The Talent Code Summary

1-Sentence-Summary: _The Talent Code_ cracks open the myth of talent and breaks it down from a neurological standpoint into three crucial parts, which anyone can pull together to become a world-class performer, artist, or athlete and form something they used to believe was not even within their own hands.

Read in: 4 minutes

Favorite quote from the author:

"Although talent feels and looks predestined, in fact we have a good deal of control over what skills we develop, and we have more potential than we might ever presume to guess."

– Daniel Coyle

I'm thankful for people like Daniel Coyle, who spend years and years digging through scientific research papers, traveling all around the world (in his case to so-called talent hotbeds, where many talented people were huddled together) and mastering their own craft (writing) to come up with books like this.

Contrary to popular belief, where you end up in the hierarchy of your field, whether it's sports, arts or business, is not up to your genes and your environment. Your talent is yours to code.

The three parts Daniel Coyle has identified are deep practice, which we'll get into in a second, ignition – an external event sparking your initial motivation, and coaching.

Let's look at the first one in more detail with these 3 lessons:

1. More myelin is how you hardwire skills into your body.
2. Use deep practice to increase the myelin around your neural pathways.
3. Chunk up what you're practicing into its smallest units.

Are you ready to crack _The Talent Code_? Let's analyze it together!

Lesson 1: You can hardwire any skill into your body by developing more myelin in your brain.

Here's what happens in your brain when you think a thought, feel angry, or raise your left foot: The electrical energy in your brain increases, until it crosses a certain threshold called the action potential. Once crossed, electrons are fired off in one neuron (a node in your network of nerve cells), and start traveling towards the next.

Electrons traveling along a certain set of neurons in a certain order lead to you performing a certain action or thinking a certain thought.

But to get from one neuron to the next, the electrons have to travel quite the distance. To cover it, they use something called axons – think of it as a street connecting two cities. All of your axons are covered in a fatty, white substance called *myelin.* It protects your axons and insulates them, but not just that.

How big the layer of protective myelin around your axons is **determines how fast and how accurately electrons can go from one neuron to the next**, and therefore, **how good you are at performing the corresponding skill**.

When you pick up a new skill, say learning how to drive a car, your axons aren't really streets yet. They're more of a path in the woods – a few people have to tread it and build it, before you can really use it. **More myelin is what turns those paths into streets and the streets into highways**.

Note: This is also the way you form and change habits. It's called neuroplasticity and I explain the concept here.

Therefore, the more myelin you develop, the better any skill gets hardwired into your body and brain. But how do you do that?

Lesson 2: Deep practice is how you grow myelin, and it consists of two parts.

That's where what the author calls deep practice comes in. It's based on three things:

1. Repetition.
2. Making mistakes.
3. Fixing them.

Myelin is living tissue, which means that, like a muscle, it must be exercised to stay healthy and grow. The more you use the axons in your brain, the fatter the myelin layer around them gets, making it ever easier to perform the skill that you do when those particular neurons fire. Put simply: **Practice makes perfect**.

But eventually, playing Yankee Doodle on the piano becomes easy, and there's not much more myelin to grow. When growth slows down, it's time to turn to a deeper way to practice. Some call this deliberate practice, Cal Newport calls it deep work, but it all means the same thing and that's to **practice something that you're not yet good at doing yet**.

This will inevitably lead you to making mistakes, like missing notes or playing off beat when you first try yourself at Beethoven's 5th. However, going back and **fixing these mistakes lets new sets of neurons fire together**, strengthening the myelin around the axons between them, and that's how you get better.

Lesson 3: Whatever you're practicing, chunk it up into the smallest, possible units.

Lastly, to fix mistakes, you have to spot them. That is easiest when you chunk down your practice into its smallest, possible units.

For example, you could take just one sheet of Beethoven's 5th, divide it horizontally, so all you're left with is 4-5 small pieces of paper, each with a single line of the piece on them. You can then practice all of these individually, mixing them up in order, and fixing every note you get wrong one by one. Then you can piece them together again and voilà, you'll deliver a really great version of the first page of Beethoven's 5th!

As you can tell, this takes a lot of time, but it's the only way to truly master something.

In my case, as a writer, I could try to write 20 different versions of just one sentence, and then compare them and pick which one is best, or even look at a few dozen variations for just a single word.

Divide your practice into tiny units, so you can fix your mistakes on the smallest scale. Then put everything back together again for a great result that you can practice with repetition.

The Talent Code Review

The Talent Code is grounded in science. Biology, to be exact. I like that. It doesn't skip straight to the "here's how it works, go do that", but lets you understand where learning comes from. Once you know these things, you'll have a better sense of what's going on as you're learning, which makes it easier to endure the process.

Talent is awesome, but you can code your own. This book shows you how, thumbs up for that!

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What else can you learn from the blinks?

- How it was possible that many talents were pooled together in 15th century Florence in Italy
- Why talent is neither in your genes, nor your environment
- What makes Brazilians good at soccer
- How a single, igniting event, can inspire and motivate generations to come
- What determines how fast a baby learns to walk
- How one South Korean golfer became the source of long-term motivation for many of his fellow countrymen
- The two types of coaches, and why both have their place
- How a master coach talks to his students

Who would I recommend The Talent Code summary to?

The 31 year old, who understands the value of deliberate practice, but not where it comes from, the 72 year old, who just decided to pick up a new hobby and become a master of retirement, and anyone who tries to become a world-class athlete.