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# Struggling at The Game of School

## How Does It Relate to The Game of Business?



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**Winning at the Game of School is different from actually learning the material.**



Photo by [Ivan Aleksic](#) on [Unsplash](#)

To play the *Game of School* masterfully you must figure out the answer your teacher wants and provide the answer in the way the teacher wants to see it. Understanding that formula is crucial to getting partial credit on a question for which you don't know the actual answer. Being good at the Game of School is very different from actually learning the material, and some people are good at one and not the other.

Years ago when I was a graduate student at Princeton University, one of our requirements was to present our research in a pre-general seminar. The best student in our class (call him Alex) was both brilliant at any subject he attempted and terrible at the Game of School. We fellow students would routinely go to him with questions about *anything*, even subjects he'd never studied — he always figured out how to solve our problems.

When he presented his seminar, however, we were shocked. He sounded like a complete idiot. We couldn't believe it, and we were seriously concerned that the best student among us might fail.

Eventually, a professor interrupted him and said:

*"You haven't shown on the screen any of the equations you're discussing."*

*"I can't," Alex replied.*

*"Why not?" the professor asked.*

*"They're 120 pages long," said Alex, simply.*

Everybody laughed. Once you realized the sorts of challenges Alex was battling every day, you stopped worrying about him so much.

Personally, I was always excellent at the Game of School, which is part of the reason I have so many academic degrees I don't actually use. Unfortunately,

the skills required to win at the Game of School don't translate well to the Game of Business. I've learned many things about that over the years.

For one key strategy in the Game of Business, read my article called *Answering the Unanswerable*:

Answering the Unanswerable

Giving Good Enough Answers

medium.com

The article is based on a chapter in my book, *Help Your Boss Help You*:

Help Your Boss Help You

Develop more productive habits in dealing with your manager. As a professional in the business world, you care about...

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Through August 31, 2021 you can use promo code **boss\_35** to save 35% on the ebook version of *Help Your Boss Help You* by Ken Kousen, published by *The Pragmatic Bookshelf*. Promo codes are not valid on prior purchases.

If you enjoyed this article, you may also enjoy the following articles, which are based on the concepts from *Help Your Boss Help You* by Ken Kousen:

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