary

CHAPTER 4 - Using knowledge management tools for personal success

- 4.1 Organizing personal retreats
- 4.2 Anticipate what can go wrong by running a pre-mortem
- 4.3. Learn from what you have done by running a post-mortem
- 4.4. Capture what you know and learn by documenting it
- 4.5. Managing your content
- 4.6. Chapter Summary

CHAPTER 5 - Five commandments to keep top of mind

- 5.1. Commandment 1 – No one succeeds alone
- 5.2. Commandment 2 - Find Clarity, it always precedes success
- 5.3. Commandment 3 - Good habits are the building blocks of future success
- 5.4. Commandment 4 – Small is the new Big - Little changes over time can have HUGE impacts
- 5.5. Commandment 5 – If, at first, you do not succeed, learn, innovate and adapt
- 5.6. Chapter Summary

Afterword

About the Author

The Problem This Book Solves – Why You MUST Read It!

Did you know we already hold the keys to our success?

I have always marveled at how compartmentalized we are in our use of information and knowledge. Perhaps, this has something to do with the structure of the school system and our efforts to increase efficiency and lower risk. As various fields of endeavor and their associated knowledge become more specialized, we seek for greater action and efforts towards the standardization of our focus. Let's say, for example, that you're learning about biology. It is typical that we would only want to apply our Biology knowledge within the subject itself. We fail to see or be curious about how transferable this knowledge is to other aspects and facets of our life. We just don't seem to want to recognize how interconnected everything is. We are yet to realize that what we do in one domain can be applicable and beneficial in other domains.

Each day, millions of people work in governments, corporations, and other institutions. They use fantastic tools, processes, and techniques to develop company strategies, set goals, and develop plans and budgets they monitor regularly. They organize team-building exercises, provide initiatives and incentives to increase employee engagement, and identify and share good practices that they try to adopt and adapt. Many management consultants point to such approaches as key factors that contribute to the success and fortunes of these companies. Yet, most employees do not realize that applying these principles in their lives will make them more successful.

Hence the paradox of people who run up credit card debt, always borrowing money from spouses, families, and friends, but who, in

The Problem This Book Solves

the workplace, are model employees, diligent managers and stewards of their company's resources. I believe this is a real tragedy.

It's almost as if we have a key to a door that opens up great opportunities. We have the key, we can see the door, and we desire what's on the other side. But somehow, it just doesn't occur to us that we can use this same key in our personal lives to unlock the benefits that we create each day for our employers.

Many years ago, I said to my wife, *"Helen let's plan our own couple's retreat. We'll go to a fantastic resort and have a mini-vacation away from the kids and the usual hustle and bustle. We'll think about some of what we'd like to achieve individually, as a couple and as a family in various parts of our life."* She smiled and said, *"Sounds like a good idea, but isn't that what companies do?"* To which I replied, *"if it's good enough and works for Fortune 500 companies, then we should also do this to accelerate our success as a family!"* My wife agreed, and this became the first of many such retreats that have transformed our lives.

Through this book, I want to help persons who hold these and other knowledge keys to recognize their value so that they can apply them and bring more abundance into their lives.

Even if it's the least crowded, the longest mile is the last mile!

Imagine running a 10K race! You've trained, you're excited, and you are ready! The race begins! It's very crowded, there are many runners, you have to really watch out. You feel hemmed in. A runner bumps into you, whoa? You almost fell! It's a good thing you were paying attention. Then, gradually the crowd of runners begins to thin out. You notice that some runners started too fast and burnt themselves out. Others didn't train enough or weren't hydrated enough. Some lost their focus taking selfies as they ran, they stumbled, fell, and got stepped on by other runners. Ouch! As you

The Problem This Book Solves

pass the 8K marker, you feel great, you keep your pace, and you mentally prepare to surge ahead as you get to the 9K mark --the last segment of the race. No one is ahead of you, your chances are great! Yes!

Then you see the finish line ahead. Incredibly, it's at the top of a steep hill at the end of a long snakelike, winding road! You really weren't expecting this! Are they kidding?! Are they sadists?

You can hear another runner behind you. What will you do? Will you dig in deep and surge ahead, or will you falter?

