

Talent Is Never Enough

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When is Talent Alone Enough?

Talent is often overrated and frequently misunderstood. French poet and dramatist Edouard Paillerson pointed out, "Have success and there will always be fools to say that you have talent". When people achieve great things, others often explain their accomplishments by simply attributing everything to talent. But that is a false and misleading way of looking at success. If talent alone is enough, then why do you and I know highly talented people who are not highly successful?

Many American business leaders are obsessed with talent. Some think talent is the answer to every problem. This talent mind-set is the new orthodoxy of American management. Certain companies hire dozens of MBA's from top universities, promote them quickly, reward them lavishly, and never accurately assess their performance.

Belief Lifts Your Talent

The first and greatest obstacle to success for most people is their belief in themselves. Once people figure out where their sweet spot is, (the area where they are most gifted), what often hinders them isn't lack of talent it's lack of trust in themselves, which is a self-imposed limitation. Lack of belief can act as a ceiling on talent. However, when people believe in themselves, they unleash power in themselves and resources around them that almost immediately take them to a higher level. Your potential is a picture of what you can become. Belief helps you see the picture and reach for it. I don't know what your talent is, but I do know this; talent alone is never enough, if you want to become your best, you need to believe in your best.

Believe in Your Potential

Your potential is a picture of what you can become. Inventor Thomas Edison remarked, "If we did all the things we are capable of doing, we would literally astonish ourselves." Too often we see what is, not what could be.

Too many people fall far short of their real potential. John Powell, author of *The Secret of staying in Love*, estimates that the average person reaches only 10% of their potential, sees only 10% of the beauty that is around them, hears only 10% of its music, smells only 10% of its fragrance and tastes only 10% of the deliciousness of being alive. Most neither see, nor seize their potential.

Believe in Yourself

It is one thing to believe that you possess remarkable potential, it's another thing to have enough faith in yourself that you think you can fulfill it. When it comes to believing in them self, some people are agnostic! That's not only a shame; it also keeps them from becoming what they could be. Psychologist and philosopher William James emphasized that, "There is but one cause of human failure, and that is man's lack of faith in his true self." People who believe in themselves get better jobs and perform better in them than those who don't. The impact of belief in self begins early. Some researchers assert that when it comes to academic achievement in school, there is a greater correlation between self-confidence and achievement than there is between IQ and achievement. Successful people believe in themselves, especially when others do not.

Believe in Your Mission

What else is necessary to lift a person's talent? Believing in what you're doing. In fact, even if the odds are against your accomplishing what you desire, confidence will help you. William James asserted, "The one thing that will guarantee the successful conclusion of a doubtful undertaking is faith in the beginning that you CAN do it.

Belief in your mission will empower you. Belief in your mission will encourage you. Belief in your mission will enlarge you. America has a tradition many nations probably envy; we frequently achieve the impossible. Do you believe in your mission? Are you confident that you can accomplish great tasks? Do you expect to achieve your goals? These are necessary ingredients to lift your talent from potential to fruition.

The more you believe in your potential, yourself, and your mission, the more you will be able to accomplish; and if you continue to believe, you will someday find yourself doing what you once considered impossible.

Initiative Activates Your Talent

It's a cliché to say that every journey begins with the first step, yet it is still true. Talent plus people don't wait for everything to be perfect to move forward. They don't wait for all the problems or obstacles to disappear. They don't wait until their fear subsides. They take initiative. They know a secret that good leaders understand: momentum is their friend. As soon as they take that first step and start moving forward, things become a little easier. If the momentum gets strong enough, many of the problems take care of themselves and talent can take over. But it starts only after you've taken the first steps.

Where you finish in life isn't determined so much by where you start, as by whether you started.

Initiative is the first step to anywhere you want to go, initiative closes the door to fear, initiative opens the door to opportunity, initiative eases life's difficulties, initiative is often the difference between success and failure. People who lack initiative fail to see the consequences of their inaction. People who lack initiative want someone else to motivate them. People who lack initiative look for the perfect time to act.

