

Special Article

The Foundation of Success: Concentration, Consistency and Cooperative Endeavour

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Abstract

Individuals and Corporations everywhere are searching for means to improve productivity and achieve success. Educational institutions deliver larger amounts of information to the students in a hope to achieve higher standards of concentration and efficiency. Yet only a few graduates are able to substantially apply their education to become industry leaders. What separates these few from the others?

Efficient action requires three essential disciplines – concentration, consistency and cooperative endeavour. This paper analyses the human constitution to derive the definition of concentration and consistency. Concentration is the technique exercised by the intellect to hold the mind on the present occupation without allowing it to slip into the past or future. Consistency is the intellectual ability to direct all actions towards a chosen idea. Combining these two disciplines with cooperative endeavour, an individual or organisation can achieve success in any field of endeavour.

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Introduction

Throughout the world, corporations and individuals are researching methods to increase worker productivity and achieve set targets. In response business consultants recommend incentives to boost worker productivity and devise methods to inspire individuals to focus more on the job at hand. Yet persons and businesses fail to achieve the standards they aim for.

Educational institutions spend millions of dollars to improve their knowledge base and ‘qualify’ students by merely disseminating greater quantities of information. While information transacted to hundreds or thousands of students is exactly the same, few are able to absorb and apply it with the maximum efficiency. What comprises an individuals talent to concentrate and achieve success? Little research has been done to analyse the human personality to understand the dynamics behind an individuals success. Autobiographies of Olympic athletes and top ranked professionals fail to provide a clear process to understanding the dynamics of successful action.

This paper analyses the three essential requisites for success – concentration, consistency and cooperative endeavour.

Prerequisite Information

To study the factors that define successful individuals requires a basic understanding of the human personality and the resultant mechanism of action. An individual's ability to succeed is determined by the strength and quality of his faculties and the direction and power of his efforts.

Human Composition

Analysis of the human composition has shown that a Human Being is made up of three components namely the body, mind and intellect.

The body comprises the organs of perception and the organs of action. The organs of perception perceive the sense-objects of the world. Eyes see colour and form, ears hear sound, nose smells odour, tongue tastes food, skin feels touches. The organs of action are the hands, feet and the organs of speech, generation and evacuation.

Within the body there are two equipments known as the mind and the intellect. The mind is composed of feelings, emotions, likes and dislikes. Love, kindness, passion, anger, jealousy etc. belong to the mind. The mind is also referred to as the philosophical heart which is different from the anatomical heart.

The third and the most important equipment in a human is the intellect. The intellect is that which thinks, comprehends, reasons, judges, decides. It is meant to guide, direct the mind and its emotions, the body and its perceptions and actions.

Thus the mind and intellect together constitute the inner personality which defines the individuality. The physical body is only a vehicle which carries the personality from one experience to another.

Course of Action

Human actions emanate from either the mind or the intellect or a combination of both. The body executes action. But the body cannot act on its own. The actions of the body are driven by either:

- 1) The likes and dislikes, feelings, emotions, impulses of the mind.
or
- 2) Reason, discretion, judgement of the intellect.
or
- 3) A combination of the above two.

Here is an example of the above three possibilities arising from an action. Offer a sweet to a diabetic person who is fond of sweets. His mind wants to take it. His intellect decides against it as he is diabetic. If his intellect is more powerful than his mind he will refuse it. If otherwise, his mind is strong and intellect weak, he would accept it. In a third possibility, if the person is not diabetic, his mind and intellect may concur and consume it.

When the mind's feeling, emotion, like and dislike drives an action without the supervision, guidance of the intellect it is said to be *impulsive*. And when the intellect reasons, judges the impulse of the mind and decides on an action then the action is termed *discriminative*. Discriminative actions determine the sanity of a person. As impulsive actions displace discriminative actions one deteriorates towards insanity.