One of the most important problems businesses need to solve is the "last mile" problem. This problem first emerged in the telecommunication sector. The invention of the telegraph made it possible to send a message almost instantaneously from a telegraph office in one city to the telegraph office in another city, hundreds or even thousands of miles away. However, the actual process of getting the message to the desired recipient could take a far, far longer time. Before the telegraph, a messenger traveling on foot, bicycle, or horse would need to go to the recipient's address to deliver the message. The messenger, who probably had to make several deliveries, would need to decide the best route to get to each recipient. Many factors could affect the delivery of the message. For example, if there was an error in the address, the delivery could take far longer. Or, if the recipient was not at home to receive the telegram, the messenger might need to make several follow-up attempts to deliver the message.

This problem still exists today. In e-commerce many companies in this sector have become very successful because they can make it through the last mile to make their deliveries on time. For example, on Amazon, you can shop online, identify the product you'd like to purchase, place your order, and have the package shipped to you. This sounds quite easy and simple. However, the most challenging part for Amazon is how to get the package to your address. Research

The Problem This Book Solves

has shown that an overwhelming percentage of costs are linked to the last mile.

So, let's imagine you placed an order on the Amazon website. Let's also imagine that there's a huge Amazon warehouse someplace where they've already packed all of the items from different factories around the world. Then, there's a worker whose job it is to select the various items you want. Maybe you want to buy a TV, some diapers, and some books. Although these are very different things, the warehouse person will pack all of these into a box and ship them to your address. When the goods leave the Amazon warehouse, they are first sent to some smaller facility, and then they go out for delivery. In this last mile/ phase, the delivery person has to consider several factors like cities with crazy traffic, unclear addresses, road blocks due to construction, and so many other factors. But somehow, you know this delivery person must get to that last stage. And that's where most of the cost goes. Often, that's also where a lot of frustration takes place. That person may not even be able to drive to your door because of road closures, bad roads, etc. They may have to stop somewhere, get off and walk. And when they eventually get to your address, you're not at home. Now, they are faced with a different challenge: the item may get stolen if they leave it on your doorstep.

All of these challenges in the last mile make the process very costly and frustrating. As a result, even though we are on the cusp of success, the dynamics of the last mile can cause us to become disheartened and give up.

Let's look at a familiar example we can all relate to. Imagine you are applying for a job. You may have studied, worked hard, graduated from the university, had successful internships, and even gone on to get great real-world experience. Then, one day, while on social media, you see an ad for your ideal position at your dream company! Wow, this is what you've been looking for! You do some research, prepare your resume and apply for the job.

The Problem This Book Solves

Soon, you get a letter inviting you to a series of screening tests. You prepare and pass all of them brilliantly. Now remains the last hurdle, the final interview. Many people get to this last mile and fail. They are doing great in the interview, then something comes up, a niggling question, some self-doubt, a worry about something they hadn't prepared for. Mentally, it causes them to stumble and lose their stride. Rather than being inspired by how far they have come, the passion they bring, and the lives they will be able to transform in this new role, they instead ruminate on this imagined misstep. Their negative self-talk kicks in. They lose focus on the prize. They start feeling self-conscious. Their throat goes dry, they start stuttering and overcompensate by babbling. Like pulling on a loose thread in a poorly knit sweater, the unraveling begins. Before they know it, they go from hero to zero, convincing themselves and the interview panel that they are just not up to the task. Ahem, next candidate, please....

So, how can you make sure that you succeed after putting in all that effort? How can you use the knowledge, talents, and various tools you have to seize the prize? How can you ensure that you do not become the architect of your own demise?

It may seem harsh, but in some of life's races, there is no podium finish. The winner takes all. There is no silver medal and no bronze either. As Julia, one of my friends, a professional corporate recruiter, says, "In this type of race, if you finish second, you are the first of the losers." This is a hard and unpalatable truth. Some people would rather not face it and decide to never try again or take a risk. This is also sad. They never stretch themselves, they never get to truly know their potential. They cheat themselves, and they and the world are poorer for it.

Equally true but more inspiring is what Jānis, one of my former directors, would say, "The biggest room is the room for improvement."

The Problem This Book Solves

Such an outlook acknowledges that setbacks come but that we are capable of learning and getting better. So, rather than seeing this race - in this case, the outcome of our job interview – as the most important race of our lives, we can put it into its true perspective. We realize that it's simply the outcome of one in a series of relay races that we will run over the course of our career. If we can harness learnings from this and earlier races, then we can win even bigger prizes in the future! With this in mind, we continue to learn, we do more of what works, less of what doesn't, and we get better and better!