People who lack initiative; like tomorrow better than today. There's an old Chinese Proverb that says; "He who deliberates fully before taking a step will spend his entire life on one leg." When it comes to lack initiative there are really only four kinds of people:

1. People who do the right thing without being told
2. People who do the right thing when told
3. People who do the right thing when told more than once
4. People who never do the right thing, no matter what

Talent + Initiative = A Talent-Plus Person Putting the Talent-Plus Formula into Action

To be honest, all of us are plagued by procrastination in some area of our lives. If something is unpleasant, uninteresting, or complex, we tend to put it off. Even some things we like doing can cause us difficulty. Johann Wolfgang von Goethe observed; “To put your ideas into action is the most difficult thing in the world.” Yet to reach our potential and become talent-plus people, we must show initiative. Here are some suggestions to help you as you strive to become a talent-plus person in this area:

1. Accept responsibility for your life
2. Examine your reasons for not initiating
3. Focus on the benefits of completing a task
4. Share your goal with a friend who will help you
5. Break large tasks down into smaller ones
6. Allocate specific times to tasks you might procrastinate
7. Remember, preparation includes doing

Focus Directs Your Talent

Watch small children playing, and what do you see? They move quickly from one toy to another and from activity to activity. They expend tremendous amounts of energy but get little done. That’s to be expected; they are exploring their world and learning by doing. Focus does not come naturally to us, yet it is essential for anyone who wants to make the most of his talent. Having talent without focus is like being an octopus on roller skates. You can be sure that there will be plenty of movement, but you won’t know in what direction it will be. Talent with focus directs you and has the potential to take you far. If you want to be successful, you must focus on what you can do, not on what you can’t do.

Focus can bring tremendous power, without it, you will often feel drained and unable to accomplish much. With it, you will find that your talents and abilities gain direction and intentionality. Those qualities pay off by producing results.

The following are some facts about focus:

1. Focus does not come naturally to most people
2. Focus increases your energy
3. Focus lifts you
4. Focus expands your life
5. Focus must be intentionally sustained

Talent + Focus = A Talent-Plus Person Putting the Talent-Plus Formula into Action

If you desire to become a talent –plus person, you need to make focus your friend. You've removed most of the roadblocks to success when you know the difference between motion and direction.

The following are ways to accomplish it:

1. Be intentional—make every action count
2. Challenge your excuses
3. Don't let yesterday hijack your attention
4. Focus on the present
5. Stay focused on results
6. Develop and follow your priorities
7. Focus on your strengths, not your weaknesses
8. Delay rewards until the job is done

Preparation Positions Your Talent

What happens when you don't prepare? Things you hoped won't happen do happen—and they occur with greater frequency than the things you hoped would happen. The reason is simple; being unprepared puts you out of position. Ask negotiators what happens at the bargaining table when they are out of position. Ask athletes what happens when they are out of position. They lose. Preparation positions people correctly, and it is often the separation between winning and losing. Talent-plus people who prepare well live by this motto: "All's well that begins well."

Why People Fail to Prepare

1. They fail to see the value of preparation before action
2. They fail to appreciate the value of discipline

Preparation allows you to tap into your talent, preparation is a process, not an event, preparation precedes opportunity, preparation for tomorrow begins with the right use of today, preparation requires continually good perspective, and good preparation leads to action.

Practice Sharpens Your Talent

It is a fact that you play at the level at which you practice. Consistently good practice leads to consistently good play. It sharpens your talent. Successful people understand this; they value practice and develop the discipline to do it. If you want to sum up what lifts most successful individuals above the crowd, you could do it with four little words:” A little bit more.” Successful people pay their dues and do all that is expected of them—plus little bit more. Preparation positions talent and practice sharpens it. There’s a myth about highly talented people—it’s that they are simply born that way; but the truth is that no people reach their potential unless they are willing to practice their way there. Practice enables development, practice leads to discovery, practice both shows and builds commitment, and practice demands discipline.

