



# How you learn has more to do with your business success than any talent you were born with...

Andy Murray, Mo Farah and Usain Bolt are world class because of their talent and hard work.

Or is it something else?

Richard Branson, Bill Gates and Mark Zuckerberg have been so successful in business because of their talent and hard work.

Or is it something else?

What if their success is a result of a way of working? A formula you can use. A formula your people can use. A formula your children can use.

Such a formula explains how Simon Clifford helped an U14s football team from Chapeltown in Yorkshire beat the Irish and Scottish national U14s teams.

OK so it might be a stretch to think this formula can turn you or me into the next Zuckerberg.

But what if it can bring a 10% or 20% improvement in business profits? Why not apply this proven way of working to the mission critical jobs in your business and improve your results?



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## In a nutshell

You and your business achieve more only when your skills improve.

To improve skills and expertise we must practice at the edge of our current skill level and we must fail more often!

## Usain Bolt's genes are just so overrated...

The science of success suggests genes have little to do with success.

World class Kenyan long distance runners aren't genetically wired for long distance running success. They're so good because, to get to school when kids, they ran longer distances at high altitude – up to 20km a day. This made their lungs 30% better at oxygen uptake and made them better long distance competitors.

98% of Jamaicans have the gene ACTN3

which is associated with sprinting success. The thing is Kenyans have an even higher frequency of the ACTN3 gene but have no sprinting success. 82% of Europeans also have the ACTN3 gene. But how many successful European sprinters can you name?

It's not the gene that matters, it's Bolt's and his Jamaican team's obsession with sprint training that delivers them repeated gold medal success.

## Here's a proven solution for your business...

**Deep practice** requires you to **reach** and **repeat**.

Apply the laws of deep practice and you'll build skill and expertise and outperform your competition.

## Is this your untapped competitive advantage?

The science says it's not genetics that determines someone's skill and capabilities. It's their depth of practice.

In sport, **repeated** practice is expected. In fact, if you want to be any good, you need to practice more often than you play.

Business is different.

In business, practice is seen as a cost. And if costs are to be kept to a minimum, practice is often avoided.

If you think differently and apply a little **deep practice** (practicing at the very limit of your capabilities) every day or every week, your skill and expertise will improve. So will your results!

## The key is smaller and heavier balls...

In 1997 Simon Clifford borrowed £5,000 to fund a trip to Brazil to learn about 'Futsal' (Futebol de Salão – football in a room). Why?

Because the Brazil national football team had more players in the world's top football leagues than any other. They had also won the World Cup more times than anyone. How come?

All over Brazil kids play futsal. Small room-sized pitches and a heavier ball.

Brazilian futsallers make more mistakes. There's just no room in this five a side game. Passing lanes are ridiculously tight. Defensive pressure is constantly tight also. Players have to either dribble or accurately thread a pass to a team mate.

Not until they're 12 years or over do the kids get to play football as we know it. They make football look easy (because, compared to futsal, it is).

Clifford brought futsal to Chapelton, and coached the U14s team using futsal. They went on to beat both the Scotland and Irish national U14s football teams.

## Here's the science behind what's happening...

**Insulation** is happening.

Insulation of your brain circuits.

Insulation means speed and precision.

Like the cable on your TV is wrapped in insulating plastic. Every time you perform an action or skill the relevant brain circuits are wrapped by an extra layer of **myelin insulation**.

For bare brain circuits – no myelin – the signal speed in the brain is 2 miles per second. For fully myelinated circuits, the signal speed is 200 miles per second.

Brazilians, Kenyans and Jamaicans are brilliant at adding more myelin to their football, running and sprinting brain circuits. Plumbers myelin-wrap their plumbing brain circuits. Sales people myelin-wrap their sales circuits. Engineers myelin-wrap their engineering brain circuits.

Myelin builds a better, faster brain and a better, faster business too.