Two skills that every outstanding CEO masters

We have seen two major problems that pervade every aspect of our life. Firstly, how to take known information and techniques that we use to solve problems in a specific field, then generalize and apply this knowledge to problems with a similar structure in different fields. Secondly, how to move from a high macro-level understanding of a process to identifying and zooming in with focused attention to address the critical, high-value last mile of a situation and maintain the resilience needed to reap success. These are two skills mastered by all top CEOs, from [Richard Branson](#) to [Warren Buffett](#), from [Robert Reffkin](#) to [Aliko Dangote](#).

For example, back in the 1980s, [Richard Branson's flight was canceled](#) while on his way to an important meeting. He then chartered an entire plane and sold tickets at an attractive price – using a blackboard and an engaging voice as he roved the terminal - to other stranded passengers. This allowed him to recoup his money and get to his desired appointment in time. It also gave him the idea for starting Virgin Airlines. All Richard did was to take the general idea of crowdfunding and social innovation and apply it to his problem of getting to his destination on time. He then scaled up this insight to create a niche business.

The Problem This Book Solves

Recognizing that he was on to something, Richard then tried to figure out the specific aspects of the travel experience where he could eliminate pain points and create the most value. He experimented and decided to make travel a fun, personalized, and delightful experience for the traveler. He set new standards by [integrating digital technology into the travel experience](#) and introduced Premium Economy with lots of special perks for the economy traveler that gave them a taste of business class travel. Similarly, with Upper Class, he created a level of service that gave business travelers a taste of first-class service. By simply focusing on specific areas of the travel process, Richard [transformed travel from a task to an experience to look forward to!](#)

In today's highly connected and globalized world, we have multiple options and pathways. More possibilities but also more complexities and uncertainties. Plenty of opportunities for transversal learning, sharing, and improvement. At the same time, no one knows when an innovation will disrupt business as usual, how much longer we will live – so we are always at the last mile.

This book will help you master these two skills of outstanding CEOs and gain a greater level of comfort with facing unpalatable truths.

In the coming chapters, I will provide you with a set of tools and systems that will systematically help you succeed, move forward, and overcome your challenges. We already have or can access knowledge about specific topics and issues. However, having knowledge without understanding the context doesn't guarantee anything. Many people say, “Knowledge is power,” but that is simply not true. I prefer to think of knowledge along the lines of the words of one of my mentors, Dr. Alex Bennett, the first-ever Chief Knowledge Manager of the US Navy. In Alex's words, “Knowledge is the potential for effective action.”

The Problem This Book Solves

I am truly excited to share with you these insights and tools that will enable you to convert your potential into effective actions that will lead to the outcomes and results you desire. They have helped me, and they can also be of great service to you if you use them.

I hope that by understanding and harnessing these principles, you will find success however you define it and fulfill your potential. By unlocking your potential, you will be able to find fulfillment and contribute to making the world a much better place.

Please write and share your successes with me and help inspire others!

Good luck and Godspeed,
Paul

Introduction

Each day, millions if not billions, of white-collar workers around the world leverage cutting-edge tools, technologies, and processes to help their institutions achieve success by developing and implementing strategic, operational, and tactical plans. At the same time, many of these workers overlook the vast potential of their corporate knowledge to improve and transform their own personal lives. This book, written by an Executive Mindset and Performance Coach, breaks down some of the business principles and processes and shows you how to apply them in your life to catalyze your success.

The book is divided into five chapters to take you through the process of being an effective CEO of your own life.

Many believe hard work alone is sufficient to be successful, but it isn't. In the first chapter of this book, you will learn why hard work alone is not enough to guarantee success.

You are hardworking, but is your hard work getting you noticed? You have the potential, you know you can do well if given the opportunity, but so far no one is ready to take the chance with you. Why is that? Chapter Two explores this problem and provides various principles to help you understand how to build trust with others so that people will have the confidence to support you.

After we get the opportunity to do the work and aim for success, it is common to want to reinvent the wheel. Chapter Three focuses on ensuring that we don't just reinvent the wheel but rather "*How we can learn from those who are succeeding*", building on what has come before to accelerate our own progress. By understanding the pathways that successful people have used, we can avoid reinventing

the wheel. This will save us time, effort, and money, with fewer bruises on our journey to our desired goal.

