

## How to do anything

by Paul Snyders Nov 08

First of all, let me reassure the skeptics that I really do mean my title. Secondly, allow me to define my terms. When I say 'how', I mean that I will discuss an approach to allow your effort, to bring you to your goal. When I say 'do', I mean the execution of the part of the labour, that a single (creator) can accomplish.

There is simply no way to surely compel others to love or appreciate or dedicate themselves-to you or your work - so the other part of 'How to do anything', is the silent 'you' - that is, the individual - who is to do the work.

I can sum-up my approach very quickly. I considered not doing-it, to force you, the poor reader, to read more before you got to the key - because my central point is one that will feel unwelcome to many, who I would love to share this knowledge with.

But here is where practical experience trumps ideal conception. *I just happen to know for a fact, that anyone who thinks the following is insulting or irrelevant, is lacking in the level of mature will required, to accomplish any difficult task.*

Here's the summary, so all you posers can sign-off now and go back to complaining:

The way to accomplish any difficult goal, is to get yourself out of the way of the work.

Still with me? Cool, then allow-me to explain what I mean from a few different directions, so you can see if you can find something useful in here.

First of all - are you willing to be really honest with yourself? This is necessary, not optional. It applies in several different ways, but they all come down to this - every lie that you need to tell yourself to feel better, is a blind-spot in your clear perception of the world.

Pride is even worse. Every thing that you think is marvellous about yourself, is an area of development that you are almost certainly paying too little attention-to, or have made grossly out of balance with your other skills and capabilities.

No, you cannot just be 'an ideas guy' and get paid. Ideas truly are (comparatively) easy

- high-quality execution is what separates the real creative people from those who talk endlessly, or simply dream (*could-a been, contenders*).

So there is the first principle that must always be returned-to PRACTICALITY!

I know that many people look at art-history and see little evidence of practicality in the great masters' lives. They had many scandals and affairs and corruptions and sell-outs - but they also had one thing in common - which is the only reason you've ever heard of them - they executed! They left evidence of excellent work, completed.

That's what I mean by practical. That is also what is meant by the 'practise' of a skill, discipline or trade. Any time you are wondering how to advance the accomplishment of your goals, the answer is always - *do some more work*.

Some people approach a field of creative work, looking for inducements that they know are offered to experienced people in that field. This is a form of ignorance - one of those lies you tell yourself to feel better.

Yes - there are people in any market who buy things - so there is a 'draw' to pull out work from the pool of people who can do it. But no, no one knows about you, or wants your work in advance, until you have established enough of a reputation that *they have to induce-you, because you are already turning work away*.

So - get over the idea of waiting around for someone to make it worth your while, *first*. They just wont. If you need someone else to reward or threaten-you, in order to accomplish work, get philosophically adjusted for your day-job. *Be happy there, instead of unhappy that you aren't doing something that your own attitude is standing in the way-of*.

There is only one way to be unstoppable. That is to not need anything.

Okay, that was slightly simplistic, but only slightly. I'll return, to clarify.

But first, here's the sequence of development for an original creator:

- 1) You are the only one who has your special idea. You are the only one who believes in it - and the only one who can make it become more than a fleeting notion.
- 2) You have invested a whole ton of effort into making yourself into the sort of instrument that can excellently accomplish a realization of your idea. Now you can execute the concept-work, and some other people can finally look at it and understand

what you mean it to be, sort-of. You can expect much cynicism about it's viability at this stage, even (especially?) from those very close to you.

3) You (still without any external reward whatsoever, mind-you) finally execute your spectacular marvellous best idea ever. Spending tons of money, effort and hope - all with a half-expectation that - *this'll be the one that really 'hits'*.

4) The world sighs and yawns. Now you have a choice, give-up, and let your effort to turn yourself into an excellent instrument simply inform your enjoyment of life and art (a reasonable and honourable and honest thing to do). Or, study your work again - and study the world again. Standing back from yourself is very hard - especially when you have invested much hope and sweat on a particular artefact or project.

5) Having learned an (almost invariably humiliating) lesson about what a crappy instrument you were, after-all. You set out to re-invigorate your perceptions with some challenging study to confront your revealed weakness, and re-build your technique using massive amounts of (*you guessed-it*) work.

6) As you bash yourself into shape for the next project, an idea that is at least a thousand times better than the failed one you were so heartbroken-about occurs to you. You drop the rehash-job (which was only conceived to save your pride, anyway) and get to work on the next - *really best idea ever*.

7) Return to step one. Repeat - *for years on end*.