*Reaching, failing and reaching again is a common thread of deep practice.*

## Accelerate your performance and your business results...

Dan Coyle for his inspiring book 'The Talent Code' visited the hotbeds of talent production. He posed the question:

***"What if you could do a month's worth of practice in just 6 minutes?"***

Coyle was looking for the common threads to explain exceptional levels of performance in these hotbeds.

The small island of Curacao has a population the size of York or Basildon but it provides 1 in 9 of the major league baseball players in the USA. Spartak is a small run-down Russian tennis club that has provided more top 50 tennis players than any other club. 21 of the top 100 women golfers are from Korea. And there's Chapelton too!

They all use deep practice.

## Common threads of success...

***"When you operate on the edge of your ability, when you are reaching, failing, reaching again, learning velocity goes way up. It goes way up."*** – Daniel Coyle 'The Talent Code'

Myelin and skill improvement respond best to being stretched. To falling over. To reaching at or beyond the edges of your ability.

A baby learns to walk quickly because they are constantly reaching for the next, better level of toddling! They fall over a lot. They get lots of coaching. They keep stretching themselves till they have mastered walking. Then they reach again and start learning to run, skip, jump!

When we struggle we get smarter, faster, better. Check out the downloadable tools to see how struggle really works.

What are you doing to reach beyond the edges of your and your team's skill level?

## Rules to accelerate learning and performance...

### 1. REPETITION AT THE EDGE

Myelin and skill improvement requires repetition but as Coyle puts it:

***"Spending more time is effective – but only if you're still in the sweet spot at the edge of your capabilities, attentively building and honing circuits."***

And if you practice at the edge of your current skill level you'll fail, you'll fall over often like a staggering baby does.

### 2. CHUNK IT

'In 7 weeks learn a year's worth of material' is the de facto motto of the Meadowmount School Of Music.

This humble school has given us four of the world's best violinists including Yo-Yo Ma.

At Meadowmount they are experts at chunking:

- **One big chunk** – look intently at the whole piece of music or task in the round
- Practice the **smallest chunks** – short sequences of notes or sub-tasks – practice in random order
- **Slow it down** – going slow allows you to recognise and attend to errors – going slow helps you build a working blueprint of the skill

Chess masters are also masters at recognizing chunks of master games and practicing those chunks. They make a move (the smallest chunk) and compare it to the winning move and work out why the move works.

How can you chunk important jobs or tasks in your business and perform deep practice on these chunks to improve your skills and your results?

## TIME TO DISAGREE

### “Constantly reaching for faster and better is tough. I’m not sure I or my people are up for that!”

The social psychologist Dr Carol Dweck has studied motivation for 30 years. **Motivation** is key to deep practice success.

Dweck gave some children a fairly easy puzzle. Afterwards they were given one of two verbal responses:

1. “You must have worked really hard”
2. “You must be smart at this”

When given a further test the praised-for-effort group (1) improved scores by 30% whilst the praised-for-intelligence group’s (2) score dropped by 20%.

The learning - **acknowledge effort not intelligence** to motivate people to struggle.

More on this in the downloadable tools accompanying this Business Bitesize where you’ll discover what the world’s best ever coach across all sports says to his people.

### “Encouraging people to make mistakes can cost me customers, revenues and profits, not improve them.”

Investing 1 of your 40 hours a week working with one of your people at the edge of their skill level is just 2.5% of your time.

And why not coach deep practice with your people as they work on-the-job?

You could get them to be 10% better at their job. Together you could get them to be faster and do more. They could do more so you do less or you can go do other more valuable work.

Andy Murray knows he’ll fail to win if he fails to practice with his coach’s feedback.

Time to start to reach and repeat with your team whilst working on-the-job?

### “We’re busy enough already without putting two people on one job.”

Teaching people to drive or fly is fraught with danger. But repetition is achieved without risking lives in simulators or dual-control cars.

How do you take this idea and apply it to just 1 hour of practice a week and drive your business forward?