In Chapter Four, we explore “*Using Knowledge Management tools for personal success.*” Today, knowledge is at the heart of creativity, innovation, and value creation for companies and nations. To be better CEOs of our lives, we must be able to capture, share and use our knowledge effectively. I present a set of knowledge management tools that are readily adaptable and applicable to a broad range of situations.

Chapter Five closes with five guiding principles that I call “*Five commandments to keep top of mind.*” These heuristics, which you really need to be aware of, are key to ensuring success throughout your entire journey. The first commandment focuses on recognizing that we can't do it alone; the second one emphasizes that clarity is a prerequisite for success; the third focuses on the critical role of habits; while the fourth looks counter-intuitively at the massive impact of small changes; finally, the fifth commandment provides guidance on responding to apparent failures.

The insights and tools in this book will help you create the internal and external environment necessary for your success. It will also equip you with action-oriented tools and processes to accelerate your progress. If you apply them, you will be well equipped to set in motion the changes you want and be better able to manage the inevitable changes that life will send your way.

Special Bonuses

I really trust that you will enjoy reading this book as much as I did while researching, conducting interviews, and writing it. Even more importantly, I really hope you will apply what you learn. As a gesture of appreciation for your support in helping me to positively impact and bring value to people through my writings, I am pleased to offer you the following bonuses:

- a) Follow me on my Upward Bound Club Facebook, Instagram, and LinkedIn pages, where I post original content that will help you grow, stay motivated, and be on track to your goals:

My Upward Bound Club Channels

- Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/UpwardBoundClub>
- Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/upward.bound.club/?hl=en>
- LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/company/upward-bound-club>

My Personal Channels

- Personal LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/in/paul-hector-47b2a43/>
- Twitter: <https://twitter.com/KimPgch>

- b) I would love to hear from you and know what you think about this book. Please visit any of my social media channels to share your feedback and suggestions for the book and my work in general. If you do this, I will send you, at no cost, my “Gratitude Day Planner and Reflection Sheet.”

- i) To benefit from this offer, e-mail me a screenshot of your post at paul@upwardboundclub.com. Include as

the Subject: **Requesting your Free Gratitude Day Planner**

- c) Send me a screenshot of your published social media post promoting my book, and I will send you my list of “Top books and resources for personal success.”
 - i) To benefit from this offer, e-mail me a screenshot of your post at paul@upwardboundclub.com. Include as the Subject: **Requesting your Top books & resources for success**
- d) Know someone who could benefit from this book? Send me their name and email, as well as your name and e-mail, and I will send them a 15% discount coupon on your behalf towards the purchase of a copy of my book.
 - i) To benefit from this offer, e-mail me your full contacts (name and email address) and theirs at paul@upwardboundclub.com. Include as the **Subject: I want to positively impact my friends’ life**
- e) Would you like to learn more about my coaching and speaking services? If so, you can reach me at:
 - i) **Learn about my coaching and speaking services:** <https://calendly.com/pgch-kim/yes-you-can-coaching-or-speaker-engagement>

CHAPTER 1 - Why doesn't my hard work translate into success?

1.1. Hard work is actually just one part of the story

The humbling, brutal, messy reality of life is that you can do everything in your power and still fail. Hard work in and of itself is no guarantee!

This statement seems counter-intuitive. When we look at the stories of many great leaders, persons who have gone before, we find they attribute their success to hard work. For examples:

- With hard work and effort, you can achieve anything. – Antoine Griezmann
- Without hard work, nothing grows but weeds. – Gordon B. Hinckley
- Hard work compounds like interest, and the earlier you do it, the more time you have for the benefits to pay off. – Sam Altman
- I'm a great believer in luck, and I find the harder I work, the more I have of it. – Thomas Jefferson
- Talent means nothing, while experience, acquired in humility and with hard work, means everything. – Patrick Suskind
- Go to the ant, O sluggard; consider her ways, and be wise. – Proverbs 6:6, ESV.

Presidents, entrepreneurs, and leaders across a variety of fields have identified hard work as a major contributor to their success. So, if you want to succeed, working hard is actually a wise thing to do.

Why Doesn't My Hard Work Translate into Success?

However, many people have worked very hard but have not succeeded. What makes some of these hard workers succeed while others do not? Let's first dig deep to really understand the role hard work plays in our journey to success.

