

**"It's only words...unless they're true."
»David Mamets**

The Masters



When I first became aware of the MasterClass website that allows you (for a fee) to take video-based classes from various well-known “masters” of their crafts, I became intrigued.

Over the past two years, however, I felt that I did not have time for it. If anything, I am busier now than ever.

I took that as a sign that I had to start.

I chose to pay the annual fee for access to the entire MasterClass catalog.

Figuring I may get bored with one course at a time, I jumped into three.

One of the neat things about taking disparate courses simultaneously is finding common threads in each that have reinforced a few of my bedrock beliefs on achieving success.

Special Delivery



My family had an excursion recently to a Houston-area post office to apply for new passports.

We arrived early for our appointment and spent 30 minutes standing around a post office lobby. That makes for quite the educational family field trip.

There was a woman in the lobby who appeared to be preparing a package while also (loudly) providing commentary on life, business, religion, politics, the weather, and (I believe) James Harden.

Judging the expressions of the postal staff, I gathered this was not her maiden performance.

Everything around the place showed wear.

I found myself trying to find anything...from a chair to a mail bin to a

The initial courses I completed were “Steve Martin Teaches Comedy”, and “David Mamet Teaches Dramatic Writing”.

I am still working through “Gordon Ramsay Teaches Cooking”.

For the record, he exceeds Mamet in the use of profanity.

Well, Ramsay uses it more often. Mamet uses it to better effect.

As diverse the fields these folks have mastered, there are common themes that each return to in the telling of their stories and the teaching of their classes.

One clear message is that talent is not so much something you are born with as it is something you develop through work.

Nothing can take the place of putting in the kind of conscientious effort that most will not in order to succeed.

We only truly learn through doing.

We try, we fail, we learn, we improve, we try again.

Successful people can tell you their personal stories as well as how and why they do the things they do.

However, we each have our own journeys to take. We have our own mistakes to make and lessons to learn. The personal lessons we work through will be as unique as we are.

It is also telling that most masters of their crafts tend to exhibit a common humility.

section of tile to a countertop that didn't look beaten up. I was unsuccessful.

From the water stained ceiling to the mostly-missing floor molding, the depressing ambience was consistent.

By the time a beat up door opened a few feet from us and our names were called, we were ready to complete the dismal visit that environment had set up for us to that point.

Then, Miss Claudia happened.

The smiling lady with the slight Cajun accent stepped out and declared, “Well, hello Martin family! Let's see what we can do about getting you all some new passports. Are y'all having a great day today?”

The funny thing was that up until 30 seconds before the answer was, “No, not really”.

But you couldn't help but answer, “Uh...yes, mam.”

When she learned we needed pictures while there, she exclaimed, “Yes, sir! I get to take some Glamour Shots today! I'm gonna make y'all look goood!”

As we chuckled through our conversations, she noticed my wife's Louisiana birth certificate.

Her father was from Eunice, Louisiana, and sure enough, we were soon talking at length about Cajun cooking.

Before long, customers in other lines began chatting back and forth. Even a

Others see their finished works and conclude they are simply gifted.

They, however, know the amount of work that goes into making things look easy or natural.

Beyond the hard work, one of the most important things most accomplished people “master” is resilience.

Developing your talents helps. Intelligence doesn't hurt.

Yet, talent and intelligence without resilience will not survive long enough to master anything but excuse making.

How much resilience can you master?

few previously stoic postal workers smiled and joined in.

We somehow learned that the daughter of a woman in line attends the university my son will be attending this fall. Huh?

My wife exchanged information on vacation spots and favorite restaurants with Claudia before leaving.

We left waving at employees and all but hugging Claudia over the counter. It was surreal.

Whether in a cutting-edge branch or one more akin to a museum, one great person can make all the difference in the world in a customer's experience.

Are you going to be that person today?

"There is little success where there is little laughter."

»Andrew Carnegie