### “Please tell me more”

Daniel Coyle’s book is rammed with inspirational stories and detailed insights.

It’s why Tom Peters, (world renowned business author) said: “You will not read a more important and useful book”.

Want more? See some examples and try some exercises to make more of deep practice – check out the downloadable tools here...



**Get Your Bitesize Support Tools Now**

## Use the Business Bitesize Support Tools And Resources

to help you make the most of this edition of Business Bitesize – go here: [www.businessbitesize.com/pentlands](http://www.businessbitesize.com/pentlands)

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## 4 helping hands for you...

Deep practice – ‘Reach and Repeat’ can transform your success and the success of your people and your business.

1. Ruthlessly eliminate passive learning
2. Embrace struggle – reach at the edges of your skill level
3. Embrace repetition – practice often with a coach
4. Coach well – praise the effort not the intelligence or ‘natural talent’ – give factual feedback

### ULTIMATE ARGUMENT:

“How do I know the constant reaching at the edges of my skills and repetition will grow my business?”

You already know that in a fast moving business world you need to improve just to stand still. Doing the same old, same old will mean the eventual demise of your business.

By helping your people (and yourself) improve skills and expertise through deep practice you set yourself up for success.

**STOP** allowing yourself to freewheel and miss out on the value of repeating deep practice.

**START** encouraging yourself and your people to make mistakes and use those errors to signpost better performance.



## Your next steps:

Deep practice helped a small Yorkshire town's U14s football team beat the national U14s sides of Scotland and Ireland.

Talent in your business is not the issue. Deep practice – 'reach and repeat' is the key to your success.

Use the deep practice insights in this report, in the accompanying tools and in Coyle's brilliant book to build success in your business.

## Start by gently pushing your people to make more mistakes...

You know you're working at the edge of a person's capabilities when they make mistakes.

Work alongside your people as they make mistakes and you can encourage their efforts and offer guidance for improvement.

## More tools and information for you:

As well as the steps on this page, use the insights, stories and tools by downloading the supporting resources at the URL link below.

# Repeatedly practice at the edges of your skill level to improve your results...

The hotbeds of success all over the world aren't full of genius people from a world beating gene pool. They succeed because they struggle every day to improve their skills and expertise at the edge of their current skill level, with the support of a guide or coach.

You can adopt this approach for yourself and your business when you:

- 1. Ruthlessly eliminate passive learning** – do rather than watch
- 2. Embrace struggle** – reach at the edges of your current skill level, make mistakes, see mistakes as an opportunity to improve
- 3. Embrace repetition** – repeat regularly so that you build the myelin in your brain and the speed and accuracy for skill improvement
- 4. Coach well** – praise the effort not the intelligence or 'natural' talent – give factual feedback like the best coaches do

**Find more insights, exercises and examples of deep practice by downloading the support tools and resources from the URL link in the box below.**

**And why not get Daniel Coyle's book or check out his website for greater insight for the success your business deserves?**

**YOUR SUPPORT TOOLS ARE HERE:** Go to the link below and you'll find a selection of practical support tools to help you work out how to apply deep practice for yourself and your people so that you can build a hotbed of talent in your business.

**Find the support tools to help you here - [www.businessbitesize.com/pentlands](http://www.businessbitesize.com/pentlands)**

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# How you learn has more to do with your business success than any talent you were born with...

Start by asking yourself:

**What aspects of your business need to work better or faster than they are doing now?**

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- 3. Your attitude, your answer and your actions after a failure determines your success** – how do you perform deep practice and make mistakes without wrecking customer relationships and losing revenues?
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Including a fun exercise for you and your team to do – to prove that reaching and repeating really works.
- 5. The 'Repeatedly Reach' checklist** – when you or your people learn a new skill or advance an existing skill, are you applying the essentials of deep practice? – use this checklist and increase your chances of success.
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**STOP** allowing yourself to freewheel and miss out on the value of repeating deep practice

**START** encouraging yourself and your people to make mistakes and use those errors to signpost better performance

### 1. The one 'Repeatedly Reaching For Success' question you must ask yourself if you want to achieve world class results for you and your business...

