



FINANCIAL PREPAREDNESS

"One of life's most painful moments comes when we must admit that we didn't do our homework, that we are not prepared." ~ Merlin Olsen

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Turning Pro

I've been thinking a lot lately about the concept of turning pro. I first heard about it several years ago when I read the book Turning Pro: Tap Your Inner Power and Create Your Life's Work by Steven Pressfield, which I highlight below. I'm not the biggest fan of his writing voice, but his take on the concept is brilliant.

Unless you've made the decision to turn pro—and make the decision daily to remain pro—you're an amateur by default. There's nothing necessarily wrong with that; perhaps 95% or more of the population are amateurs.

Here are some of the ways a pro differs from an amateur:

A pro has made a conscious decision to become a pro. Being a pro doesn't necessarily mean that you're a professional _____ (whatever your profession is), it just means that you approach virtually everything in life in a professional, systematic way. Your mindset is different. You think strategically and are oriented towards the long term. You have self-discipline and can delay gratification. You have developed good systems and habits. You are consistent and dependable. You take care of your health and maintain your

equipment. You plan, prepare and think proactively instead of having to react to unexpected crises.

You have a mission/calling/ikigai/life purpose, values, and either specific goals or a chosen direction. You have self awareness and self-control. You can see yourself objectively and know your strengths and weaknesses. You actively pursue growth and personal development.

You know how to get along with other people, and your relationships are not tumultuous. You are kind, take the high road, and help and think of others. You're a lifelong learner and voracious reader. You know a lot about psychology and how the brain works. Your finances are not out of control. You're punctual. People trust and respect you.

When you're a pro, you hold yourself to a higher standard. You're an independent, critical thinker and are not afraid to march to the beat of your own drummer. You avoid mindless entertainment, television, social media and spectator sports and spend your time consuming deep, rich, timeless content that will make you a better person and allow you to lead a more fulfilled life. Instead of passively floating down the stream of Life like a leaf, you make conscious, strategic decisions and live deliberately.

Most people never even realize that the pros are open to anyone who wants to be one, and most of those who do know about the pros don't have the courage, self-respect and initiative it takes to make the switch. I believe that in order to pursue your calling and live a fulfilled life, you must turn pro. Pros leave a legacy; amateurs leave a tombstone.

Here are some of the highlights of Turning Pro:

“When craft, dedication and professionalism come together, the result can be astonishing....What ails us is that we are living our lives as amateurs....To feel ambition and to act upon it is to embrace the unique calling of our souls. Not to act upon that ambition is to turn our backs on ourselves and on the reason for our existence.”

“The difference between an amateur and a professional is in their habits....lives go down the tubes...one hundred and forty characters [the maximum length of a tweet] at a time.”

“Resistance hates two qualities above all others: concentration and depth. Why? Because when we work with focus and we work deep, we succeed....Resistance wants to keep us shallow and unfocused. So it makes the superficial and the vain intoxicating....It can be fatal, keeping up with the Kardashians.”

“The habits and addictions of the amateur are conscious or unconscious self-inflicted wounds....When we take our M1903 Springfield and blow a hole in our foot, we no longer have to face the real fight of our lives, which is to become who we are and to realize our destiny and our calling.”

According to Pressfield, the qualities of an amateur include:

The Amateur Is Terrified

The Amateur Is an Egotist

The Amateur Lives by the Opinions of Others

The Amateur Permits Fear to Stop Him From Acting

The Amateur Is Easily Distracted: "...[the amateur] seeks distraction. The amateur prizes shallowness and shuns depth. The culture of Twitter and Facebook is paradise for the amateur."

The Amateur Seeks Instant Gratification: "The amateur, the addict and the obsessive all want what they want, *now*."

The Amateur Is Jealous: "The amateur is often unkind or insensitive to others...."

The Amateur Seeks Permission: "The amateur sits on a stool...waiting to be discovered."

The Amateur Lives for the Future: "The promise that our products and politicians proffer is the promise one might make to an infant or an addict: 'I will get you what you want and it will cost you nothing'."

The Amateur Lives in the Past

The Amateur Will Be Ready Tomorrow: "The sure sign of an amateur is he has a million plans and they all start tomorrow."

The Amateur Is Asleep

"[When we turn pro], we plan our activities in order to accomplish an aim. And we bring our will to bear so that we stick to this resolution....[Turning pro] changes what we read and what we eat. It changes the shape of our bodies."

"Turning pro...is a decision, a decision to which we must re-commit every day....Each day, the professional understands, he will wake up facing the same demons, the same Resistance, the same self-sabotage, the same tendencies to shadow activities and amateurism that he has always faced. The difference is that now he will not yield to those temptations."

My Own Moment of Turning Pro: "What counted was that I had, after years of running from it, actually sat down and done my work."

According to Pressfield, the qualities of the professional include:

1. The professional shows up every day.
2. The professional stays on the job all day.

3. The professional is committed over the long haul.
4. For the professional, the stakes are high and real.
5. The professional is patient.
6. The professional seeks order....
8. The professional acts in the face of fear....
11. ***The professional is prepared*** [emphasis added]....
13. The professional dedicates himself to mastering technique....
15. The professional does not take failure or success personally....
17. The professional endures adversity....
19. The professional reinvents herself.

A Professional Is Courageous: “...the artist and the entrepreneur enter combat alone.”

The Professional Will Not Be Distracted: “The amateur tweets. The pro works.”

The Professional Lives in the Present: “[When a pro engages in his craft], he is thinking of nothing else. He is immersed. He loses himself in the work and in the moment.”

The Professional Defers Gratification

The Professional Does Not Wait for Inspiration: “We're all nothing without the Muse. But the pro has learned that the goddess prizes labor and dedication beyond any theatrical seeking of her favors. The professional does not wait for inspiration; he acts in anticipation of it. He knows that when the Muse sees his butt in the chair, she will deliver.”

The Professional Helps Others

The Professional Mindset as a Practice: “To 'have a practice'...is to follow a rigorous, prescribed regimen....A practice implies engagement in a ritual. A practice may be defined as the dedicated, daily exercise of commitment, will and focused intention aimed...at the achievement of mastery in a field....”

A Practice Has a Space: “A practice has a space, and that space is sacred.”

A Practice Has a Time: “When we convene day upon day in the same space at the same time, a powerful energy builds up around us. This is the energy of our intention, of our dedication, of our commitment.”

A Practice Has an Intention: “When Stevie Wonder sits down in his studio at the piano, he's not there to mess around....[the 10,000 hours of practice that are required to achieve mastery in a field must] be focused. It must possess intention.”

We Come to Practice as Students

A Practice Is Lifelong: “For us, there is no finish line.”

I would love to hear from you! I thrive on feedback from readers. If you have any comments, suggestions, insight/wisdom, or you'd like to share a link to a great article, please [email me](#).

Generally, I don't have time to answer questions about your specific situation, but if you have a general question that I think other readers also have, [let me know](#) and I will provide an answer in a future issue.

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