The Secret of Success

The whole world longs for success. People crave for something which belongs to the future. Little to do they realise that success is an effect of a cause. That success or failure is a result which is yet to come. And present action is the cause that brings about that result. The majority are more

concerned about the effect than the cause. Hardly anyone concentrates on action. The interest and attention is on the result of the action rather than the present action. Consequently, the action suffers. Success eludes such result oriented actions.

Whereas, those who concentrate on their present action, unmindful of its result, execute their actions perfectly. Success is bound to follow such actions. Success, therefore, can be defined as action itself at a future period of time. Today' action metamorphoses into tomorrow's success or failure. Just as a child becomes a youth later, and an old man towards the end of its life, so too, the actual structure of one's present action determines its result in the future.

Thus success is an effect brought about in the future by efficient action in the present.

Efficient Action

For efficient and productive action, the inner personality must entirely back the action being performed. (Any quotes about the absolute concentration). And the intellect plays a vital role in efficient action. Sans intellectual governance the mind functions through like and dislike, desire and anger and other emotions. The pressures of the mind destroy the intellect's capacity to think, reason and determine the course of action, resulting in loss of efficiency and productivity in the field of action. To control the vagaries of the mind and direct it to the optimum output in life requires a well-developed intellect.

The knowledge acquired through academic resources only qualifies one to work in the particular field of action that one is engaged in. But that does not help overcome the mind's distraction and interference with work. The work continues to be led more by feeling and emotion rather than reason and

judgement. The intellect hardly plays its part. The work turns out to be unproductive, even detrimental.

Hence the intellect must be constantly employed to circumvent the mind's negative influence upon your activity. This negative influence is overcome through continual intellectual application to three disciplines viz. *concentration*, *consistency* and *cooperation*. They are the rudiments of achievement in any field of activity. These words are no doubt used liberally among corporate educators but few really understand, much less put them into actual practice.

Concentration

Observation

The vast majority in the world today rarely concentrate on the present action. It is a malady that applies to people from different fields of activity.

- When a businessman goes to office he is thinking of the family at home. When he comes home from work he is thinking of the problems in the office. As a result, he claims to be 'stressed'.
- The sportsman playing a sport is constantly vacillating between thoughts of his past performances and future achievements. Consequently his concentration on the game suffers.
- The student preparing for the examination is unable to concentrate and cover the necessary portion in spite of adequate time. Reason being constant worries of past performances and terrible anxiety for the upcoming examination.

Findings

Thus the inability to concentrate on the present results in:

- i) **Loss of mental peace.**

Constant worries of the past and anxieties for the future lead to mental agitations and stress.

ii) Loss of efficiency in action.

To perform any action efficiently it is essential that the mind backs the action. If not the action suffers as evidenced by:

Case 1

A student attending a lecture will not hear the words of the lecturer if his mind is thinking of home.

Case 2

A sportsman will make mistakes if his mind is thinking of breaking records or winning titles.

iii) Loss of energy.

The constant wandering of the mind through past experiences, or expectations of the future result in loss of energy.

Observation

This fact is clearly brought out upon observing the child and the adult. The child always lives in the present. It has no worries of the past or anxieties for the future. It is ever bristling with energy. The adult has perhaps ten times the strength of the child. Yet by the end of the day is drained of energy. Even though the physical work done is minimal, the adult would complain of being exhausted. While the child having played all day is still ready for more!