If an U14s football team from a village in Yorkshire (Chapelton) can beat the Scottish national U14s team and the Irish national U14s team too, can't you beat your competition?

**What aspects of your business need to work better or faster than they are doing now?**

Where is the value in this question?

The value lies here...

...the degree to which you and your team learn to do the mission critical jobs in your business better and faster than your competition is the degree to which you'll be successful.

The research in Daniel Coyle's book, the neuro-science he quotes, shows that speed and accuracy of any skill comes from repetition. Not, 'going-through-the-motions' type repetition but repetition at the edge of your current skill level.

The research shows that:

- talent is entirely overrated
- repetition is the key to success

So, what areas of your business need to work better than they do now? And how do you make it easier and more likely that you and your people practice at the edge of your capabilities so you get better?

**Warning:** In sport, *repeated* practice is expected. In fact, if you want to be any good, you need to practice more often than you play.

Business works differently.

In business, practice is seen as a cost. And if costs are to be kept to a minimum, practice is often avoided. As a result your business fails to improve.

If you think differently and apply a little regular, repeating *deep practice* (practicing at the very limit of your capabilities) every day or every week, your skill and expertise will improve. So will your results!

### 2. Simply knowing how your brain works improves performance...

The science of learning at the edge of your skill level is called deep practice – simply understanding the neuroscience of myelin helps you achieve much more.

Learning at the edge of your current skill level requires struggle. Struggle is good.

You struggled, and all kids struggle, when learning to ride a bike or learning to drive a car.

When you stop struggling the progress also stops.

Struggle plus repetition has a powerful impact on your brain.

Specifically, repetition and struggle grows myelin in your brain. Myelin is the insulation that wraps itself round your neurons when you perform an action, especially if the action is at the edge of your current skill level.

As Daniel Coyle succinctly puts it:

***“...practice makes myelin, and myelin makes perfect.”***

***“...myelin doesn't care about who you are. It only cares about what you do.”***

Talent is entirely overrated.

***“Skill is insulation that wraps neural circuits and grows according to certain signals.”***

Knowing that repetition changes the brain is the key to success.

#### 700 children prove it beyond doubt...

Carol Dweck is a well-respected Stanford professor and an expert in learning and motivation (check out her book 'Mindset' - it's brilliant too).

Dweck split 700 low-achieving children into two groups. Both groups were given an 8-week study skills course but only one group received a 50-minute session about how the brain grows when it is challenged. The teachers were not told which kids had received the 'brain' session but within one term could tell the difference. The kids who'd learned about the brain had improved study habits and significant grade improvements.

Knowing that repetition at the edge of your skill level changes the brain is the key to success.

Anders Ericsson put forward, in the 1990's, the idea that 10,000 hours of practice delivers world class performance. But it doesn't if the practice is freewheeling practice. Practice that stretches the learner makes all the difference and even delivers a month's worth of practice in just 6 minutes if your attitude about mistakes is right...

### 3. Your attitude, your answer and your actions after a failure determine your success...

**Your attitude** to mistakes (failure) decides whether you try again wholeheartedly, whether you try again half-heartedly or whether you just give up.

Your attitude determines whether you stretch yourself or not.

For example: Why does a young student at the top their class in spelling refuse to enter a regional spelling competition? Is it because they enjoy being a winner - so why would they risk being a loser?!

Failure either signposts smarter, harder and more effort on your chosen task. Or it signposts your inability to perform the task. The neuroscience proves that repetition at the edge of your capability stretches you. This results in mistakes, errors, failures but also adds more myelin to your brain connections and eventually makes the quality and speed of your actions jump 10-fold or even a 100-fold.

