

"It's only about who you know when what you know isn't impressive."

Say that we have two students who just completed grade school and are looking towards matriculating into an institution of higher education. The university that both of them have their eyes set on rubs shoulders along with other elite schools in all aspects. Pupil A graduated as the class valedictorian accompanied with top percentile test scores, and Pupil B only capped out in the top forty percent or so of the class and posted a slightly below average performance on the same standardized assessment. In essence Pupil A's credentials align perfectly with the school's standards for admission, while Pupil B's most certainly does not. Surely you can see how this is shaping up.

Both applicants submit their applications to the extremely diligent admissions committee and go under review. After rigorous scrutiny by the committee both students are granted acceptance to this renowned college. How is that? It comes to the philosophy expressed in the title of this chapter, sometimes achieving certain things come down to who you know. While Pupil A was an immediate shoo-in based on empirical numbers, Pupil B clearly was not. So it is possible that a couple of different scenarios took place in this particular situation. The action taken on Pupil A doesn't warrant much discussion about how the decision was rendered. Her credentials were solid and needed little to no explanation she has shown her worthiness as an exceptional student. Now Pupil B on the other hand deserves much more analysis.

The decision to admit this student to ranks of others with higher empirical figures is more often than not a derivative of Pupil B having an inside tie to the university, which can be paraphrased as 'who he knew'. For example, Pupil B's father is the President of the university. Surely it would be frowned upon for the committee to deny admission to the son of the leadership of the entire college right? Or even a more direct tie would be that a family friend of Pupil B is one of the sitting admissions counselors on the committee. Those factors definitely change things.

The point that is being made here is that there is a fundamental flaw in the well established belief that forward progression and achievement relies heavily on 'who you know'. This notion is challenged by the fact that it comes down to 'who you know' when 'what you know' is not impressive, or warrants deep consideration or attention. To support this statement the previous scenario was duly presented. The first student's resume and accolades were impressive, simple as that. With all other factors set aside, it would be difficult or even imprudent to decline a student of that caliber because her accomplishments speak for themselves. It didn't matter if she knew someone on the committee or if her family founded the very institution, the credentials that the student offered to the university were impeccable.

The idea that is being depicted here is the value associated with one putting his or herself in a position to be a rarity. On the road offering something that is indisputable, it is important to grasp and understand the concept of commoditization of a given skill, talent, or personality trait. As in basic economics, something becomes a commodity once the demand for the given tangible or intangible product greatly exceeds the supply, thus resulting in the said object being sought after with higher determination than others.

In essence the championed concept in this chapter is that once that an individual understands and can convey his or her talents, skills, abilities, or character as a commodity, the possibility for success will not only be highly probable but it will almost be undoubtedly propelled into the limelight.

Take the late Henry Ford into account. He was the pioneer of automotive transportation as we know it. Before his innovative ideas came into fruition, traveling one mile on dry land in mere seconds was generally unheard of. Not only was he the brains behind developing such a machine capable of such a feat, he was able to do so at an extremely effective and efficient manner in regards to cost and manpower. During those times there wasn't any other industrialized vehicle that was capable of traveling at such a high speed on land. Without a doubt potential investors and others of the like were perusing around with their pockets on their sleeves just for an opportunity to be a part of such a magnanimous project.

As previously mentioned Ford was able to commoditize his tangible and intangible capital through the proliferation of the quadricycle, the 999, and most notably the Model T. Intangibly he did so by first believing that it was possible to create such a piece of machinery to carry out the end of automotive travel, then translating his thoughts into the reality of his circumstances. His intellectual tenacity resulted in the tangible output of revolutionizing the realm of transportation. The contribution he made to society as left an indelible mark on the world as we know it.

In a more physical sense, take the exceptional American Athlete Earl Campbell. He dutifully earned his place in the National Football League Hall of Fame through his physical prowess on the field. Campbell had garnered his talents in way that set him apart for others at an early age. In grade school countless colleges sought to have him amongst their depth charts. A great coach once commented that he was the only prep school tail back that he had ever seen that was ready to play professional football at the young age of eighteen. Needless to say he was the number one overall pick in his professional football draft class.

Tying these two examples back to the original with students seeking college mission the idea of commoditization is apparent. Imagine if instead of an exceptionally high score, Pupil A posts a perfect score. There would even more schools recruiting her than there are students to fill the seats. Intellectually this student has made herself a commodity amongst others as Campbell had done so athletically, and Ford had done through invention of new technology.

The overarching principle to be observed in all of the previously mentioned scenarios is that contrary to common belief, the factor of 'who' these individuals knew played a small role in their success. Creating the first fully functioning automobile known to man, setting a score of American college football records, and posting a perfect performance on a national scholastic test, all have one salient trait in common, each feat is unquestionably impressive. Therefore the link between remarkable talent, skill, and intellect and success is apparent. Now the purpose of this delineation is not to undermine the idea that making a plethora of personal connections can achieve some of the implications that mirror those that come along with being impressive [i.e. the college admissions scenario] but it is to dispel the myth that the most

conventional way to do so is through the former not the latter. As a final word one would find that becoming a rarity in any realm is a more attractive option to seek success than to relying on rubbing shoulders with someone in a position to achieve the same end. Why wait for someone else to open the door for you, when you can open it yourself?