



Thomas Oppong

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Founding Editor at <http://alltopstartups.com>. Curator at <http://postanly.com>. Columnist @Inc. Magaz...
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The Art of Purposeful Practice (Not All Practice Makes Perfect)

“If we follow the mastery process long enough, inspired by a profound interest and curiosity we cannot fail to achieve something exceptional.”

—*Robert Greene*

Purposeful practice is serving the tennis ball 20, 35, or 50 times until the serve is “near perfect”. It is working on a piano scales every day without fail until the fingering is so automatic, the fingers fly across

the keys. It is committing to something so many times that it becomes a purposeful routine that gets you closer to mastery.

You become so good, they can't ignore you. These practices, whether guided or independent, provides the kind of extended learning needed to hone your craft. It's the ultimate process that leads to mastery.

Purposeful practice demands focus and intense concentration on a skill, problem, or even a project beyond the ordinary. It is a long-term commitment with a single goal in mind. Every activity is strategically designed to purposefully improve performance.

The difference between proficient and expert performances often depends on the amount and quality of practice.

Quantity > Quality...for beginners!

“Landing on your butt twenty thousand times is where great performance comes from”—Geoff Calvin

The extraordinary commitment of the young Mozart, under the guidance of his father produced one of the most prolific and influential composers of the classical era. Mozart had clocked up 3500 hours by the time he was 6 and had studied his chosen profession for 18 years before he wrote his Piano concerto No 9 at the age of 21.

Top athletes don't become experts at what they do by simply practicing; they get there through purposeful practice.

The differences between expert performers, creatives, and normal professionals reflect a life-long persistence of deliberate, purposeful effort to improve performance. Tiger Woods started when he was 2 years old. Serena Williams started playing at 3, Venus Williams at 4. They committed to deep, sustained immersion in purposeful practice.

Uncommon achievement requires an uncommon level of grit and a massive amount of faith even when you keep failing. You need a deeper connection to stay on the same path for years.

Anyone can achieve mastery with purposeful practice. With considerable, specific, and sustained efforts over time, you can do

most things you struggle with. You can only turn into the expert you want to become by deliberate, purposeful practice.

You've got to respect the process!

“There are really three parts to the creative process. First there is inspiration, then there is the execution, and finally there is the release.”
—**Eddie Van Halen**

The ability to show up everyday even when you are not motivated to learn, create, make something is the most valuable trait you need to be a professional. It doesn't come easy but it's a requirement to survive the process of creating or doing something unique and remarkable.

Mastering anything usually involves exploration, adjustment, and improvisation. You can't always know your destination in advance. And that's okay.

But be prepared for constant average work to get better at mastering the skill you have chosen to master. Give yourself permission to screw up and move on when things don't go as plans.

You can't create a masterpiece without creative mess. Whatever you intend to master now or in the future, you need to prepare yourself for the long haul. And that means hundreds of thousands of hours will be spent making mistakes and starting over. And that's okay.

One of the greatest impediments to creativity is impatience. It pays to value and embrace the creative process. It's the only way to master any skill.

Excellence comes from constantly stretching to reach a much higher goal

“Mediocrity will never do. You are capable of something better.” —
Gordon B. Hinckley

Purposeful practice builds new neural pathways. You can move the boundary of your comfort bubble to accommodate new routines that will contribute to your growth.

Anders Ericsson and Robert Pool explains:

“The most effective and most powerful types of practice in any field work by harnessing the adaptability of the human body and brain to create, step by step, the ability to do things that were previously not possible.”

People who achieve extraordinary results put in a lot more hours to practice than the rest of us. But while their performances and what they do are remarkable, there is no mystery at all about how they developed them. They practiced. A lot. Beyond the ordinary.

This increase in the amount and sophistication of practice resulted in a steady improvement over time. And even they become masters and experts, they don't stop practicing to deliver even amazing results expected of them.

Arsene Wenger (Manager at Arsenal Football Club) once said:

“To perform at your maximum, you have to teach yourself to believe with an intensity that goes way beyond logical justification. No top performer has lacked this capacity for irrational optimism.

Consistency and a series of purposeful actions will transform the way you work and hone in your chosen craft.

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