1.2. Deliberate practice and a clear goal

In his book, [Outliers: The Story of Success](#), the New York Times best-selling author, [Malcolm Gladwell](#), quotes a famous study [conducted in 1973 by Herbert A. Simon and William G. Chase](#) that strongly suggests that in order for someone to become a master in a cognitively demanding area of endeavor, they need to put in about 10,000 hours of work. That's a lot of hours! If we think about 10,000 hours, that is like 250 working weeks. Technically, we are looking at five years if we think about 250 working weeks - and forget about time off for holidays, sick leave, and all other such unforeseeable factors! So, in reality, we need at least 10 years to become masters. But what's important to note is that it's not just about doing the same thing over and over again. To become masters, we must put in the time, but even more importantly, we must perform what is known as *Deliberate Practice*. 😊

What exactly is deliberate practice? Deliberate practice refers to a way of practice or work that is both purposeful and systematic. One thing that differentiates regular work from deliberate practice is that deliberate practice does not include mindless repetition. Deliberate practice is characterized by focused attention to the task at hand. It is conducted with the specific goal of improving performance. So, it's not just about doing a lot of things or just working hard, there must be a clear goal.

It is also important to understand that deliberate practice may not be a comfortable activity 😊; sustained effort requires sustained

Why Doesn't My Hard Work Translate into Success?

concentration. The person who practices deliberately is someone who is committed to the process. They are curious. They are constantly interested in lifelong learning. They are committed to achieving mastery, and the process is just as important as the goal they seek to achieve. They have a big **Why** that drives them! They are inner-motivated and self-directed.

In their quest to improve, they are not afraid to explore new ways of looking at their area of focus. They experiment. They are willing to go down dead ends and return to the main path to hone and refine their knowledge and processes. This means that such persons generate what we call Mental Toughness and Resilience. The outcome is not guaranteed when you experiment and try new things. Still, we have read stories about people who transformed.... Consider Thomas Edison, who is credited with contributing significantly to the development of the incandescent lightbulbs. He and his team are said to have done over 10,000 different experiments before coming up with a commercially viable light bulb: one that lasted a long time, was effective, efficient, was standardized so that it could be readily manufactured, and represented value for money to the purchaser.

One of the first procedures Edison and his team put in place was to keep a logbook where they recorded each experiment and its outcome. This systematic process allowed them to learn from what they were doing and map their progress. With this process, they could step back and say, “*Yes, I found another way that doesn't work!*” or “*This approach looks promising!*” Also, by regularly reviewing and reflecting on what had been done and achieved, they began to see patterns. This, in turn, inspired hunches and informed their brainstorming sessions about new ways of finding solutions.

The benefits of this approach are not limited to areas such as science and business. We can also see this in the professional careers of many

Why Doesn't My Hard Work Translate into Success?

athletes. Basketball players like Michael Jordan and Kobe Bryant have been known to conduct exhaustive practice sessions where they focus on just one specific move over and over again, frequently assessing their performance with the aim to do better. Both of these icons owe their success to deliberate practice.

Bruce Lee, perhaps the best known and great karate expert, is credited with the saying:

“I fear not the man who has practiced 10,000 kicks once, but I fear the man who has practiced one kick 10,000 times.” 😊

So, as in the case of Edison, taking action, implementing it repeatedly, breaking it down, and seeing what you have learned from it, is crucial. Feedback allows you to refine your technique and improve. This deliberate practice also contributes to building muscle memory and creating new neural pathways, which, over time, allow actions to be performed seemingly effortlessly.

Another area of literally life and death endeavor where this approach is applied is in the field of surgery. Medical students spend hours and hours learning about anatomy, physiology, and other disciplines. This gives them an intimate understanding of how the body's many organs and systems are connected and interrelated. They supplement this theoretical knowledge by working with simulators and cadavers. Yet, these actions are not enough to ensure success in the operating room. One resident once shared his experiences from his residency days:

“You go into the operating room, and you're being exposed firsthand to seeing a human being cut open....you are super alert, and your emotions run high... you see the blood, the

Why Doesn't My Hard Work Translate into Success?

different smells, sights, sounds. You get to see and know what you have to do in that setting. You get a chance to see several of these operations... And then, one day, it's your turn to actually do an operation. Of course, they don't simply shove you into the deep end. You have a knowledge base, you've studied, you've been in operating rooms, and you are supported by an entire team. They are people there you know who can step in when you need help. It's a big moment, an opportunity for you to actually do an operation. So you go in, and you do what you have to do. You draw on your knowledge., you're cutting, and as you go in, you're getting that sort of immediate feedback in terms of what did I do? What happened? What should I do next? Etc. And then, there's the next stage, where you have the opportunity to teach and guide someone through these first two stages. Therefore, by being in these different positions, you're able to have different perspectives and also get different types of feedback. This includes the immediate feedback from what you are doing as well as the postoperative reviews and debriefs. Together, they accelerate your learning and mastery.

