

Have you ever read a life history of someone that is successful where his or her success is attributed to complete dumb luck? Most likely not. Instead, when we talk about success stories, we like to assume that the people being discussed have achieved their success through skill and hard work. This is the myth of the “self-made man,” and this book chapter will reveal to you that it doesn’t have a foundation. You’ll know how a lot of obscure factors affect someone’s success, and the majority of them lie outside that person’s ability.

Chapter 1 - The myth of the “self-made man” is celebrated by our culture

If we come across a brilliant mathematician, we have a tendency to think that his skill for reasonable thinking is, at its core, a thing he was given birth with. The same applies to professional athletes’ agility, musicians’ sense of rhythm, or computer programmers’ problem-solving abilities.

This reason is that we naturally have a tendency to attribute a person’s success or accomplishment to his or her own hard work and innate skills.

When Jeb Bush contested for the governorship of Florida, he named himself a “self-made man” as part of his campaign approach. This is, honestly, absurd; in his immediate family, he had two American Presidents, one a rich Wall Street banker, and the other one a United States senator. However, in our culture, as individualism is really significant he attempted this perspective anyhow.

Jeb Bush’s accomplishments make him an outlier – an outlier is a person that has accomplished something statistically amazing. However, just like how Bush’s beneficial background assisted him to attain success, so as well do less external factors assist other outliers to rise above the ordinary.

We put really high value on people and their “self-made” accomplishment that we usually deliberately disregard other factors.

The “self-made man” is a myth – a really, really common myth.

Chapter 2 - As soon as you get to a specific threshold, increased abilities cannot help you succeed anymore.

Although innate abilities are significant, being 6’10” tall doesn’t assure you a million-dollar basketball deal, and possessing a sky-high IQ doesn’t essentially signify a Nobel Prize. What is the reason for this?

Abilities that promote success –such as height in basketball players or quantitative intelligence in mathematicians –possess a “threshold.” For instance, after getting to a specific height, an additional couple of inches don’t make much of a difference for a basketball player.

The same applies to education too: the entry requirements for some law schools are lower for racial minorities under a policy of affirmative action. These students have a tendency to do somewhat worse in law school generally than the white students; however, when postgraduate success is inspected, there is actually no difference between the minority and non-minority students any longer. In spite of their poorer result both before and during law school, the minority students enjoy the same salaries, get as many honors, and make as many contributions to the legal field as their white counterparts.

Just like how height in basketball players just matters to a point, after you get an adequate amount of legal expertise, other factors begin to play a larger part. Similar abilities and characters are essential basic for accomplishment in a field – you can’t turn into a leading legal expert if you don’t have any logical reasoning abilities–but, as soon as you’ve attained the skills threshold, marginal increases in innate reasoning skills won’t promote you. Other things such as – social abilities, networks, or even a lucky break – will advance you.

Chapter 3 - World-class mastery of anything needs about 10,000 hours of practice— not an easy thing.

Although talent is definitely a vital ingredient in the recipe for success, hard work looks to be at least as significant, if not more so. Bill Gates used lots of time mastering computer programming. The Beatles used much of his time on stage. Although they were extremely talented people as well, it was the wide practice that allowed them to be really world-class.

In order to attain world-class mastery at anything, various studies reveal that you have to use a “crucial minimum” amount of time –about 10,000 hours – practicing. Definitely, not everybody has the opportunity to use a lot of time practicing a thing.

Firstly, you require the opportunity to begin early in order for you to get as much practice as possible and get an advantage on the competition. You or your family needs to have the resources to back you up as well; it’s difficult to look for time for work or tasks when you’re using 40 hours a week attempting to be a famous violinist.

Depending on what you wish to achieve, you might as well have access to costly state-of-the-art equipment. Support from relatives, friends, mentors, teachers and nice strangers you meet on the street assists as well.

If you’re fortunate, just like Bill Gates or the Beatles, you’ll get these entire things. But, a lot of people don’t; therefore they effectively don’t have the opportunity to attain world-class mastery in their selected fields.

Chapter 4 - Your birth month can have a massive impact on what you accomplish.

