

# How To Do Well In Something Even If You Don't Seem To Have The Talent For It

By Ellesse Chow

One of the common grouses I hear, hindering people from going into a particular challenge is that they believe they don't have the "X-factor" to excel in it. Usually, it's after one or two failed attempts in that same domain. Or something so new that they didn't know what to expect. They'll say things like "*Nah, I've tried before and I know I suck*", "*I'm just not cut out for that*" or "*I can never be as good as him*" and abandon the whole idea just to save themselves the embarrassment. Even when it's something that'll definitely expand their lives if they'll just give it a(nother) try.

I admit I'm not spared of this too. Besides judging myself previously for lacking the talent in sales, I used to think I was a lousy dancer... hehehe. I was a member of the high school choir and during one of our overseas concerts, I was handpicked to take part in an all girls performance item. We had to sing and dance a little at the same time. A few of us - myself included - were so "stiff" that we had to be given remedial lessons in our female instructor's hotel room every other night before the concert! Yes, we were that bad!

Hardly anyone would comment I'm a bad dancer now whenever my friends and I go clubbing. In case you're wondering, nope, I didn't take any dancing lessons. I just changed my thinking. In fact, when I look at it, it's probably the same process of thoughts that lead me to my sales success. Here's how :

## **(1) Expect the Frustration**

Trust me, when you're being challenged with some role or work you've previously labeled yourself as having no talent for, the first thing to do is just to expect the frustration. It'll inevitably bring back the nasty memories of how everyone jeered at you when you were on the stage not knowing what to say, for instance. Your ego is likely to convey that underlying message that you shouldn't speak in public anymore just to avoid the pain of getting hurt or disappointed again.

Well, don't beat yourself up over it. Be aware that this is your subconscious' way of protecting you. But despite the good intentions, choosing to run away from it is literally putting yourself on dystrophy mode. You'll never be able to do well in public speaking not because it's true you lacked the talent but rather because you've decided not to give yourself a second shot at it anymore!

## **(2) Make a Decision & Watch Your Focus Shift**

In most of my cases, I realize my frustration and anxiety is at its worse when I'm split on a decision. Whether to take up the challenge or say "no". The former requires some guts but whenever I do so, the negative energy caused by my frustration soon turned into

proactive forces. I'll start brainstorming ways to alleviate the situation. Such as putting in more effort to practice or research the skill I need to develop.

Strangely at the same time, I'll find comfort within myself. For example, even though I was worried about affecting the necktie sales, I eventually told myself that my assistance was actually to help my brother-in-law resolve an urgent resource issue, which was far more pressing than a slight drop in Sales.

I find myself focusing on another aspect of the whole situation so much so that it takes the pressure off the results. Think of it this way. Assuming you've just taken an examination and the score for a pass is 50 marks. You got 45. If your focus is on passing, I'm sure you'll feel terrible. But what if your plan is to do better than your previous grade, which was 20 marks? You'll have achieved 125% improvement, way above what you've intended!

### **(3) Observe > Practice > Review > Practice**

When the focus is shifted and the stress to perform is greatly reduced, you'll gradually build up that self belief that it's probably not going to be that tough after all. By following up this school of thought with the 4 action steps of observe, practice, review and practice, trust me, you'll be able to hone the skill that you thought you didn't have the talent for. Just like what I did to be better in dancing.

After my high school saga, I never really had a chance to dance again. Until my University hostel committee organized a party at a club where we were all invited to the dance floor after the dinner. I was initially reluctant to join them - mainly because I didn't want to embarrass myself - but when everyone at our table popped down to the dance floor, a friend just dragged me by the arm. I didn't have time to say "no".

Under the music and shimmering lights, I suddenly realized that everyone was so busy having fun that no one would notice my obscure dance moves! I began to shift my focus. Instead of being conscious about my dance steps, I just concentrate on swaying my body with the music.

And as I did so, I started taking note of how others danced, played copycat a little, review the response from my friend on my moves - well, she didn't say anything bad - and quickly continued with it. At the end of the day, I was having so much fun that for the first time ever, I felt that dancing wasn't totally beyond me! As much as I thought it was.

### **(4) Have Fun In The Process!**

Once everything becomes almost second nature to you through your observation, practice, review and continuous practice, what determines if you'll ever do well in that domain really depends on how much fun you're beginning to derive from it. Nowadays, I'm usually the one initiating for a chillout at the clubs, occasionally receiving a bonus compliment that I dance quite naturally. And yes, none believed that I used to be so bad in dancing that I had to have remedial lessons.

Do you now enjoy the attention of speaking on the stage? Are you gradually opening up to the idea of breaking ceilings of sales one after another? Will you like to go dancing to the tune of the music and sweating it out again? When you derive a lot of fun and satisfaction from that something you didn't know you could do well in, it will eventually develop an impetus for you to know more, learn more and practice more. That, in turn avalanches your achievement as you become skilled in it.

Though I still face a lot of insecurities in reattempting stuff I used to do badly in - things that I totally felt I wasn't born with the gift for - such little successes over the years have helped to mitigate that frustration and fear. I know there's still a chance for me to do well in it.

What about you?