
Work 3 x Less, Perform 3 x Better



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One thing I know all too well from my time in extreme sports .

Mother Nature is a fickle mistress and she doesn't always behave as we would like.

For many, this reliance on something that is fundamentally out of their control is the single, biggest problem they have with their sport.

For others it's an opportunity.

Just because the wind isn't blowing, the waves aren't rolling in or the powders not perfect doesn't mean that you can't be improving. In fact these days I now find these days the most valuable days I have in terms of actually progressing.

Let me explain using kiting as an example...

For years now I've used simulation as a way of improving my kiting on days of no wind. I'd practice something over and over again either in my head or actually step through it until I had it perfectly. I'd combine this with endlessly scrutinising (*in minute detail*) You Tube video's of whatever it was I was trying to learn. Getting it absolutely clear in my head, in an effort to be absolutely prepared once I got on the water, so I'd be able to blast that next trick.

Unfortunately...this just didn't work.

I would run through the move time and again and again and again. When I was out on the water I would re run it just before I attempted it, paying really close attention to what I was doing, often recording it at the same time for later analysis.

The result...failure, frustration and a growing sense that I was becoming progressively more useless every day,

"didn't I used to be good at this...?"

One day I was watching the Tim Ferriss Experiment. For those of you who haven't seen it, this is a show where Tim sets himself a ludicrously difficult skill to learn in an amazingly short space of time to fulfill some challenge at the end of the show, ie learn to play the drums and appear on stage with Foreigner at a live gig just a few days later.

In 2 of the episodes he learns a sport, one, surfing with Laird Hamilton, the other, golf with Terry Rowles. What struck me in both of these episodes were the coaches final words just before he set off on his final challenge...

Terry said, "(What we have been doing is) a very organized way of practicing to **allow things to happen naturally**. So I need you to understand what it is you have to do, but when you actually play it's just you, hitting a golf ball and there's the target."

Laird was even more flippant, not even setting a challenge, simply saying..."enjoy it."

That was it, nothing profound, no life changing, amazing advice...or so I thought at the time.

And then I started to reflect.

It slowly dawned on me that this was actually insanely good advise given what we know about the peak performance state.



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The flow state, as it is called, is that state you sometimes go into where every action is effortless, where one movement flows perfectly into the next, where time dilates and we feel godlike, totally caught up in the moment. It is also the ultimate human performance state. In a flow state we are performing up to 300 % better than in our normal state of existence.

Now the interesting thing about this state is that it is an intensely focussed but intensely relaxed state.

I looked back on my efforts trying to push my kiting and realized I had been anything but relaxed, In fact I'd been so stressed trying to get all the parts into place, in perfect order and timing, whilst recording the damn thing, that I had been so wound up it was impossible to get anywhere near a flow state.

This is a very common problem. We are taught from birth, that if we just try hard enough we'll make it, that the secret to success is hard work, put in the hours and keep banging our head against that wall until we start to make progress.

What if the real secret is to follow Lairds advise? Just enjoy it. Or as Obi Wan put it..."Let go."

When we are having fun we relax, we focus and we live in the now, all pre requisites for accessing the flow state.

Does this mean that all that study and practice was for nothing?

Absolutely not

As Don Draper of madmen (fictional character maybe, but flow hacking expert for sure!) said when asked how he comes up with such amazing advertising campaigns, he replied....

"I think about it intensely then I forget about it."

The period of simulation, of intense study, of practice, forms what we call the struggle phase.

*"I think about
it intensely
then I forget
about it."*





This is the time when we are training our body in the bio mechanics of the skill and laying down the neural pathways that will enable us to perform effortlessly.

However, once we get out there we have to forget about all this, to hand over to instinct and trust that the struggle has given our subconscious what it needs and that it now knows what to do. This allows us to enter into a flow state which is what causes these exponential leaps in performance.

I have since seen this time and time again in my own training and in training others.

When teaching wakeboarding the part EVERYONE struggles with is actually getting out of the water.

When the boat starts to move and pull you along, the natural instinct is to pull back and try to heave yourself out of the water, when actually, what you need to do, is allow the boat to pull you effortlessly out of the water.

Trying to transmit this concept at times can be nigh on impossible, so having given a person all the instruction they need including detailed explanations, video examples and dry runs on land. Just before the boat starts to move we tell them to forget it all, plaster an idiot grin on their face and think about dolphins or baby chickens or something equally warm and fuzzy that inspires them to relax.

The Result:

Since using this technique we have a 100% success record at getting people up on their first session. Before hand we we're lucky if we got 50%.

So watch all the video's on You Tube, endlessly practice the move you are trying on land, with or without a kite, visualize it countless times in your head...but once your actually out there, forget about it all, plaster that idiot grin on your face, let go and remember the other thing Laird said...

"the best one out there is the one having the most fun."

You'll be amazed at the results.



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