The Five Pillars of Practice

- 1. An excellent teacher or coach** One of
my core beliefs is that everything rises and falls on leadership. People perform at their peak practice effectively under the leadership of a great teacher.
- 2. Your best effort** Andrew
Carnegie declared, “There is no use whatever trying to help people who do not help themselves. You cannot push anyone up a ladder unless he is willing to climb himself.” People don’t improve and reach their potential without putting forth great effort.

3. **A clear purpose**

PGA

Golfer Warren Bottke says that when he works with a new client, the first thing he does is establish the purpose of practice. That usually means identifying a specific goal for each practice session. But the overarching purpose of practice is always improvement leading to excellence.

4. **The greatest potential**

You can

tell that you're not making the most of your potential when the standards set for you by others are higher than the ones you set for yourself. Anytime you require less of yourself than your boss, coach, spouse or other involved person does, your potential will go untapped.

5. **The right resources**

The right

resources are nothing more than tools you need to accomplish your purpose. Every human endeavor requires resources of some kind. To practice well, you need to be properly equipped.

Talent may be given, but success you must earn.

Perseverance Sustains Your Talent

Perseverance is not an issue of talent. It is not an issue of time. It is about finishing. Talent provides hope for accomplishment, but perseverance guarantees it. Playwright Noel Coward commented, "Thousands of people have talent, I might as well congratulate you for having eyes in your head; the one and only thing that counts is: do you have staying power?"

Principles of perseverance are:

1. Perseverance means succeeding because you are determined to, not destined to
2. Perseverance recognizes life is not a long race, but many short ones in succession
3. Perseverance is needed to release most of life's rewards

4. Perseverance draws sweetness out of adversity
5. Perseverance has a compounding effect on life
6. Perseverance means stopping not because you're tired but because the task is done
7. Perseverance doesn't demand more than we have but all that we have

Courage Tests Your Talents

People think of courage as a quality required only in times of extreme danger or stress, such as during war or disaster. But it is much larger than that—and more ordinary than we think. Courage is an everyday virtue. Professor, writer, and apologist C.S. Lewis wrote, “Courage is not simply one of the virtues, but the form of every virtue at its testing point.” You can do nothing worthwhile without courage. The person who exhibits courage is often able to live without regrets.

We need to recognize that if we display courage, our hearts will be tested continually, here's what I mean:

1. Our courage will be tested as we seek a truth that we know may be painful
2. Our courage will be tested when change is needed but inactivity is more comfortable
3. Our courage will be tested when our convictions, once expressed, are challenged
4. Our courage will be tested when learning and growing will display our weakness
5. Our courage will be tested when we take the high road even as others treat us badly
6. Our courage will be tested when being “Out Front” makes us an easy target
7. Our courage will be tested whenever we face obstacles to our progress

Adversity is always the partner of progress. Anytime we want to move forward, obstacles, difficulties, problems, and predicaments are going to get in the way. Every obstacle we overcome teaches us about ourselves, about our strengths and weaknesses. Every obstacle shapes us. When we succeed in the midst of difficulty, we become stronger, wiser, and more confident. The greatest people in

history are those who faced the most difficult challenges with courage and rose to the occasion

Teach Ability Expands Your Talent

If you are a highly talented person, you may have a tough time with “teach ability”. Why? Because talented people often think they know it all; and that makes it difficult for them to continually expand their talent. Teach ability is not so much about competence and mental capacity as it is about attitude. It is the desire to listen, learn, and apply. It is the hunger to discover and grow, it is the willingness to learn, unlearn, and relearn. I love the way Hall of Fame basket coach John Wooden states it: “it’s what you learn after you know it all that counts”. When I teach and mentor leaders, I remind them that if they stop learning, they stop *leading*. But if they remain teachable and keep learning, they will be able to keep making an impact as leaders. Whatever your talent happens to be—whether it’s leadership, craftsmanship, entrepreneurship, or something else—you will expand it if you keep expecting and striving to learn. Talented individuals with teachable attitudes become talent-plus people.

