

## Member's Quarterly

## Spring 2024 Edition

### President's Message

## Practice Doesn't Have to Make Perfect

*It always leads to improvement*

**W**e've all heard about Malcolm Gladwell and his theory that it takes 10,000 hours of intensive practice to achieve mastery of complex skills like being an expert at computer programming or becoming a violin virtuoso. However, what he didn't say was that the 10,000 hours was an average that masters of various crafts had invested in order to get to the expert level. Some did more and some did less. Basically, not everyone starts with the basic skills or abilities. Some have an advantage when it comes to getting to the top.

The bottom line is that practice may not always lead to excellence, but practice towards a goal will always lead to improvement. According to the experts, the best way to use practice is to target it towards a specific goal. Scientists who have studied practicing suggest that there are several key elements to making the most of your practice time. They include identifying the area that needs improvement, setting short and long-term goals to aim for, making sure the practice fits you and where you are on the scale, and using a coach or mentor to guide you and help monitor your progress.

Does practice always have to be perfect to learn? Research suggests not. Sometimes we get bored doing the same routine over and over and our brain does as well. Repetition is not the same as growth and we all learn in different ways. If we shake things up in our efforts to improve, the science suggests we may actually get better faster. That's why athletes, especially professional ones, have some regular practice sets and they add in random and varied activities to work on other parts of their game. They maintain their level of excellence and add enhancements around the edges.

Practice is not just for world-class musicians or athletes either. At work, we have to help employees learn new skills by letting them practice, giving them feedback and making adjustments as needed until they are successful. We all make progress by trying and then when we don't get it right, trying again. Perhaps the most important thing about practice is that we start and that we must continue.

Continuous learning and growth are the mark of every successful athlete- and every successful manager too. How do you get to the Kennedy Center? Practice, practice and more practice. How do you become a great manager? You know the answer.

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