Your “relative age” –your age in comparison to others in a developmental group – can make or break you.

This is an illustration: in Canadian youth-hockey leagues, the eligibility cutoff date for age groups is the 1st of January. Every child born in the same calendar year contest with one other. It looks fair, right?

Well, it isn't fair. Yearly cutoff dates pit children born in January against the children that are born at the end of December. Meaning, December babies contest with children who are essentially a year older than they are.

The system isn't only unequal off the bat, it also forms a self-fulfilling prophecy as well: coaches commend the best nine-year-olds since they're more powerful, better players, when as a matter of fact they're neither; they're only older – a year makes a huge difference when it constitutes one-eighth of your life.

The children with this unfair age edge receive more motivation and opportunities to develop at an impressionable phase of their growth. This is known as a cumulative advantage, and that is the cause why professional Canadian hockey players have birthdays during the first half of the year more frequently than in the second.

You might be considering, "Hey, it's not a big deal– I'm not a hockey player neither am I a Canadian!"

However, relative age can form uneven opportunities in any aspect that makes use of yearly cutoff dates to separate individuals into age-based groups. The majority of the sports leagues have them. A different place that has them is the Schools.

Hence, the five-year-old whose short attention time encourages her to take a crayon to her spelling homework can grow up believing that she's a "problem child." Simultaneously, the calm nearly-six-year-old she sat next to grows up to attend Harvard.

Chapter 5 - How you're raised can deeply affect how successful you be.

After you attain a skills “threshold,” natural skills stop mattering in your search for success. A very more significant factor is if you possess practical intelligence.

Practical intelligence is “procedural” understand: understanding how to interpret and work social circumstances to achieve what you want –meaning, understanding who to ask what, and when to ask. The skill to mingle with and negotiate with people in authority can assist move people closer to their goals.

This understanding is not innate. Annette Lareau a Sociologist discovered that richer parents impart in their children a feeling of “entitlement” more frequently than lower-class parents do. Generally speaking, they do this by focusing more on their children, or by at least offering their children with inspiring activities that enhance intellectual development.

They impart in their kids to demand respect and to “customize” circumstances to fit their wants. Meaning, they teach their children practical intelligence.

On the other hand, poorer parents are usually threatened by authority and allow their kids to trail a pattern of “natural growth” – there’s less assertive, prodding and inspiring than in richer families. This signifies that kids from poorer families are less likely to be taught practical intelligence, which extremely reduces their risks of success.

Chapter 6 - Your birth year can either make or break you.

“Unfair” edges in life can come from really improbable places.

Think of various big-name software billionaires: Steve Job, Bill Gates, and Bill Joy the co-founder of Sun-Microsystems. All these people were given birth to with an incredible talent for logical reasoning and ambition, practical intelligence, and opportunities to practice their abilities. The mystery of the wildly successful fixed?

Not that fast. It’s not only that they possessed opportunities; it’s that they possessed an exact series of opportunities that allow them to achieve their 10,000 hours of computer programming practice at precisely the appropriate time in history.

For them to make the most of on the fast-growing software industry, they had to be born at exactly the appropriate time: late enough to get access to a new computer model that made it very easy to figure out programming bugs; however, not really late that other people could get to their concepts first. Also, they had to be just the appropriate age when beginning their companies; if they had been very older, they probably might have been more concerned in “settling down” instead of taking the big risks that made them flourish.

Not all successful software moguls were born between the years 1954 and 1956; however, due to the fact that a lot of them were indicated that being in the appropriate place at the appropriate time matters.

Chapter 7 - Where you originate from – geographically and culturally – can have a specifically huge impact on what you accomplish.

You’re most likely conversant with the stereotype that Asians are good at math. Some people might shed tears, “Politically incorrect!” when they hear about this; however, various aspects of Eastern culture do as a matter of fact encourage better math students. One of such is language. When Asians kids learn the words for numbers in Asian languages, they automatically learn to add up numbers as well; hence, enhancing their mathematical ability at a tender age.

Additionally to language, the staple of the Asian diet, rice – also assists students to learn math since rice farming promotes a strong work ethic. Farming rice is very more difficult than farming in Western crops. A strong, profitable rice harvest needs accuracy, coordination, and patience.