I think most people are familiar with playing chess, draught, or other board games. I think this is a good parallel. When you are standing next to the board and looking at someone playing very often, you can see moves that are apparently invisible to the player – somehow, they develop tunnel vision. In addition, when you play, you know it's a different perspective. Of course, when you are coaching the player, you have different perspectives and, hopefully, can see more clearly.

Why Doesn't My Hard Work Translate into Success?

*Quote from a dear friend who wishes to remain
anonymous ☀*

Along the same lines is a [TEDtalk by Dr Atul Gawande](#) who shares how getting a coach can make you better.

The foregoing experiences underline the importance of being systematic, obtaining feedback, reviewing, and reflecting, coupled with having a clear objective that you are working towards. These goals can be vastly different! In the case of Edison, it was a technological breakthrough and commercial success. For an athlete, depending on the sport, the goals could include greater physiological endurance, shots that are more consistent, jumping higher, moving faster, or throwing farther. For the surgeon, it might be minimizing a patient's blood loss and pain or the amount of malignant tissue that needs to be removed. As we will see in the next section, by understanding our goal and the factors that influence it, we can direct our efforts to high-value and high-leverage actions.

1.3. Prioritizing and the law of focus

Given that time is in short supply, prioritization and focus are essential. This follows on from what we mentioned about having a goal that drives you.

Stephen R. Covey, in his best-seller, [“*The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People: Powerful Lessons in Personal Change*,”](#) used a 2x2 matrix to look at how we should use our time:

Why Doesn't My Hard Work Translate into Success?

<i>The 4 TIME MANAGEMENT QUADRANTS</i>	URGENT	NOT URGENT
IMPORTANT	Do these tasks	Plan and prepare for these tasks
NOT IMPORTANT	Delegate these tasks	Avoid and/or Eliminate these tasks

Figure 1 – A 2x2 Time Management Matrix

As shown in Figure 1, activities are grouped by their urgency and importance. Our hard work and efforts should focus on the most important activities. Our aim should be to first clear all urgent and important tasks. Once that is accomplished, our next priority should be to plan and prepare for the tasks that are important but not urgent. Taking care of these important tasks early reduces the likelihood of them becoming urgent. This will help us avoid the stress as well as the heavy time and resource investments that may then become necessary. On the other hand, tasks that are not important should be either delegated, avoided or eliminated.

Work by a 17th-century researcher, Vilfredo Pareto, provides some fascinating insights commonly referred to as the Pareto Principle. In his study of land ownership across Italy, he found that about 80% of the land was owned by just 20% of the population. To his surprise, he found similar results when he looked at patterns of wealth distribution in other countries.

Why Doesn't My Hard Work Translate into Success?

In his book, [The 80/20 Principle: The secret to achieving more with less](#), Richard Koch applies Pareto's principle in a new way:

“a minority of causes, inputs or efforts usually lead to a majority of the results, outputs or rewards... 80 percent of what you achieve in your job comes from 20 percent of the time spent...for all practical purposes, four-fifths of the effort is largely irrelevant.

[Richard Koch](#) has been a management consultant at the Boston Consulting Group as well as at Bain & Company. He is also an entrepreneur and the author of several books on how to apply the Pareto Principle. The Pareto Principle is what mathematicians refer to as a Power Law Distribution. In statistics, a power law is a functional relationship between two quantities, where one quantity varies as a power of another. For example, doubling the length of the sides of a square leads to a four times increase in its area. Power laws are a universal phenomenon and appear in fields such as astronomy, biology, economics, weather systems, and others.

In some cases, the types of imbalances predicted by the Pareto Principle can be 95/5 or even greater. For example, Ms. Kerry A. Dolan, author of the [Forbes' 35th Annual World's Billionaires List: Facts And Figures 2021](#), mentions that as of mid-March 2021, there are 2,755 billionaires in the world with a net worth of US\$13.1 Trillion. This group, which represents just 0.0000003 % of the earth's population of 7.8 billion people, accounts for an incredible 6.5% of global wealth!

