



## Practice And Professionalism: A Causal Relationship

by Esther Muller and Michael Williams, Ph.D.



The 4<sup>th</sup> century philosopher Socrates wrote, “We are what we repeatedly do.” In short, to “do” is to “be or become.” Our thoughts, emotions, and behaviors enable our selfness. With repetition, these characteristics of self become habits; hence, we become ourselves. Over time, people become desensitized; even ignore environmental stimuli suggesting that their engagements in the world could be more pleasing and productive if they

changed not only “what” they repeatedly do, but also “why” and “how” they do it.

Pleasure and productivity are desired yields from practice. Practice manifests the “what,” “why,” and “how,” of our joy through achievement. However, practice requires significant personal investment over time in order to achieve desired goals. Practice transforms vision and purpose into new realities filled with promise and meaning. Generally, people seem to agree that practice is a prerequisite to achievement. Professional exemplars in art, medicine, and business demonstrate their commitment to achieving excellence as evidenced through continuous, disciplined, and intelligent practice. When asked about their “processes-of-practice,” these professionals routinely provide similar and simple responses. They share that their desire to achieve fuels their learning of new knowledge. Through practice in real life environments, they transform acquired knowledge into mastering the competencies and skills necessary to achieve desired goals. Finally, through continual, reflection, recalibration, and reapplication, guided by performance feedback from master coaches or teachers, they realize their goals. Becoming an exemplar residential real estate advisor requires an equal measure of commitment to this professional orientation; specifically to practice. The 18<sup>th</sup> century English writer William Hazlitt penned, “Great thoughts reduced to practice become great acts.” Let’s consider three domains of practice that can enable advisors to realize their professional aspirations through practice resulting in great achievements!”

### Practice to Understand

Cognitive psychologist Dr. Albert Ellis developed strategies for understanding and harnessing the power of practice. To enable client understanding toward eliminating phobias, Dr. Ellis designed practice exercises emphasizing a cognitive approach to eliminating fears; in turn encouraging success-related behaviors. Dr. Ellis believed that if “something was irrational, it offered little chance of success, therefore was an unrealistic endeavor.” For example, his fear of public speaking was quickly eliminated by executing exercises designed to induce his fear by constantly speaking in public places. Ellis’s reflective repetition of public speaking, aimed at slaying his irrational thoughts, enabled him to eliminate his fear and create space for healthy, success-oriented thoughts and behaviors. Practice is a mechanism for understanding. Focused practice and success in real situations reduces the negative influence of fear on learning new knowledge and acquiring unfamiliar skills. Continual practice shifts our attention away from fear or other unproductive

states such as the lack of motivation or questions of self confidence, and provides us with opportunities to more clearly understand our visions of the future and necessary professional capabilities. In turn, it guides on the path to professional mastery through reflective practice. Practice with purpose.

### Practice to Master

In his groundbreaking 1990 book, *The Fifth Discipline: The Art and Practice of the Learning Organization*, author Peter Senge offered five disciplines for continuous learning and practice for individuals and teams in organizations. One of the disciplines, Personal Mastery, is especially relevant to understanding and mastering practice. Senge writes that fundamentally, Personal Mastery requires individuals to position their desired, personal vision of success alongside an unbiased view of current reality. Through comparison, individuals, in the case real estate advisors, can recognize the presence of oppositional forces between desired and current reality. These forces constitute “creative tension” and by nature seek resolution. Resolving this tension becomes a “choice point” for advisors; moving toward realizing their vision of the future (desired reality) or relaxing the tension and returning to current reality (state to be changed). The discipline of Personal Mastery suggests that advisors committed to their vision will recognize the creative tension separating desired and current realities; in turn will make the changes necessary to resolve the tension and move toward realizing desired reality. Mastering new knowledge and skills requires patience, energy, and focus. Advisors acquiring personal mastery understand that time-to-achievement may be reduced by reflective and coached practice. They accept the situational ambiguity and personal endurance necessary to practice closing transactions and studying mortgaging options. They welcome “creative tension” as a partner in realizing professional excellence. Practice toward mastery.

### Practice to Transcend

The 2<sup>nd</sup> century stoic philosopher Epictetus counseled “Practice yourself, for heaven’s sake, in little things; and thence proceed to greater.” Epictetus’s “little things” could equate to residential real estate advisors’ understanding, mastery, and practice of industry fundamentals. From learning the importance of an internal rate-of-return calculation to organizing a co-op board package, advisors can choose to acknowledge that “moving to the next level” is an experience of transcendence. It is a quantum transition in all professional categories resulting in a new professional environment where achievement is commonplace and success expected.

Practice with purpose. Practice to master. Practice to transcend.

Create your professional future today; practice. ■

*Esther Muller*

*Co-Founder of the Academy for Continuing Education & Master Coach*

*Tel: (646) 391-7406*

*esther@realestateacademy.com*

*www.esthermuller.com*

*www.realestateacademy.com*

*Michael Williams, Ph.D.*

*Dean of the Graduate School of Business*

*Division of Graduate Studies, Touro College*

*Tel: (646) 342-2483*