



# CAMERON-BROOKS, INC.

## Professional Recruiters

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### **Roger's Tip of the Month**

#### **“Perfect Practice Makes Perfect”**

I hear people say that practice makes perfect. I don't agree with this. Only PERFECT practice makes perfect. Many people think just doing something over and over again (practice) will help them perfect a skill. But, just putting in the hours won't do, especially if you are doing things the wrong way. All of your effort and consistent hard work is worthless unless you practice doing things correctly.

Take interviewing for example. Candidates write out their answers to questions and practice saying these answers over and over again with little thought of whether what they are saying makes any sense to the listener. They practice communication in a vacuum. Eighty percent of your success in answering interview questions comes from the content of your answer (and the rest from your delivery). You could practice the best delivery in interviewing history, but if your content is lousy, your interview will be lousy. You cannot interview successfully without perfect practice. Consider your audience, think about your past, develop compelling content, and then practice your delivery. With great content, you will deliver great answers and get great results.

In another example, I see talented business leaders who are below average public speakers. To improve, they just continue to give poor speeches hoping that repetition would help them improve. Of course, they never get better because with each speech, they simply improve poor technique. When asked why they don't invest the time to get better, they invariably answer that they don't have time to improve. I argue that they are wasting more time because they are not getting any more efficient at preparing and giving great talks.

If you want to improve your speaking skills, find people who are good at it and learn from them. Observe them, study them, analyze what makes them good at it. Break it down into its fundamentals. Then go out and do the same thing. Now it is time for perfect practice. Once you learn what you should be doing, practice it right away. Check yourself repeatedly and force yourself to do it right. Don't expect immediate results (as a matter of fact, you may get worse at it in the short-term). By practicing good techniques, you will improve your abilities. By continuing to make the same mistakes over and over again, you will never improve.

I see the same thing with leaders who are promoted into positions where they need to manage many details. Instead of studying the way other leaders manage details, they just flounder hoping time and repetition will improve their skills. As you grow in a company, weak skills are like staves in a barrel. The water will never rise higher than the lowest stave. Perfect practice means identifying the fundamentals of time management and prioritization and forcing yourself to practice daily to get better.

Over the last three decades, I have worked with many strong officers who had introverted personalities. When I questioned how they lead others with such sedate personalities, they explained that when the going got tough, they could always step out of their shell and motivate people. I always wondered why they just didn't practice these skills so they could always communicate and influence people around them (i.e., don't wait for emergencies to step up to the plate). I mean, if you can motivate people when you really need to, why not practice to make it a daily habit? I have never met a person who could afford sloppy communication in their everyday life and do it the right way when it counts. After all, bad practice makes bad habits.

We have all seen others around us who are great at things that we are not. Make these people your role models and learn fundamentals from them that you can make a part of your own arsenal. There is an amazing amount of talent around us. Emulate and study talented leaders, find out the fundamentals that make people successful, and then work like crazy to incorporate these success traits into your daily practice. Remember, perfect practice makes perfect.

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