If you are cool with that, then eventually, you will pull outside of this cycle and start to build clients, markets and fans. Keep it up long-enough and you may be one of the (incredibly few) lucky ones, who always have to turn down work.

But you really must be prepared to work that hard. I'll bet it is almost exactly what most of your favourites in the field did, if you examine their early lives closely-enough. You can't have comfortable and cushy and well-paid and safe - and also go out scouting where no one has been yet. But when the heartbreak feels bad, you must remember -

It's never about the project you just did. The artefact is not the aim here. You are the lead that is being turned into gold, not the canvas or stone or words or music.

Every single thing that doesn't work the way you hoped, is a rich learning-opportunity. Don't waste any time whining about how much your experience was unlike your expectations. The whole point is that you don't yet know - so be open to what you

don't know, not angry about it - lessons come much faster (and less painfully) to those who are sensible-enough to be grateful for them.

Painful levels of honesty are really called-for here, but I do not recommend masochistic self-criticism (reverse narcissism). The trick is to be open to the idea that you might have been wrong, even about things you thought were right. If you allow yourself to doubt, compassionately, you will also find yourself judging other work in the world around you in more compassionate terms. Looking for the aims, and how well they were realized, rather than just whether it met your preference.

Which brings me to the biggest common debilitating lie we tell ourselves nowadays - that our personal preferences and pride are incredibly important.

I can quickly prove that they simply are not - *they are all completely 100% subjective.*

No one else has a window into the complex of interpretations and explanations inside your head. You can never expect anyone else, whether it's your spouse or your audience, to be acting-on any clues that weren't very obvious, in the physical world. Even then, you'd be amazed how much interpretation varies in the simplest matters.

What this means is that you need to bust-down all of your preferences, call all of your bluffs, confront all of your weak-points. Scare, challenge, frustrate and thrill yourself.

If you want safe, well - remember what I said above - be happy in your day-job. There is no art in your personal preference - even if you have confused that advertising-trained slavering infant (who we all possess, almost like a physical organ) with your essential self - take my word for it - that *gimme, praise-me, love-me, now now now!* thing, is exactly the you, that I was saying had to get out of the way of your work.

What you like is irrelevant - *it's what you can see, that is interesting to others.* But if you are sure that your preferences should always be met, you are filtering-out too much of the world to be seeing anything but what you know already. Comfortable is dead.

Again, I'm not recommending pyrrhic self-destructive nonsense, or Van Gogh obsessiveness, I'm just saying that no one person is big enough to see helpfully, unless they are constantly looking for more than what they've seen already. It's not a matter of correctly rendering a group of perfect insights or aesthetics or data-points - it is a dynamic of perception and re-expression. Like a shark, it has to move to live.

Now something about needs - and something about 'cool' in the bargain.

Any market or audience (and the gallery and editorial guardians thereof) have needs.

Each of us as individuals, have needs. The easiest way to appear cool to other individuals, is to appear-to only have met-needs (no one falsely boasts that they are poor and live in their parent's basement, when they are trying to get laid).

But the easiest way to actually be cool, is to actually have met-needs. This doesn't mean wait until you are rich, and then you'll be happy. It means, if you want to be happy, get happy with the idea of not being rich. The more things you can get happy with not-needing, the more of a surplus of energy you have left over for your projects.

Even helping other people is best done, when you are looking-after yourself in such a way that you feel balanced, sustainable, positive. If you can want what you have, you are completely incorruptible.

Please don't think that I'm suggesting that any of this is easy, but also don't think that there isn't joy involved. The fact is that the more you get over your initial (ignorant) preferences, and become a rich and quiet and wide-open eye and ear to the world, the richer your life becomes - in every single living moment of it.

This is not a slam on people who want to dedicate their lives to money, but it is the thing that you really can expect to earn, for years of dedication - even if your ideas are fifty years ahead of their audience or more. *See Bucky Fuller or old (1600s) Francis Bacon.*

Then there is the experience of something working - something happening - something coming out of your pen, or your brush, or your instrument - and into the world. Something new that wasn't there before you - yes, tiny measly you, could be bothered to drag-it out of the ether and give it substance.

I'm not a religious man, but I really do believe in gratitude. Not as some idealized conception, but because I've had it proven-to stubborn, grumpy, pig-headed dumb-me, at least a hundred times. If you are working-on something worthwhile, you will be given lovely gifts of coincidence and inspiration - right up until the moment that you start trying to question-them, analyse-them, or even examine-them too closely.

Stay in the groove, let the universe help you. Thank it nicely. Need nothing. There you go. Now I have told you how to do anything.

Now - Go, Do It!