

8-4: Building mini-skills

Now one question you by the asked yourself is what do you practice on? What do you spent your time actually practicing? Now that might be fairly obvious in basketball where you have to work on your lay ups, in your dribbling. But what you do is the program. What is the practice in being a good designer or a good architect? What are the specific ingredients that make someone very great in their field? And one way you can think of this, is it a very broad skill like that, like teaching, design. This is actually broken to many individual mini skills and people who are world class on this ability have mastered most or they mastered some of them to a much greater extent than average or inadequate performance in the same field. So a great writer has mastered 50 or hundred or thousand mini skills in writing much better that someone who is mediocre writer. And in this sense this gives you an idea on how you formed your practice efforts. It's you can't just practice the entire skills whole although you will do that overtime then when you spending your practice session, you're pinpointing on a very specific mini skill which does have a very good objective criteria.

So for example, if you're thinking about writing then maybe one of your specific criteria is headline writing, and so what you could do is focus your deliberate practice session, you set aside time from your regular writing work, you spent 30 minutes a day and you just focus on writing headlines. And so you just pick the same topic and you try to write a hundred different headline. And this will give you a lot of practice at that very specific mini skill. Another example is if you are working as a programmer maybe you want to master a very particular design patterns. So you learn java and you want to master the visitor design pattern for a java program. In this case you might set up a very good trial example where you can work through it multiple times, all practicing this design patterns. And as you learn more and more design patterns, your proficiency as a programmer will grow up. So this way you're thinking of it that expertise in complex skills is really a library of a very specific skills. Then what you can do is identify what those skills are and build them up.

So another question is how to identify what the important mini skills are. So one way you could do this is by researching people who are already experts in your field. So if you have access to this people, if you have access to people that are already performing in a good level of ability, so if you are working in an office and you know people that are fairly good programmers, you can start by interviewing them. Figuring out what are the things that they do that you are not doing very well that they do very well, which you can break down into miniture skills. Another example is that as if you don't have direct access to this people, you could study your method. So if you wanted to become a great writer then you could look at different styles of writing from people who have mastered

very different subset of the writing skills. You could like Hemingway, you could look like Mountain Bloodwell, and you could look like even JK Rolling, all for ways to write a good book and race to write well in different context. And so by studying this you could identify what are the things that these writers do well and how can I identify them in a very specific practice context. So you might discover the amount of Bloodwell and so you might for non fishing is very good in writing profiles. And so you can work on working on profile writing as the way of describing people as introducing the missing stories on your own writing. Or you might decide that Hemingway is very good at writing, very sparse and very brief sentences. He doesn't waste a lot of word. And so when you are doing your own writing, you could do the same thing in really focus on bred any in re writing the same passage try to make it as seen as possible And again this building that many skills also flows into the original ideas of separating works from practice. Because once you identify that many skills you can often create a practice drill which is separate from actual work. And because it separate from actual work, you can master it independently without having to do all the other stuff that would be important for achieving the result. So in the example I was saying about programming, you just focus on mastering that one design pattern instead of trying to figure out when you would use it in a much larger context of the programming that actually wanted to create. Or if you are trying to work on a design problem, you can just design that one feature that you want to work on instead of the entire design that the client will request. And this is how you can get better skills as well because when you're doing the practice component, you might cover all these skills in your work to certain degree. So if I'm writing an article you might be hitting each of the skills with the small amount of practice each time. So I write the headline and I spent maybe 10 or 15 minutes again in the headline and then I spent 10 to 15 minutes working on this aspect of my article, and I spent a little bit to all of them. But the problem is they soothing out technique when you're actually doing the work. It doesn't give you the focus you need the actually next level of ability.

So when I'm writing a headline I'm always going to writing roughly the same level of quality and I'm going to stagnate. However, if I spend time specifically on writing headline and I spend a week and that's my only focus on my deliberate practice session is only on writing better headline. Figuring out how to write them better, getting good feedback on that specific part of the process, I might be able to write a thousand of headlines in accumulate years of experience in just that one mini skill. So consider how you could do this result. Breakdown the complex skill you want to learn very specific components and then figure out which of those components are most important to you right now will be cover all of them but if you can figure out just once that are most important to you and spend time mastering that very specific slice in detail again using the feedback mechanism again, and separating from the work you regularly doing. Now we can

build up skills and proficiency in that much faster than just by doing your regular work will be good