

“You need to spend at least **ten years** working in a **very focused, everyday** way on the thing you want to be great at. Evidence: high school swimmers today would beat Olympic records from years ago.”

That’s not “evidence.” There are more high school swimmers than ever, therefore more opportunities to find and train great swimmers. They have access to diet, training, technology, and facilities that didn’t exist years ago. That’s what it is “evidence” of.

And anyway, supposing it does take that much sheer effort, clearly it also takes talent (though she denies this, as do other,⁵ *cough cough*, experts). I’m a case in point: I practiced the piano for an hour a day for more than ten years. I became good, but there were others who practiced twice as much who were worse, and still others who practiced less and are much better.

We all know this. Why are we allowing people to tell us otherwise?

Not one of the successful entrepreneurs I know started as an expert. Rather, **career and expertise were developed simultaneously**, eventually resulting in success when coupled with a few key events (due as much to luck as effort⁶).

Pick anyone. Sergey and Larry weren’t advertising experts before they started Google. Joel Spolsky wasn’t a blogging expert before starting FogCreek. I didn’t know anything about peer code review before starting Smart Bear.

In fact, in all these cases it would have been impossible to have been an expert! Why? Because Google reinvented advertising, there were no “blogs” when Joel started posting essays, and there was no tool for code review until I invented one.

Innovation defies prior expertise.

So let’s stop being distracted with these arbitrary definitions, artificial goals, and unnecessary prerequisites to “success.”

Let’s just get back to work.

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