

Elliott Masie's

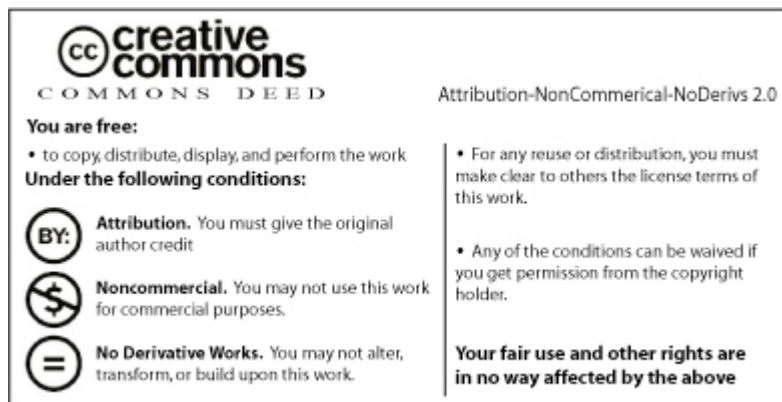
# LEARNING 2009

## Malcolm Gladwell *Outliers*

Learning 2009 Keynote – Ten Thousand Hours Toward Expertise

November 9th, 2009

Transcription of Video Segment Available at:  
<http://www.learning2010.com/gladwell>



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**Learning 2010 will be held from October 24-27 in Orlando, Florida.**

**Elliott Masie:** What do you think about duration and experience, and hours spent, because we spend a lot of time here talking about speed to competency and shortcuts to competency. What's your take on that?

**Malcolm Gladwell:** Well, we know from the psychological literature - and this is something I talk about in *Outliers* - we know this thing called the 10,000 hour rule, which is that, in a wide number of different cognitively complex disciplines, world-class expertise cannot be attained without at least 10,000 hours of deliberate practice. So chess playing, writing a great piece of classical music, being a surgeon...I can list them all. And that's ten years roughly; four hours a day for ten years.

What's interesting about that is just how consistent it is from field to field. So where some kind of real mastery is necessary for greatness in a field, it seems to be [that] we get that number again and again. And that's a really interesting number. One [reason it's interesting] is because it's longer: we all would have said it takes some degree of training to be good. I think intuitively we would have thought the number was lower than 10,000 hours. But it also simultaneously opens the door to all kinds of really, really interesting interventions by the likes of all you in this room, which is to say, "Oh, okay, when someone is ramping up that curve and hasn't gotten to 10,000 hours yet, they need help," right? "Okay, what are the interesting ways in which we can give them tools, which make them the equivalent of an expert, even before they reach expertise?" That, to me, is trick number one.

Trick number two is, "Can I speed that necessarily elongated process up through better feedback?" Before, I was talking about how it's really interesting to me to see the beginnings of exceptions to the 10,000 hour rule in sports. So you are beginning to see people in cognitively complex sports, like golf or tennis, who are getting there in shorter time than 10,000 hours, and that's because we've gotten really, really good at enriching the learning experience at a young age so that people can get more out of an hour of practice than they would have gotten 20 years ago.

**Elliott Masie:** Ironically, I heard that from a friend of mine who is a dealer in Vegas on the poker tables. [He said] that folks who are coming there, who have played intensive computer games of that [poker] play more hands per hour, and so it has been a compression of experience, iterated by how many hands you need versus how many hours.

**Malcolm Gladwell:** It's funny because I am a runner and I always remember, as a kid, reading about Roger Bannister, the man who broke the four-minute mile while he was in medical school at Oxford, right? And he would train on his lunch hour. [He had] an hour off for lunch and he would train. What's hilarious about that, of course, is that, these days, if you want to be a world-class runner, you can't have a job. I mean, your job is that [to run], and you train. You spend three, four hours a day in various aspects of preparing your body for it, but our notion of the preparation necessary for these kinds of tasks has just increased so dramatically. It's almost comical to read about how little Roger Bannister trained, and this was only 50 years ago.

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