Anatomy of Concentration

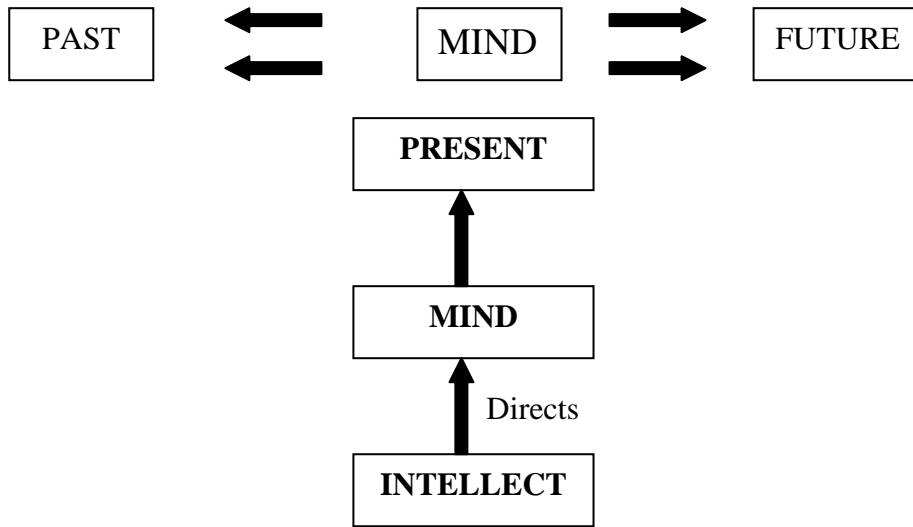
As stated before - the individual is composed of three equipments – the body, mind and intellect.. The mind is the seat of likes and dislikes, desires, impulses and emotions. The intellect is the faculty of reasoning, discriminating, judging and deciding. The mind is an extremely unstable entity. Left to itself it can never remain in the present. Thus it is that the

mind is constantly rambling into the past and the future and the individual finds himself unable to focus on the present. However, the intellect is superior equipment than the mind. It has the capacity to control the mind and hold it in the present.

Mechanism of Concentration

Definition: *When the intellect holds the mind in the present activity, not allowing it to slip into the past or the future, then you are concentrating*

(see illustration)



Concentration therefore is the ability of an individual to clip the past and the future and plunge into the present action. This does not imply that one ought not to learn from the past or plan for the future. These exercises are essential, but they

should not disturb the present performance of action. They may be done prior to the execution of action.

While functioning in the present, there is also a possibility of the mind getting involved, excited in the present activity. This unsupervised, uncontrolled involvement of the mind in the present action is unproductive. It leads to dissipation of energy and loss of efficiency, though one may claim to be in the present. One must therefore control the mind's excitement with the help of the intellect while engaging it in the present activity.

Through concentration, one can thus achieve:

- Reduction in mental agitation
- Efficiency in action
- Avoidance of loss of energy

Summary

\ *Concentration* is the technique exercised by the intellect to hold the mind on the present occupation without allowing it to slip into the past or future. The natural tendency of the mind is to worry over the past and become anxious of the future. You need a developed intellect to focus your mind on the present job. Concentration is measured by the extent to which your intellect can manage to hold your mind in the present.

Consistency

The second discipline, *consistency* is the craft of directing all actions towards the ideal, goal you have set to achieve. As you work towards the goal the mind slips into other attractions. The actions then do not follow the direction set to attain it. Herein, your intellect plays a significant role to keep all actions moving towards the goal. When your intellect channelises actions in the direction of the goal you practise

consistency. The practice of consistency lends power, energy, strength to action. A few examples illustrate this fact. When water flows in one direction there is power, strength. So also when wind blows in one direction or light is focussed to a point.

Cooperative Endeavour

The third discipline is *cooperation*. To achieve anything you need the cooperation of others. It is difficult, if not impossible, to achieve anything in life without the spirit of cooperative endeavour. Germany and Japan were devastated in the last world war. But they pooled their efforts cooperatively to rebuild their nations. Thus sprang two nations into power and strength, both economically and politically. America and Australia were virtually nothing a little over two hundred years ago. The early settlers had also to pool their resources in a spirit of cooperative endeavour to build a nation. They have now become powerful nations of the world. Thus the third essential requirement for corporate success is for the intellect to develop and maintain a true spirit of cooperation among one and all concerned.