Normally, we expect that, on average, different factors will more or less contribute equally to an outcome. So, perhaps the most useful insight that we can gain from the Pareto Principle is something that

Why Doesn't My Hard Work Translate into Success?

may go against our sense of equity and equality – *some things simply matter more than others.*

If we look at our day-to-day life through the lens of the Pareto Principle, we will see that a small number of activities contribute in a bigger way to our success. So, what this means then is that it's not just enough to work hard. We need to really drill down to identify the specific areas where applying our best efforts yield the greatest return. We need to identify the activities that produce the biggest payoffs and focus on doing them rather than trying to do everything.

So, let us look at a practical example. You are at the office and are making a list of the tasks you should complete today. From your list, you see you have 15 tasks. In this scenario, the Pareto Principle in its 80/20 form suggests that three tasks will give you the most value for the day. How did we arrive at three? Let look at the math. If 20% of the tasks will give 80% of the value, then we do as follows:

- $20\% \text{ of } 15 = 15 * 0.20 = 3$

Now that we know how many items we should focus on, we can look at the list and identify metrics for determining the urgency and importance of each task. We will then use the metrics to cut down our list to those top three high-value tasks. We would then work our way through these tasks from highest value to least value. We can then use the Urgency-Importance matrix to identify the remaining tasks that should be delegated or avoided. Once we have completed our top three tasks, we can then work our way through the remaining tasks. This approach not only helps you to get more done but it also greatly increases the impact and the effectiveness of your effort. Because you know you are working effectively you are not stressed. So, we are not just working hard but working deliberately,

working with focus. And again, we can see a clear link between what you're doing and your overarching goal.

1.4. Embracing your desirable disadvantage – it's all about mindset

There is one remaining area that I'd like to look into in this chapter which explains why hard work alone doesn't translate into success. Here, we look at what are paradoxically “desirable disadvantages”.

Many people face challenging life circumstances that can make it far more difficult to achieve their goals. However, rather than acknowledging, facing, and embracing these challenges, they often try not to let them show. They try to pass themselves off as just like everyone else. Rather than boldly creating and blazing a unique path for themselves, they try to do things the same way as others who do not have these challenges. They live in denial, working hard, trying to be like the others. However, because they have failed to adapt and embrace their desirable disadvantages, they miss out. They are not as effective as they could be, so they fall behind.

So, what is a desirable disadvantage? A perfect explanation is one given by Malcolm Gladwell in his book, [David and Goliath: Underdogs, Misfits, and the Art of Battling Giants](#). According to Malcolm, desirable disadvantages are attributes that are widely perceived to be negative factors but which (counter-intuitively) can actually become sources of significant, strong, and enduring advantage. Desirable disadvantages can contribute to building personal qualities like tenacity, perseverance, resilience, and resourcefulness. This allows persons perceived to be at a disadvantage to actually come out on top against seemingly stronger and superior competitors.

Aesop's fable of the Tortoise and the Hare is one age-old example. No one expected or even imagined that a tortoise would beat a hare in a

Why Doesn't My Hard Work Translate into Success?

race. However, the hare's speed and inconsistency turned out to be no match for the tortoise's slow, steady and consistent effort. As you will see, there are a large number of contemporary examples where individuals, by embracing their desirable disadvantages, have developed ingenious ways to blaze unique paths to their goals.

Malcolm Gladwell quotes a 2011 research study by [Elizabeth and Robert Bjork](#), "[Making things hard on yourself, but in a good way: Creating desirable difficulties to enhance learning](#)" that has profound real world impact. For example, Malcolm points out that around 30% of successful entrepreneurs have learning disorders like dyslexia. Billionaire founder of Virgin, Richard Branson, credits dyslexia as a contributing factor to his success! In an interview with [CNBC's Chloe Taylor](#) titled "[Billionaire Richard Branson: Dyslexia helped me to become successful](#)," Branson explained that dyslexia helped him develop a vivid imagination, which he translated into business success:

"My dyslexia has shaped Virgin right from the very beginning, and imagination has been the key to many of our successes... while the details and data are important, the ability to dream, conceptualize and innovate is what sets the successful and the unsuccessful apart."