Teach Ability Truths

The good news is that we don’t have to have the talent of a Leonardo da Vinci to be teachable. We just need to have the right attitude about learning. To do that, consider the following truths about teaching:

1. Nothing is interesting if you are not interested
2. Successful people view learning differently from those who are unsuccessful
3. Learning is meant to be a lifelong pursuit
4. Talented people can be the toughest to teach
5. Pride is the number one hindrance to teach ability, (pride closes our minds to new ideas, pride closes our mind to feedback, pride prevents us from admitting mistakes, and pride keeps us from making needed changes.)

A winner knows how much he still has to learn, even when he is considered an expert by others. A loser wants to be considered an expert by others, before he has learned enough to know how little he knows.

Everything we know we learn from someone else. Thomas Edison was the guest of the governor of North Carolina when the politician complimented him on his creative genius. "I am not a great inventor," countered Edison. "But you have over a thousand patents to your credit," the governor stated. "Yes, but about the only invention I can really claim as absolutely original is the phonograph," Edison replied. "I'm afraid I don't understand what you mean," the governor remarked. "Well," explained Edison, "I guess I'm an awfully good sponge. I absorb ideas from every course I can, and put them to practical use; then I improve them until they become of some value. The ideas which I use are mostly the ideas of other people who don't develop them themselves."

What a remarkable description of someone who used teach ability to expand his talent! That is what a talent-plus person does. That is what all of us should strive to do.

Character Protects Your Talent

Many people with talent make it into the limelight, but the ones who have neglected to develop strong character rarely stay there long. Absence of strong character eventually topples talent. Why; because people cannot climb beyond the limitations of their character. Talented people are sometimes tempted to take shortcuts. Character prevents that. Talented people may feel superior and expect special privileges; but character helps them to know better. Talented people are praised for what others see them build. Character builds what's inside them. Talented people have the potential to be difference makers. Character makes a difference in them. Talented people are often a gift to the world. Character protects that gift. When it comes to talent, everything is not always as it seems to the casual observer. Sometimes what appears to be a huge success isn't, and in time, the truth comes out.

So what exactly comprises character? Ask a dozen people and you will get a dozen answers. I believe it boils down to four elements: Self discipline, core values, sense of identity, and integrity. Let's consider each of them:

Self-discipline: at the most basic level, self discipline is the ability to do what is right even when you don't feel like doing it. Outstanding leaders and achievers throughout history understood this. Greek philosopher Plato asserted, "The first and best victory is to conquer self." The greatest victories are internal ones.

Core Values: Our core values are the principles we live by every day. They define what we believe and how we live. Ideally we should write out our core values so that they become a clear beacon we can always use to guide us. Swiss philosopher Henri Frederic Amiel stated, "The man who has no inner life is the slave of his surroundings." Core values give order and structure to an individual's inner life, and when that inner life is in order, a person can navigate almost anything the world throws at him.

Sense of Identity: If you live with a chip on your shoulder, believe deep down you have no intrinsic value, or see yourself as a victim, you will have a distorted view of yourself and your surroundings. That in turn, will impact your character. No matter how hard you try, you cannot consistently behave in a way that is inconsistent with how you see yourself. Thus, a strong and accurate sense of identity is essential.

Integrity: The final component in strong character is integrity, which is an alignment of values, thoughts, feelings and actions. People who possess the consistency that comes with strong integrity can be very compelling. If you want your talent to take you far, you need to protect that talent with integrity.

Relationships Influence Your Talent

In his book, *My Personal Best*, John Wooden writes, "There is choice you have to make in everything you do, so keep in mind that in the end, the choice you make makes you." Nowhere is this more evident than in your relationships. Nothing will influence your talent as much as the important relationships in your life. Surround

yourself with people who add value to you and encourage you, and your talent will go in a positive direction, Spend time with people who constantly drain you, pull you in the wrong direction, or try to knock you down, and it will be almost impossible for your talent to take flight. People can trace the successes and failures in their lives to their most significant relationships.

