

## **Pathways and Probabilities**

Why is it that every consistent high performer in the world has a structured routine that they follow?

There are exceptions, but they are extremely rare and usually temporary. Consistent high performance, lasting for long periods of time, typically demands a structured routine. But why?

We can break it down to basic principles. Every person – no matter their background, talents, or area of pursuit – has a limited amount of time and energy, and has to allocate that energy in an optimal way.

Economics has been described as a study of the allocation of scarce resources, with a majority of decisions driven by incentives.

High performance is basically the same. The scarce resources being allocated are time and energy. The incentives are the positive psychological feedback loops created by achieving goals.

Scarce resources have to be used intelligently, and incentives have to align. If a goal is realistically achievable, most of the failures in doing so can be traced back to problems in one of these areas – bad resource allocation or mismatched incentives.

High performance in competitive arenas, where humans compete against other humans, means that opponents set a high bar.

And the higher the bar for success, the fewer pathways there are to success. A common, mediocre result can be achieved in lots of different ways. A rare, excellent result can only be achieved in relatively few ways (in comparison to the mediocre one).

Imagine rolling six dice at a time, counting the dots that land face up.

There are a great many random combinations when rolling six dice that could result in, say, the number 19.

You can randomly “arrive” at the random outcome of 19 by lots of different random dice combinations, or pathways.

In contrast, there is only ONE way to arrive at the outcome of 36. All six dice have to land with the six facing up.

Out of all the different combinations that represent how six randomly rolled dice can land, that is just one of them.

The probability of rolling 36 at random is thus much, much lower than rolling a 19. There is only one way to roll a 36. There are lots of ways to roll a 19.

Now imagine rolling 50 dice at once. What are the odds of getting a perfect 300?

Some might think that, because the minimum you can roll with 50 dice is 50 (all ones) and the maximum is 300 (all sixes), the odds of rolling a 300 would simply be one out of 250 – like the odds of drawing a specific ping pong ball from a canister of 250 in a random drawing.

But that's not how it works. The odds of rolling a perfect 300 are actually much, much lower than one out of 250 –effectively the odds are zero. That is because there is basically only one way to do it – rolling fifty separate sixes.

Rolling fifty sixes at once is probabilistically no different than rolling a six fifty times in a row.

So you take the odds of rolling the first a six... a shade under seventeen percent... and then multiply that to the 50th power, in order to represent the probability of randomly rolling a six fifty times in a row (or fifty sixes all in one batch).

You'd have better odds of being struck by falling satellite debris.

The point is that some outcomes have more pathways than others. Consider the modest goal of, say, making \$30,000 a year. There are an almost infinite number of ways to do this.

Contrast that with a goal of making, say, \$3 million a year. There are many ways to do that too -- but the workable pathways are far, far, fewer.

The use of structured routine is one of those things that gives you higher likelihood of finding that relatively rare path to success. It puts you on the track of rare pathways, that increases the odds of getting where you want to go.

That is because routine enhances things like efficiency and consistency and muscle memory, giving your brain a set of beneficial algorithms to rely on at low cost, which in turn frees up energy to focus on the hard stuff, the dynamic stuff in the moment.

Also, back to those fifty dice – imagine that there was a way to get that 300 result not by chance, but through deliberate design.

Imagine if, instead of seeking that perfect 300 through randomness, you used evolution... applying incremental focus in search of compound gains.

Human beings seeking compound skill growth don't have to rely on randomness. They can use natural selection combined with observation and trial and error.

Memory allows us to gain benefit from a positive result, and then to apply knowledge and willpower in trying again – and adding to that initial result.

So imagine if, instead of getting random results, with a lot of practice and focus on dice throwing you could learn to throw a six at will, with a high degree of consistency.

Then, with patience and concentration, you throw your first six. Then another... then another... then another... and a chain is created that, to the outside world, looks like luck or an incredible

streak of good fortune. But really it was focused evolution via SEG (strategic evolutionary growth).

Most people don't understand the power of personal evolution, or the compound gains of incremental performance pickup at the margins.

That is why, when someone is truly extraordinary at something, the common assumption is that this person benefited from extreme lucks, freak of nature genetics, or some mystical power akin to The Force from Star Wars.

Again, Mushin – which is enabled by structured routine – is at the heart of this.