



“Success Happens when Preparation meets Opportunity”

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The heading is a quote attributed to author and speaker Zig Ziglar. A similar quote, – “Luck is what happens when preparation meets opportunity”, is associated with the philosopher Seneca. Both quotes encapsulate what I want to talk about.

We are in the middle of the Soccer or Football (whatever word works best for you) World Cup. World Cups are times when we see elite athletes display their skills, as well as their readiness, mental grit, and ability to handle obstacles that crop up unexpectedly, as they always do. They are a time when success is on display and the armchair critics get to propose their views as to what makes up success and what is needed to produce success. There is no shortage of definitions of success, however in this article I want to use the above quote, specifically because I want to talk about preparation for success, and the opportunity to display success. While the analogy I use is that of sports, it applies in all fields.

Let me start with preparation.

When you are playing with the best, be it in sports, in business, in the arts, or in any other field, you have to prepare. What are some aspects to consider in preparing to win.

- I seem to be doing a lot of quoting others in this article, so let me now paraphrase what Stephen Covey said. “Begin with the end in mind”. Start your preparation with knowing what you want the end result to be. This enables you to set a goal and follow the recognised actions for achieving goals. Know where you want to end up. If it is to win the 100 metres then know that is the end goal. If it is to capture a certain percentage of the market share in your industry, then know what that is. Don’t make the end vague. Be very specific about what the end needs to look like. Be able to describe it and picture it in detail.
- Find out who the masters (past and present) are and research and study how they achieved their success. To reach your goal you will need to break it down into smaller actions that

have to be taken. You need to know what these smaller actions are. What skills do you need to build? What experience and how much experience do you need? One of the ways to become successful is to study what other people have done to be successful. As they say, success leaves clues.

- Practice a lot. And then some more. Practice so much that you cannot get it wrong. If you want to win, then practice more than anyone else. Practice with the best. If you want to win in sports or any other field, you cannot go into a tournament only having played with second tier teams.
- Know your weaknesses and fix them. Your competition will be studying you. In business and in sports, if you have a weakness, you can bet your opposition will focus on that and use that to try and beat you.
- In turn, you want to study the competition. Know their strengths and weaknesses. Formulating your game plan means knowing what to expect on the playing field. And you cannot know what to expect unless you have a very good idea of how your competitors play. You also need to know what the playing field is like.
- In addition to developing skills, you need to train your mind. And this goes for business too. Life is always full of the unexpected: the ref may be unfair, someone may get injured, a spectator may cause a disruption, the audience may hate you, whatever it is, you can't be sidetracked by it. You cannot let it disrupt your concentration and your motivation. Your focus needs to be there, and if it is disrupted you need to get back on focus quickly.
- Have an edge and hone it. When the Springboks won the Rugby World Cup in 2019 they were the only team to have an eye-hand coordination specialist who had them engage in groundbreaking visual-motor training. If you want to win, then you need to do more. And you want to find an edge. That something extra that is relevant and no one else has thought about.
- Have a strategy for game day and also have back-up strategies. If for some reason you cannot follow plan A, you don't want to run around like a headless chicken, you want to be able to execute plan B flawlessly.

And then what about opportunity.

Well opportunity is also something that you can influence to some extent. And I will talk about just two ways to increase opportunities.

- Get out there. It is no good sitting at home and doing nothing, or not making the effort to contact people and go places. You will get more opportunities if you put yourself out there more and try many things.
- Have a mindset that is focused on opportunities. In the Great Depression of the late 1920's and 1930's, some people began creating fortunes because they saw the problems around

them and found ways to innovate. I am not suggesting that you take advantage of other people's misery, but instead of thinking about everything that might be going wrong, consider what people need to take away their misery and offer ways to fix it. There are always opportunities around you, no matter what is happening in the world. You need to be open to seeing them.

If nothing is happening in your life, or success seems to be eluding you, then you need to think about what you would like to happen in your life. Once you know what you want you need to plan on how you can prepare yourself, and then how you can create opportunities, so you are ready to make the most of them when they come along. You also need some patience and some determination, because life is such, that most great opportunities come along when we typically are not expecting them. To some extent preparation comes first. If the opportunity comes along and you are not prepared you probably won't succeed. If you know what you want and prepare well, then when you get a shot at goal you can take the shot and score.