Feudal systems in Europe gave farmers little to express from their work; they had to give back the majority of their crops to cruel landlords; however, those kinds of systems were not rampant in Asia, therefore rice farming gave an obvious association between effort and reward. Due to that, a culture of hard work formed; one specifically explaining an age-old adage was, “Nobody who can wake up before dawn three hundred sixty days a year fails to make his family rich.”

How does this relate to math? Well, just like rice farming, math is difficult; you might use one hour attempting to understand why you continue getting -17 when the answer is meant to be 19,473.6. Research has revealed that students from Western nations give up on math problems far earlier than students in Eastern nations do.

Therefore, yes, Asians are usually good at math; it's an aspect of their cultural legacy. People that have lineages who worked in rice paddies have a tendency to get an outlook towards work that is mainly beneficial when learning math. This propensity continues, even generations after families have stopped rice paddies.

Chapter 8 - If we know the significance of cultural legacy, we can assist more people to work towards achieving success – and hinder failure.

There are also not-so-celebrated outliers as well, like plane crashes. This uncommon incident nearly usually occurs from the accumulation of an improbable series of minor problems or mistakes that might have been unimportant on their own. However, just like how Bill Gates was fortunate to meet an opportunity after another, pilots can encounter a series of small issues that contribute to the tragedy.

An illustration of this is Korean Air, an airline which before the year 2000, had a poor safety record. Their crash-rate was seventeen times more than the industry average. This terrible track record could be clarified by cultural legacy as well, as with the Asian predisposition for math.

Korean culture respects authority figures and orders that a person should regularly submit to a person with a higher rank. Hence, if the captain of a plane makes an error, it might not be comfortable for a lower-ranking crew member to correct the captain since their cultural legacy indicates that they shouldn't.

One of the Korean Air's crashes in Guam can be traced back to that kind of communication errors. The flight's first officer attempted to inform the tired captain that visibility was really bad

to try a visual method to the runway, however, in order to prevent offending the captain with an explicit command, he basically said,

“Don’t you reason that it rains more? In this region, here?”

The captain disregarded the first officer’s feeble comment about the weather – and then their plane crashed into a hill.

After a change that acknowledged the issues of the Korean cultural legacy of hierarchy could pose for flying a plane, Korean Air employed an American organization to promote its flight crews’ communication abilities. At the moment its safety record equals those of its rivals.

Chapter 9 - If we identify the causes of uneven playing fields, we can form more opportunities for people to flourish.

The processes we utilize to decrease fledgling skills into success stories are hardly effective or efficient, leading in just a few successful outliers.

In hockey, yearly cutoff dates signify juniors born late in the year have to play against children nearly a year older than they are. However, a hockey player from Canada born on the 27th of December can’t tell his mom to travel back in time and not go into labor till the 1st of January, and he shouldn’t have to wish he could.

A lot of hockey players that might have harnessed good work ethics or practiced how to deal with the puck better than any other person in the league are lost since resources are given to the people who have an unfair edge by been born in the right time of the year. A cumulative edge for some signifies cumulative disadvantage for other people.

But, as soon as this error in the system is known, it can be solved. Rather than making use of yearly cutoff dates, we could separate young hockey players into four times as many groups until the edge of relative age diminishes. Make January-March babies play in a group, April-June in another group, and so on.

The same applies to schools. Rather than sitting back and letting the children of richer parents have access to more opportunities, we can form programs such as South Bronx's KIPP – Knowledge is Power Program – Academy, a severe middle school accessible to students from this severely low-income region. Though this program doesn't have any exams or admission requirements, and though the majority of the students are from poor backgrounds, KIPP succeeds to get 84% of its pupils to achieve at or above their grade level in math during the time they complete eighth grade.

Outliers: The Story of Success by Malcolm Gladwell Book Review

No one, neither a man, woman or Canadian hockey player is an island. Amazing success is the outcome of a frequently-unlikely series of opportunities, lucky breaks, and incidences that combine to form the exact circumstances that permit such accomplishment.

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