Without a 'learning' attitude you are unlikely to do what Daniel Coyle, in his book, refers to as a month's practice in just 6 minutes. 6 minutes of myelination of your brains routines of the actions you want to be brilliant at. For this to work, mistakes need to be seen as friends!

We know it's as old as the hills and even a bit corny but the phrase...

*"Mistakes are your stepping stones to future success"*

...is actually neurologically correct.

Here are a few sample videos showing some inspiring responses to failure:

- Lewis Hamilton talks about his change of attitude towards mistakes and how making mistakes has helped him drive at a higher level. And how losing has helped him become a better faster driver. Enjoying the fact he hasn't won feeds the next stage of his growth - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TZiZ6uvbZwQ>
- Michael Jordan is one of the greatest basketball players of all time. This video about his failures, including missing 26 game winning shots, is worth the 31 seconds it takes to watch – <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CgW48mBQJ14>

#### Practice safely...

How do you perform deep practice and make mistakes without wrecking customer relationships, wasting valuable production time or losing revenues?

Pilots learn to fly safely thanks to the use of flight simulators.

In business, you can't have people train by practicing on customers or using precious equipment when it's needed to deliver customer orders. So, what's your equivalent of a flight simulator?

In sales it might be role play exercises. In doing technical work it may need a mentoring approach where your people do work with you watching and supporting closely.



### Practice and struggle...

***“Staggering babies embody the deepest truth about deep practice: to get good, it’s helpful to be willing, or even enthusiastic, about being bad.”***

It’s why a school that introduces violin practice, but has to hold a lottery to see who gets to play, outperforms a school where all students get a violin. The school running the lottery means that the students feel lucky, honoured and privileged to receive a violin and invest themselves wholeheartedly in practice. The wealthier school fails to tap into the upside benefit of the struggle and students mostly treat practice half-heartedly. There’s more on this subject in Coyle’s brilliant and entertaining book.

And for another reference point consider David Maister’s insights from working with accountants and other professional service firms. Maister suggests that 4 things positively influence the success of a firm:

- A sense of job **SATISFACTION**
- A sense of **ACCOMPLISHMENT**
- A sense of **COMMITMENT**
- A sense of **CHALLENGE**

Two of these, accomplishment and challenge, also suggest that struggle at the edge of your capabilities is necessary for success.

Are you and your team stretching yourselves enough? Are you practicing enough too?



## Repeatedly Reach For Success

Support tools and resources

### The 'repeatedly reach for success' exercise

Here is a fun exercise you can do with your team.

Put this list of words up on a slide

#### Column A

window / sill

sugar / salt

black / white

mobile / phone

car / keys

horse / saddle

leaf / tree

turkey / stuffing

#### Column B

bread / b\_tter

hand / gl\_ve

c\_w / milk

bird / s\_ed

letter / b\_x

sh\_e / sock

music / l\_rics

winter / s\_ow

Give your team 30 seconds to look at the words, but they cannot write them down. After 1 minute ask them how many of the words and the links they can remember. Make a note of their scores.

***How many words and links did your team remember from Column A?***

***How many words and links did your team remember from Column B?***

Discuss the results together and what they mean.

It is proved, after testing thousands of people that most people remember the words from Column B.

In fact, most people remember 300% more from Column B!

This is not because for that 30 seconds they were 300% more talented or that they concentrated on Column B 300% more.

The reason for the results...

We gloss or skim over Column A as all the words are there, so although we read it we don't really read it! We have nothing to focus/concentrate on as all the words are there. We have nothing to 'reach' for, or a point of reference to remember.

But Column B requires us to work out the word with the missing letter, it's not a simple as reading. We have to take time (even just a micro-second) to work out the missing letter and therefore the word. We experience a micro-second of struggle until we reach the word.



## Repeatedly Reach For Success

Support tools and resources

And in that micro-second we are hard wiring our brain circuits...

The brain requires us to reach, requires us to struggle, perhaps make a mistake - we might have said 'Winter / Slow' - but then we have to correct our self and insert the correct letter to make the correct word.

