

Want to Become the Best at What You Do?

By Benjamin P. Hardy

It doesn't matter how good your strategy is, if you're not skilled at what you do, that strategy won't take you very far. As Jason Fried and DHH have said: "*Many amateur golfers think they need expensive clubs. But it's the swing that matters, not the club.*" When you're confident about what you do and clear about where you're going, the right strategy will make itself known. Hence, when your "why" is strong, you'll figure out "how." The how comes from the why. Not the other way around. If you're looking for how to be successful, you're going about it all wrong. You're doing it for the wrong reasons. And you'll continuously be left searching for the next patch of land to find gold. What will be left? An open field of half-dug holes, three feet from gold. If you know what you want and why you're doing it, you're not worried about the "gold." Your security is internal. You aren't worried about the outcomes because you already know they are coming. For you it's never actually been about the rewards. It's only and always been about seeing how far you can go. About achieving the impossible. About never stopping. Take everything external away and you're still going to continue with the same intensity you always have. Give you everything-- fame, money, whatever else-- and it won't derail you. Here's how to become the best at what you do:

1. Work On Yourself, Not On Your Job

"Work hard at your job and you can make a living. Work hard on yourself and you can make a fortune."-- Jim Rohn
Your work is a reflection of you. If you're not getting the results you're looking for, **stop looking for better strategies. Instead, look inside. Are you currently the person who would attract the level of success you seek?** Your outer conditions are a reflection of your inner reality. As James Allen has said, *Your circumstances reveal you to yourself.* Where you are right now: that's you. If you want something different: improve you.

Most people focus on their craft or their "job." That's all well and good. However, you'll get far more bang-for-your-buck by focusing on yourself. 20% of your energy should be devoted to your work. 80% of your energy should be devoted to rest and self-improvement. This is what fuels your work and makes it better than anyone else's. Self-improvement is more than books and true rest is renewal. While others are trying to improve their job, you're continuously improving yourself, expanding your vision, skills, and abilities. This is akin to Stephen R. Covey's 7th principle: Sharpen your saw. Most people are trying to chop down their tree-- their "job" --with a dull saw.

"Give me six hours to chop down a tree and I will spend the first four sharpening the axe."-- Abraham Lincoln
Within a short period of time, you'll have developed true mastery. Everyone else is trying to hone their "craft." Don't work on your job. Work on yourself. When you do, your work will far exceed what other people are painstakingly producing. Your work will be cleaner, clearer, and more powerful because you'll be more evolved as a person. Most people you're "competing" against are an inner mess.

2. Consistently Put Yourself Into Situations Others Can Only Dream Of

Your results aren't a reflection of your talent. Lots of people have talent. Few people, however, are required to rise to a difficult challenge. Most people never put themselves in demanding situations-- situations that humble and scare you. You need to put yourself into positions that create immense pressure. The kind of pressure that will either make or break you. This is how you purge out your weakness and small-mindedness. It won't be pretty. But it will change you. And eventually, you'll rise up. New. Changed. Better. You need to be taking on challenges that require you to become so much more than you currently are. You need to put your back against the wall so you have no other choice but to produce. This is how you evolve. How do you put yourself into these situations? You initiate. You don't wait for life to come to you. You don't wait for the "next" opportunity.

You improve your current situation or "job" by providing actual value. You pitch ideas. You ask questions. You try and fail. You take on roles that require greater responsibility. "Leadership" is available to everyone. You just need to assume a leadership *role*. You can do that right now, in whatever situation you're in. You do this enough, and continuously pitch yourself and your ideas, you'll *create* opportunities. You then maximize those opportunities and more will come. Opportunities are like ideas. The more you use them, rather than let them simmer, the more will come. Most people sit on their ideas far too long and they become stale. Similarly, most people sit on their opportunities too long and they stop coming.

3. Don't Copy Other People. Make Them Copy You.

"From this point, your strategy is to make everyone else get on your level, you're not going down to theirs. You're not competing with anyone else, ever again. They're going to have to compete with you." -- Tim Grover

If you're still mimicking the work of other people, good luck. If you're trying to replicate the work and results of *other people*, what does that say about your own inner compass? What does that say about your motivations? Are you just trying to find what's working? Are you looking for the "how"? Do you actually know where you're going?

If you're following someone else's tracks, where do you think those tracks will lead you? To your own destination or to theirs? And even if you'd be happy with their destination, do you really think you could do it better than them? It's *their path*. They're driven by something deep and internal. You can't get ahead if you're always a few steps behind. If you're always reacting rather than creating. If you don't know who you are, you'll always try to be someone else. And thus, you'll never be the best. Your work will always be a cheap imitation. It will lack the *feeling* that produced the work or the idea.

4. Stay In Love With The Process

"The more you sweat in peace, the less you bleed in war." -- Norman Schwarzkopf

The process--or the work itself--is all there is. Results come and go. And it's never been about the results. Success is inevitable. Success comes easy because it's the last thing on your mind. You already know it's going to happen. The work itself--and becoming better and better at it--is what drives you. It almost doesn't matter *what* you're doing. It's *why* you're doing it that matters.

The "what" can and does take many forms. Don't over-attach to one role. Whether you're a leader, writer, athlete, parent, "employee" -- the what doesn't matter. Why you do it and subsequently how you do it is what matters. Hence, how you do anything is how you do everything. When you are in love with the process, you seek feedback, mentoring, and coaching--even when you're at the top of your game. You surround yourself with people who aren't afraid to tell you the truth. You avoid people who only tell you what they think you want to hear. Those aren't friends. They have an agenda. Self-transcendence comes from collaborating with others who are driven by a greater and grander vision. When the whole becomes fundamentally different than the sum of its parts. When the work is the reward. Going beyond anything you've ever imagined. Complete openness to the possibilities. Unless you're continuously improving and working with better people, you'll never realize this. When you hone yourself, your work, and you produce--opportunities will come. They won't help but come. Because you're a magnet, pulling them in.

5. Never Forget Why You're Doing This

I often see people throw their value-systems out the door in hopes for quick success. When I see this happen, I already know these people won't succeed long-term. They clearly don't have a "why" -- or they forgot it. They don't have an inner compass. Consequently, they don't really know where they're headed. It's a destructive path. The moment you start compromising, you won't stop compromising. As innovation expert, Clayton Christensen, has said: Many of us have convinced ourselves that we are able to break our own personal rules "just this once." In our minds, we can justify these small choices. None of those things, when they first happen, feels like a life-changing decision. The marginal costs are almost always low. But each of those decisions can roll up into a much bigger picture, turning you into the kind of person you never wanted to be. This, unfortunately, is more common than not. It's so common, in fact, that it's almost expected. Hence, few people become the best at what they do. They end up becoming something far less.

Conclusion

Becoming the best is about never being satisfied with what you've done. It's about continually improving who you are. It's knowing success will come because you know who you are and what you stand for. It's about initiating -- continually creating situations that force you to become more than you currently are. Purging yourself of all your imperfections. Evolving. This is your journey. Take it