Richard Branson, Billionaire and Founder of Virgin

Branson indicates that he found school very challenging. Realizing he couldn't make headway with traditional learning, he decided to focus on areas like sports, where he gave it his all. When he left school and entered the real world, he found that the other skills he had developed mattered more. Richard is also convinced that the propensity that dyslexics have for imagination, problem-solving, and creativity will lead to increased employability in the workplace in light of the trends toward the widespread adoption of artificial

Why Doesn't My Hard Work Translate into Success?

intelligence and automation. A number of other [outstanding luminaries in various fields](#) have also been diagnosed with dyslexia.

Research by the [Founders Institute](#), the world's largest pre-seed startup accelerator, led to the development of a psychometric tool they call the [Entrepreneur's DNA](#). One of the findings from the application of this tool is that persons who succeed as entrepreneurs often grew up in families with less than ideal circumstances, such as hostile parents.

So, why is it that such persons succeed when others don't? By embracing the difficulties they faced rather than running away from them, they were able to develop and master talents, find new skills, or work harder to overcome these difficulties. Different challenges require different approaches. Persons with reading challenges might need to put in more effort to overcome these difficulties. Likewise, someone who has problems with being a great leader may need to enhance their ability to lead and delegate to others. Say they had homework to be done, they could develop the art of convincing their friends to do this work on their behalf.

Most people who lived in hostile home environments became skilled in empathy. They were more attuned to the emotions of others and so could manage the emotions and expectations of others. By facing the challenges in their own unique ways, they could deliver the result that is required. This enabled them to develop a range of soft skills such as perseverance, grit, and resilience that also translate to success in other areas.

[Robert Hunter](#) has been deaf since he was 15 years old, but this did not stop him from developing a career as a successful lawyer in London. As he explained, no one wanted to hire him as a lawyer just because he was deaf, so he had to compete against non-disabled lawyers for cases, clients, and jobs. This meant he had to

Why Doesn't My Hard Work Translate into Success?

develop skills, some specific to his disability and others with broader applications. For example, straining to hear all day can become exhausting. Therefore, instinctively, he developed tenacity, perseverance, and resourcefulness over time. He also had to figure out how to solve his own unique problems, like not being able to hear the judge. Experiences like these made him accustomed to being an outsider and helped reduce his need to fit in. This has made it easier for him to advance novel arguments and points of view that challenge the conventional norms. This has given him a first-mover advantage over other persons who feel more attached to the orthodoxy.

Managing expectations and recognizing early that sometimes, trying hard may not yield the desired result, but still moving consistently and doggedly towards the goal builds up a certain type of resilience that makes it easier to persevere. I believe the most successful people, while focusing on the target of where they want to go, also recognize that the journey is equally important. They grow to enjoy the difficulty and incorporate this experience as part of their identity and how they see themselves.

For example, take someone who wants to lose weight. They decide to get up early each morning to work out as part of their weight loss plan. While others are still in bed sleeping, they go out and go through the grind of pushing through and doing something that others are not willing to do. They know and accept that they will see results only if they are consistent and follow the process. As they develop this habit, their identity begins to shift to that of someone who exercises regularly and wakes up early. They gain the identity of an athlete, the identity of someone who is training, the identity of someone who is goal-oriented. This identity shift allows them to keep practicing and executing these steps and moving towards their goal.

Why Doesn't My Hard Work Translate into Success?

By embracing the challenge of getting up early and working out consistently, they can shift the trajectory of their life.

The importance of consistence and mindset are echoed in the words of Deshauna Barber, a Captain in the United States Army Reserve and former Miss USA who says “giving up is the birthplace of regret”. Watch Desahuana tell her story in her [address to the graduating class at the University of Maryland University College](#).

1.5 Chapter Summary

In this chapter, we learned that hard work is one of the building blocks of sustainable success. However, while a necessary condition, it is not sufficient to guarantee success. To be successful, we need to ensure that we are practicing deliberately in addition to our hard work. We need to have a clear goal that we are moving towards. We need to be decisive, even brutally focused, in terms of where we place our efforts. So, prioritizing important and crucial tasks while knowing those we should totally avoid or delegate is incredibly important. And, of course, we need to embrace the desirable disadvantages we face and see them as an integral part of the whole process that helps us move towards where we want to be. By doing this, we will find ourselves adopting a new identity. This mind shift transforms us and allows us to know and see ourselves differently, squarely putting us on the path to the goal we desire.

The successful warrior is the average man with laser-like focus – Bruce Lee

Happiness is the real sense of fulfillment that comes from hard work – Joseph Barbara