An analysis of the Japanese social behaviour after the destruction of World War II lends credibility to this idea. During the war Japan suffered intense humanitarian loss and disability along with economic and infrastructural damage.

“World War II wiped out many of the gains Japan had made since 1868. About 40 percent of the nation's industrial plants and infrastructure were destroyed, and production reverted to levels of about fifteen years earlier.” (<http://www.country-data.com/cgi-bin/query/r-7176.html>, undated).

“As Japanese leaders signed the instruments of surrender aboard the U.S.S. Missouri in Tokyo Bay on Sept. 2, 1945, the task before MacArthur was enormous. Approximately 3

million Japanese had died, countless more were injured, and an estimated 9 million were homeless. Even before atomic bombs leveled Nagasaki and Hiroshima, Allied firebombing had reduced dozens of Japanese cities to rubble". (Time Magazine Nov 13, 2006 : 42 & 50)

Yet an analysis of the Economic Development of Japan post World War II shows a dramatic increase. Studies of Japanese social behaviour provide substantial evidence for initiative as the reason for such growth despite the devastation of the war.

"The people were shocked by the devastation and swung into action. As Japan's second period of economic development began, millions of former soldiers joined a well-disciplined and highly educated work force to rebuild Japan.....Japan's highly acclaimed postwar education system contributed strongly to the modernizing process. Japanese schools also encouraged discipline, another benefit in forming an effective work force." (<http://www.country-data.com/cgi-bin/query/r-7176.html>, undated)

"Government-industry cooperation, a strong work ethic, mastery of high technology, and a comparatively small defense allocation (1% of GDP) helped Japan advance with extraordinary rapidity to the rank of second most technologically powerful economy in the world after the US and the third-largest economy in the world after the US and China, measured on a purchasing power parity (PPP) basis." (<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ja.html>, undated)

Cooperation, discipline and work ethic are effects of an initiative driven society. Moreover Japanese social norms of the period promulgated initiative ideology or the willingness to set aside personal interests for the sake of the larger community:

Anthropologist Brian Moeran distinguishes Japanese attitudes toward individuality and individualism. Individuality, or the uniqueness of a person, is not only tolerated but often is admired if the person is seen as sincere, as acting from the heart. A work of art conveys strength as well as beauty from its "individuality." Individualism, however, is viewed negatively, for it is equated with selfishness, the opposite of the empathy that is so highly valued.Japan, like all other societies, has conflicts between individual and group. What is different from North American society is not that the Japanese have no sense of self but rather that the self is defined through its interaction with others and not merely through the force of individual personality.

According to Reischauer, "The cooperative, relativistic Japanese is not thought of as the bland product of a social conditioning that has worn off all individualistic corners, but rather as the product of firm inner self-control that has made him master of his . . . anti-social instincts Social conformity . . . is no sign of weakness but rather the proud, tempered product of inner strength." This mastery is achieved by overcoming hardship, through self-discipline, and through personal striving for a perfection that one knows is not possible but remains a worthy goal. In this view, both the self and society can be improved, and in fact are interrelated because the ideal of selfhood, toward which many Japanese strive, is one in which consideration of others is paramount. (<http://www.country-data.com/cgi-bin/query/r-7117.html>, undated)

A nation with 40% of its infrastructure destroyed, with minimal natural resources, becoming the third-largest economy in the world in a span of two decades is a clear indication of the effect of cooperation.

Conclusion

The above findings suggest that mere information acquired from external sources does not make an individual or organisation more productive. Success is an effect that is brought about by efficient action in the present. And efficient action is dependent on the three factors – concentration, consistency and cooperative endeavour. Concentration is the technique wherein the intellect prevents the mind from slipping in to the past and future and keeps it on the present action thus rendering the action efficient. Consistency is another intellectual exercise which directs all actions towards a set purpose. And cooperation is required for any organisation to develop as a whole. When an individual, organisation or corporation follows the above three disciplines it will command success and productivity, progress and peace in its field of endeavour.

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