Five signs of a Solid Relationship

1. *Mutual enjoyment*: in solid relationships, people spend time together just for the enjoyment of being together. What they do is not of significance.
2. *Respect*: When you value someone on the front end of a relationship, you can earn respect on the back end. And that's foundational to all solid relationships. When do people respect you? When you don't let obstacles or circumstances become more important to you than the relationship. People who respect each other and build a solid relationship enjoy all of these benefits of friendship.
3. *Shared Experiences*: Going through a significant experience with another person creates a mutual bond. The experience can be positive or negative. Colleagues build relationships as they work together on high-pressure projects. We all need others to lean on and to celebrate with; shared experiences give us those opportunities.
4. *Trust*: Trust is both joy of relationships and a necessary component. In my book, *Winning with People*, I write about the Bedrock Principle which says, "Trust is the foundation of any relationship". Nothing is more important in relationships; if you don't have trust, you don't have much of a relationship.
5. *Reciprocity*: All relationships experience ebb and flow. Sometimes one person is the primary giver; sometimes the other person is. Friendships are like bank accounts, you cannot continue to draw on them without making deposits. Solid relationships must be beneficial to both parties. Solid relationships are always win-win.

Responsibility Strengthens Your Talent

Nothing adds "muscle" to talent like responsibility. It lifts talent to a new level and increases its stamina. I realize that responsibility is often the last choice people

desire to make. The result is “flabby” talent that fails to perform and never realizes it’s potential. How sad for the person who fails to take responsibility; how sad for others. Author and Editor Michael Korda said, “Success on any major scale requires you to accept responsibility—In the final analysis, the one quality that all successful people have—is the ability to take on responsibility.” If you desire success, make responsibility your choice.

Teamwork Multiplies Your Talent

In the Academy Award—winning movie Rocky, boxer Rocky Balboa describes his relationship with his girlfriend, Adrian: “I’ve got gaps. She’s got gaps; but together we’ve got no gaps.” What a wonderful description of teamwork! It doesn’t matter how talented you may be—you have gaps. There are things you don’t do well. What’s the best way to handle your weaknesses? Partner with others who have strengths in those areas. If you want to do something really big, then do it as part of a team.

Teamwork not only allows a person to do what he couldn’t otherwise do; it also has a compounding effect on all he possesses—including talent. If you believe one person is a work of God (which I do), then a group of talented people committed to working together is a work of art. Whatever your vision or desire, teamwork makes the dream work. Working together with other people toward a common goal is one of the most rewarding experiences of life. Talking to leaders, developing teams, counseling with coaches, and teaching and writing on teamwork have influenced my thinking when it comes to teams. What I’ve learned I want to share with you:

1. Teamwork divides the effort and multiplies the effect. Teams involve more people, thus affording more resources, ideas, and energy than an individual possesses.
2. Talent wins games, but teamwork wins championships. It’s easy to see the fruit of teamwork in sports; but it is just as important in business. If you want to perform at the highest possible level, you need to be part of a team.
3. Teamwork is not about you. The Harvard Business School recognizes a team as a small number of people with complementary skills who are

committed to a common purpose, performance goals, and approach for which they hold themselves mutually accountable.

4. Great teams create community. All effective teams create an environment where relationships grow and teammates become connected to one another. To use a term that is currently popular, they create a sense of community. This environment of community is based on trust. Little can be accomplished without it. They hold themselves to a high standard.
5. Adding value to others adds value to you. If you desire to succeed, then live by these “Four” simple words: add value to others. That philosophy will take you far.

I can't think of a better way to say it myself; a talented person who is part of a team—in the right place on the right team—becomes more than he ever could on his own. That's what it means to be a talent-plus person.