

## Expert Tips & Tactics

### Technical Excellence

Let's talk about something that lies at the heart of being a martial artist and being an entrepreneur; for that matter it applies to any field of endeavor in which we wish to excel. I want to talk about technique and skill.

A Technique is a thing we learn, it is a piece of a puzzle or tactical tool. Skill, on the other hand, represents the strategic ability to use techniques in a seamless, efficient and effortless fashion. Skill is the outcome of untold numbers of repetition. Skill is therefore a testament to quality of the learning experience, and technique is a tool of the learning environment. Each time we repeat a technique we make small adjustments as we evaluate our ability to produce the desired outcome. By constantly monitoring practice performance, improving the quality of our repetitions and performing the technique in the setting in which it will be required, the technique evolves into a skill.

Mastery in any field of endeavor comes from only one place: Repetition in the crucible of learning. Great performers do not necessarily have very flamboyant techniques, but they do perform the basics with an astounding mastery. Thus, skill becomes the external demonstration of an internalized technique. You can see this on the tournament circuit: Skillful competitors have refined their actions to such a level that people of lesser experience are totally outmatched.

We can all aspire to be great technicians given the time, desire, repetition and sweat. Eventually, some of us might even become skillful.

I believe, however, that there is another level, which is attainable. This is the level of 'mindless ability'. In these very, very rare circumstances you meet a student who has practiced for so many years that the movement of energy, which defines the execution of a skill is so efficient that you do not see the person performing, you simply see an effortless performance. The action becomes a thing of beauty.

Now, here is a goal worthy of attainment.

Setting this level of attainment as your goal will keep you forever on the path. 'Good enough' will never be acceptable and excellence is always a beginning point. Setting this level of ability will keep you humble, it will keep you training in times of doubt and through the plateaus of frustration. Setting this level of skill as your goal will help you keep an open mind and an empty cup. Every time you step on the deck you will know that you are still a beginner, still learning, still climbing the mountain.

Occasionally, you will look back at the view, but then you look ahead at the summit and realize there is still much climbing to do. I often wonder what that view will look like, and I often wonder whether I shall see the view, but in the greater schemes of things it is not the view from the top that is of value, it's the journey itself. Each view along the way acquires the value of the sweat expended to get there.

Technical ability is therefore a commodity that can always be refined, it is not a fixed quality; there is always room for more practice. Consequently, mastery in any field of endeavor knows only one teacher....experience. Everything else is rhetoric. There are no short cuts, no substitutes and no quitting.

One of the greatest things that I have learned from the martial arts is that the well of knowledge is infinitely deep and that no matter what I learn; it is miniscule in comparison to what I have yet to learn. In addition to the physical techniques we also learn to be determined, not stubborn, we learn to get up one more time than we are knocked over, we learn to study, to listen, to pay attention to the details and we learn that quitting is simply not an option.

Building skill in any arena of activity is a hard task. Training is an uncompromising task master...but I think that we all know this in our hearts, which is why, so often we settle for 'good enough' when excellence is just out of our immediate reach. It's also a reason why we allow our businesses to remain mediocre, when they could astound.

Now there's a wake up call for you...and for me too!

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