
X-FACTOR

“Destiny is not a matter of chance, it is a matter of choice; it is not a thing to be waited for, it is a thing to be achieved.”

~ **William Jennings Bryan**

“There are 86,400 seconds in a day. It’s up to you to decide what to do with them.”

~ **Jim Valvano**

“Success isn’t the same as talent. The world is full of incredibly talented people who never succeed at anything.”

~ **Tim Grover**

“The separation is in the preparation.”

~ **Russell Wilson**

“The winner ain’t the one with the fastest car. It’s the one who refuses to lose.”

~ **Dale Earnhardt, Jr.**

What takes us from good to great? What gives us an edge over the competition? How do we reach our potential? What is the winning margin that the best seem to have? That “X-factor” can vary among different athletes but one thing remains constant and that is that the best of the best have “it”. They are able to put it all together and find whatever is needed in any given situation.

In his book *Talent is Never Enough*, John C. Maxwell says, “People who neglect to make the right choices to release and maximize their talent

continually underperform. Their talent allows them to stand out, but their wrong choices make them sit down. Their friends, families, coaches, and bosses see their giftedness, but they wonder why they so often come up short of expectations. Their talent gives them the opportunity, but their wrong choices shut the door. Talent is a given, but you must earn success.”¹

Talent is important to success, but it is not the only part of being successful. Champions know how to call upon their gifts when they are needed, in the manner that they are needed. Champions know that in one game, they might need to use a certain skill but in another situation their team will need more of another skill.

Having an X-factor means that we have something that sets us apart. We have something that positively differentiates us from others. This might not matter when our talent or skills are far superior, but it is crucial for us to tap into something else when talent is equal. Do we work harder, smarter, or more efficient? Do we plan better? Do we use strategy better? Do we use our skills in a different way? Do we stay focused longer? Do we maintain our poise? All of these things can set us apart.

When a person goes into an interview, sporting contest, or business meeting, their confidence can be a difference maker. But why does a person have confidence? It could be that they know something that others don't. They might have prepared differently. They might have taken care of their body in a healthy way with their nutrition or their

strength training.

Navy Seals feel that they can conquer and overcome any situation because they have trained better than anyone else. They are prepared. It is often said that a person doesn't rise to the challenge, but they sink to the level of their training. Well, for Navy Seals, their training is intense and very comprehensive. The level of their training is higher and they know that they will be successful.

Tim Grover trained Michael Jordan, among many others, and he wrote the best-selling book *Relentless: From Good to Great to Unstoppable*. In the book, he mentions future Hall of Fame basketball player Dwayne Wade as a great example of possessing "it" or the "X-factor".

"Dwyane Wade is the perfect example of receiving nothing but talent, and taking it to the top", says Grover. "From a small high school in Chicago not known for its great basketball program, he was barely recruited by any colleges and ended up at Marquette. He didn't even play his freshman year because of academic reasons. But he knew what it was going to take if he had any chance of making it to the pros, and he fought his way back."

"In 2003 he was drafted by the Miami Heat, the fifth pick after LeBron James, Darko Milicic, Carmelo Anthony, and Chris Bosh. That's right, of the Big Three, Dwyane Wade was the last one drafted. He arrived in Miami without billboards, mega-million dollar shoe deals, or a crown. He just showed up and played. Three years later, he had his first championship ring. It would be years before anyone drafted ahead of him would do the same."

“You cannot understand what it means to be relentless until you have struggled to possess something that’s just out of your reach. Over and over, as soon as you touch it, it moves farther away. But something inside you— that killer instinct— makes you keep going, reaching, until you finally grab it and fight with all your might to keep holding on. Anyone can take what’s sitting right in front of him. Only when you’re truly relentless can you understand the determination to keep pursuing a target that never stops moving.”

On July 27, 2017, Jeff Bezos became the first person to ever have a net worth of \$90 billion. His company, Amazon, seems to turn everything it touches into gold. There are many things that Amazon has done through the years to make themselves the gold standard for businesses. One thing in particular stands out and that is Amazon’s ability to make things happen and find ways to get things done. John Rossman was a former Amazon executive. He tells of one such time in his book, *The Amazon Way*.

“One year, we ordered four thousand pink iPods from Apple for Christmas”, said Rossman. “In mid-November, an Apple rep contacted us to say, ‘There’s a problem – we can’t make the Christmas delivery. They’re transitioning from a disk drive to a hard-drive memory in the iPods, and they don’t want to make any more using the old technology. Once we get the new ones made, we’ll get you your four thousand. But it won’t be in time for the holiday.’ Other retailers would have simply

apologized to their customers for the failure to deliver a product on time. That wasn't going to fly at Amazon.com."

"We were not the kind of company that ruined people's Christmases because of a lack of availability – not under any circumstances. So we went out and bought four thousand pink iPods at retail and had them all shipped to our Union Street office. Then we hand-sorted them, repacked them, and shipped them to the warehouse to be packaged and sent to our customers. It killed our margins on those iPods, but it enabled us to keep our promise to our customers." ³

We can make excuses, or we can have success, but we can't have both. True champions find a way to get done what they need to get done. What is in the middle of all excuses? "U". When we make excuses, for why something can't be done, we essentially give up on ourselves. We make it easy for others (or life) to defeat us. Champions do whatever is needed without excuses or explanations.

Amazon was willing to take a loss on an item to maintain its' high-quality and reputation. What will we do to stand out from the crowd? How will we position ourselves to be different? Why will we be the person that our coach, supervisor, boss, or friends look to with confidence? Our talent and skills will only take us so far. What is our X-factor? How will we position ourselves to maximize our potential?