The struggle and reach make all the difference. The struggle/reach is the reason that more people remember Column B.

"When you operate on the edge of your ability, when you are reaching, failing and reaching again, learning velocity goes way up. It goes way up." *Daniel Coyle – 'The Talent Code'*

**When we struggle we get smarter.**

Use this simple fun exercise to demonstrate to your team that reaching, failing and struggling will make them smarter.

#### **4. Leaders and managers create the environment for deep practice. Are you coaching well enough?**

Because of an amazing track record and 88 unbeaten games across three seasons, the sports channel ESPN made John Wooden the greatest coach of all time in any sport.

A study of 2,326 of Wooden's coaching comments revealed the following:

- 6.9% were compliments
- 6.6% expressed displeasure
- **75% were pure information** – what to do, how to do it, when to intensify an activity.

Wooden's insights were mostly practical. He **guided**. He **advised**.

Are you around your people often enough to behave like Wooden?

Are you spending enough time with your people to share your knowledge, insight and skill as they do their work? Or as they practice?

Are you mostly giving practical 'what to do' and 'how to do it' guidance?

### 5. The 'Repeatedly Reach' checklist – When you or your people learn a new skill or advance an existing skill, are you applying the essentials of deep practice? – use this checklist and increase your chances of success.

#### a. Be good at CHUNKING

➤ **Are you providing an overview of what's needed or expected? YES / NO**

If you were coaching music you'd listen to the whole piece to give an overview. You might play different artists playing the same piece. In business you might watch an expert do the job.

➤ **Are you dividing the whole into smaller, manageable parts? YES / NO**

If it was music you'd chunk the piece into phrases or bars to practice. In business it might be machine preparation or where to start or when to finish or what questions to ask.

➤ **Are you slowing things down? YES / NO**

Going slow makes it easier to recognise and attend to errors and brings a focus on precision. This makes sense in music or sport. In business you might get 'trainees' to refer to checklists before acting or responding. Or you might get them to tell you 'what they intend to do' before they do it to slow them down.

#### b. Be good at REPETITIONS

➤ **Are you helping your people do repetitions every day? YES / NO**

➤ **Are you helping your people do their repetitions at the edge? YES / NO**

In sport and music repetitions are a way of life. In business this gets lost. But can you see how 30 or 40 minutes a day repeating key skills or actions at the edge of your existing skill level will eventually give you a competitive advantage?

#### c. Be good at RECOGNISING MISTAKES

➤ **Are you choosing a goal for your practice? YES / NO**

Be clear on what you and your people are aiming for in each practice.

➤ **Are you encouraging mistakes early on in practice? YES / NO**

It pays to hear a bum note before you start practice. It pays to hear someone ask a clumsy question or mess up setting up a machine or start with the wrong checklist. Encourage mistakes.



- **Are you recognising mistakes early on in practice?** YES / NO

Help your people see and hear the mistakes as they happen. Do not glance past them.

- **Are you recognising the difference between success and failure?** YES / NO

It pays to compare and contrast right and wrong, success and failure so your people start to see, hear and feel the error themselves and so recognise success themselves too.

### 6. The book and other powerful resources: *'The Talent Code – Greatness isn't born, it's grown, here's how'* – Daniel Coyle

If you'd like to watch an amusing but insightful 17 minute video of the author sharing key insights from his research and his book **go here** (watch the first 6 minutes at least and have a few laughs and see the source of future success) -

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Aq0pHpNy6bs>

Just knowing about myelin is enough for a win. But if you want serious wins for you, your people and your business get yourself a copy of Daniel Coyle's simply brilliant and insightful book.

We strongly urge you to read this book from cover to cover and start applying the talent code insights to your business. You can get the book here -

<https://www.amazon.co.uk/dp/B004EYSXT8/ref=dp-kindle-redirect?encoding=UTF8&btkr=1>