

Vision Activity 6: The Paths are Well Lit

Whatever it is you want to achieve, the chances are someone else has already managed to do it. Of course, that doesn't stop it feeling impossible sometimes – we might look at an amazing student who has got a place at a university we'd love to attend and think, *'yeah but that can't be me.'*

But perhaps it can... if we somehow map out the pathway that they took, throwing some light on it. In this activity, we attempt to light up the pathway ahead using an activity we've adapted from Cal Newport's work.⁴

Newport uses the phrase 'innovation map' to describe *a visual guide showing the steps someone took in order to achieve something*. Have a look at the example below. (We've filled this one out ourselves, based on a combination of students we've worked with.) Newport suggests three stages to each cycle of progress and we've adapted them here:

1. **A Trigger Event:** The student takes *an initial action*, which leads to...
2. **An Accomplishment:** *a brave and repeated action which opens up an opportunity*, which leads to...
3. **Responsibilities:** *a series of actions which need to be regularly completed*, and that give the student valuable experience.

EXAMPLE:

Student: *Liam*

Achievement: *Got a place on a Journalism degree because of a great portfolio of work, then went on to write for the sports pages of a national newspaper.*

Pathway Part One:

Trigger Event	<i>I discussed Journalism with a teacher – they suggested I try and write a match report for a local non-league team.</i>
Accomplishment	<i>I got in touch with the club secretary via the team's website. I had to email him three or four times until he agreed to meet me. I went to the club and explained what I'd like to do. He agreed I could write up a match report for the club's website.</i>
Responsibilities	<i>I attended the match, took photographs and used the voice memo on my phone to remind myself of the main action. I wrote up the piece, asked a teacher to check it, then submitted it. The club published it on their website. I asked if I could do another and they said yes. After I'd done three match reports, they asked if I could report on every home game and of course I agreed!</i>

By the end of pathway part one, the student is in a really good position – and happens to be in the right place at the right time for the next cycle to happen. (It looks like luck, but of course it isn't!)

Pathway Part Two:

Trigger Event	<i>I was asked to do a piece on non-league football for the local newspaper. They'd heard of me because I'd been doing the match reports for the non-</i>
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⁴ Newport, Cal, *How to be a High School Superstar*, Broadway Books, 2010 (pg 225)

	<i>league team and I'd also started my own blog. I said yes and asked if I could visit the offices of the paper. They agreed.</i>
Accomplishment	<i>I made sure I talked to the staff and looked really enthusiastic when I visited. I completed the piece as they requested, asked my teachers to check it over and then submitted it. They printed it! It was just a short piece but I had my first article in print. I suggested a couple of ideas for other pieces I could do. They agreed to think about it so I kept on at them!</i>
Responsibilities	<i>I read a lot of sports journalism and kept a notebook of ideas for other articles. I knew from meeting the staff at the local paper that they liked small, local stories so I kept looking for things that might interest them. I wrote three more pieces for them by the winter of Year 13. When I applied to university, I was the only one who brought printed newspaper articles along with me. The interview went really well and I got the place.</i>

By using a map like this, we're beginning to see the steps taken by those who went before, and we're starting to see how they got themselves into positions that meant they were well-placed for other things to happen to them. Life is a series of cycles like this, with opportunities leading to more opportunities. The impossible is starting to look a lot more possible...

Now it's your turn!

1. Choose a student who's achieved something you'd like to achieve and interview them. Ask for half an hour of their time, and perhaps even show them the example above.
2. Complete the interview. It might feel a bit awkward, but just think of yourself of a journalist trying to find out the story of someone's success. It might be worth asking if you can record the discussion so that you can listen back later.
3. Once you've got your conversation, try and make sense of it. The answers might have come out in a jumbled way. See if you can start de-coding what it was they did in what order.

Trigger Event	
Accomplishment	
Responsibilities	

By the end (hopefully...) you've got a well-lit path and you know what needs to be done next. Now the challenge is to be brave and begin your journey. Good luck!