

Quadrant II Newsletter

Research shows that the difference between leaders who derail in their career and those that soar to great heights is social skills. Social skills appear in the second quadrant of Stephen R. Covey's Importance-Urgency matrix: social skills are important to a career but not urgent (Covey is author of the top-selling business book *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*). Quadrant II provides an opportunity for business and technical professionals to learn and try out new social skills based in science.

20Apr2016, author: Valerie Patrick, PhD, Simple Way to Better Living

Quotable (*Key Message*)

Being more aware of the role of luck in your life helps fight the natural human tendencies that hinder ways to increase your good fortune.

Quantify (*The Science*)

In his article on the role of luck in success, Robert H. Frank, professor of management and economics at Cornell University, cites the research revealing the intrinsic rewards of gratitude (see http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2016/05/why-luck-matters-more-than-you-might-think/476394/?utm_source=nextdraft&utm_medium=email).

The intrinsic rewards of gratitude include improved sleep quality, reduced anxiety, less frequent and severe aches and pains, greater alertness, and greater happiness. Because there is a strong correlation between feeling lucky and gratitude (Teigen, K.H.; *Scandinavian Journal of Psychology*, Vol. 38, 1977, p. 314-323), then the intrinsic rewards of gratitude also apply to recognizing the role of luck in our lives.

Frank describes two natural human tendencies that hinder our ability to recognize the role of luck in our lives.

The first natural human tendency that hinders our ability to recognize the role of luck in our lives is called hindsight bias. Hindsight bias is the tendency to see an event that has already occurred as more predictable than it actually was at the time of the event. Dr. Baruch Fischhoff has done an elegant set of experiments to demonstrate this tendency (Fischhoff, B., “Hindsight ≠ Foresight: The Effect of Outcome Knowledge on Judgement Under Uncertainty,” *Journal of Experimental Psychology: Human Perception and Performance*, 1975, Vol. 1, pp. 288-299). Hindsight bias causes us to over-attribute our success to ourselves rather than to other factors like luck.

The second human tendency that hinders our ability to recognize the role of luck in our lives is called the availability heuristic. A heuristic is a mental short-cut that our brain takes to process information and speed up decisions and problem-solving. The availability heuristic is the natural tendency of our brain to judge the probability of an event by how quickly and easily examples come to mind (see <http://study.com/academy/lesson/availability-heuristic-examples-definition-quiz.html>). While the availability heuristic is often helpful to our thinking, sometimes it can lead us to make mistakes. Applying the availability heuristic to successes in our life, we naturally recall the factors that show up repeatedly such as our hard work, the specific skills we demonstrate, the characteristics of the people we work with, and so on. Since luck is one of the factors that happens more sporadically and doesn’t show up as often as these other factors when it comes to successes in our life, then we likely will not attribute the role of luck in our overall success.

Both of these natural human tendencies cause the bias of attributing our success in life to primarily ourselves. Unfortunately, if we don’t see the role of luck in our lives, then we can’t access the intrinsic rewards described earlier. In

fact, Frank describes additional research that correlates those who attribute their success to themselves with lower generosity. However, Frank also describes research studies where being prompted to recognize luck increases generosity relative to those who are not prompted to recognize luck. Finally, recent studies have shown a strong correlation between generosity and gratitude (see <https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/the-athletes-way/201510/small-acts-generosity-and-the-neuroscience-gratitude>). Therefore, to enjoy the spoils of gratitude despite the natural tendencies of hindsight bias and the availability heuristic, all we need to do is prompt ourselves to recognize the role of luck in our lives.

Qualify (*Put into Practice*)

One practice I adopted many years ago after reading about it in an Oprah Winfrey magazine is the daily practice of writing down five things I am grateful for. Some days, like when I am on vacation, the things I am grateful for come pouring out of me. Other days, it is a real struggle to see the things I am grateful for but they are always there. I recently recovered from a severe case of bronchitis that turned into a bad sinus infection and things like “I am able to work again” and “the energy is back in my body” have appeared on my list of things I am grateful for. I typically write my list in the wee hours of the following morning because that is when my brain is most alive and energized. You may need to experiment to find a time of day that works for you. This practice has changed my outlook on life and made me a happier and healthier person (accept when I catch a virus that goes wild) with low anxiety.

Quip (*Fun*)



By luck is meant a circumstance of good fortune beyond your control, not making a good fortune by manipulating others as Jordan Belfort (portayed by Leonardo DiCaprio) does in “The Wolf of Wall Street.”

Quest (*Resources*)

Fulcrum Connection LLC believes that barriers to working together can be eliminated to unleash the power of collaboration for high performance in any group or organization. The way we eliminate these barriers is to use and make available tools and techniques that are rigorously refined and validated with research findings and with repeated use in organizational settings.

Dr. Valerie Patrick, Founder and President of Fulcrum Connection LLC, is an expert on the people engagement side of technical project management. Dr. Patrick is a Certified Professional Facilitator who can collaborate with you to plan, prepare, and execute engagements that are productive and rewarding experiences for all concerned. Dr. Patrick also provides training, consulting, and keynotes on facilitation, teamwork, collaboration, creativity, innovation, social intelligence, change management, and thriving on a steep learning curve. Contact Dr. Patrick (valerie.patrick@fulcrumconnection.com or text 412-742-9675) to set up an exploratory call. Ask about the new Performance Acceleration Package for technical teams.

Listen to the interview with Karen Weingart in Episode 13 of “Science of Success: Social Secrets” podcast here:

<http://scienceofsuccess.libsyn.com/podcast>. Also available on iTunes and Stitcher Radio and all comments are welcome and encouraged!

Also see the companion blog post about the science of emotion and the role of emotion in collaboration here: <http://fulcrumconnection.com/blog/your-brain-on-collaboration/>.

About Fulcrum Connection LLC

Fulcrum Connection specializes in instructional design, training, speaking, facilitation and consulting to develop skills in leadership, innovation, sustainability, troubleshooting teamwork, and managing technical professionals.