





## Because change is a constant...

Very little stands still in business.

- Your customer expectations are constantly changing
  - Your competition's capabilities are improving
  - New technology and new ways of working are constantly emerging
- Stay the same and you travel the path of irrelevance towards being outdated and commercially extinct.

New skills are needed, again and again.

## Let's not make it so hard!

Of course, you may choose to spend much more time acquiring a new skill, but why make it a long, hard road when you can make it a shorter, easier road to new skill acquisition?

*"...skill acquisition always feels bigger than it actually is."*

– Josh Kaufman

20 hours is fast but it still takes a measure of effort and commitment.

20 hours looks and feels manageable and can be seen as attainable by anyone who wants a new skill.

20 hours (or less) is what Josh Kaufman proved is needed for rapid skill acquisition.

You and your team can do the same.

**STOP** thinking that skill acquisition is a long, drawn-out and difficult process.

**START** seeing skill acquisition as a 20-hour pathway you and your team can follow.

## Can you or can't you...

...learn a new skill?

You can. Everyone can.

Your brain is not 'fixed'. All human brains are 'plastic'.

A vast array of brain science clearly proves that all brains have the ability to learn and improve capabilities and skills with practice.

Kaufman neatly shows us the 10 steps to rapid (20 hours) skill acquisition – something we can all do if we really want to! All 10 steps seem to state the blatantly obvious, but as a checklist they ensure you are on the path to successful skill acquisition:

### 1. Real desire is the first step...

Only if you *really* want a new skill will you invest the time, energy and commitment in acquiring that skill.

Kaufman wanted to learn the ukulele because he wanted his new daughter to grow up in a house with music. This desire became more intense when he committed to performing in front of an audience in ten days' time!

If I want to be able to live like a local in Portugal, I'll want to speak Portuguese.

*"You naturally learn things you care about faster than things you don't"*

– Josh Kaufman

Work on your own or with your team to establish a strong reason why the new skill or improved skill is needed.

If the desire isn't great enough, skill acquisition will almost certainly fail to happen.

### 2. One and only one...

Because you have to invest time and energy in acquiring a new skill, it's really important to focus on just one.

As Confucius eloquently points out:

*"She/he who chases two rabbits catches neither"*

Focus on one new skill and you stand a chance.

Simply choose the one skill you want and park any others 'til later.

### 3. Set SMART goals...

**S**pecific, **M**easurable, **A**chievable, **R**elevant and **T**ime-bound (SMART) goals help focus the mind.

Write down a sentence that defines what 'good enough' looks and feels like in this first stage (20 hours) of skill acquisition.

For Kaufman, this was playing the ukulele confidently for 20 minutes in front of an audience of strangers. Or what about never again speaking English in a Portuguese restaurant or shop – only Portuguese?

A SMART goal can help set the achievable standard you want in just 20 hours of effort.

**IMPORTANT:** The 'A' in SMART is **achievable** rather than ambitious; for our goals to work (in 20 hours) they need to be just out of reach, not overly ambitious, 'out-the-park' aspirations.

## 4. Deconstruct your skill into subskills...



When learning a new skill, it's easy to quickly feel overwhelmed. Your early efforts will be fraught with challenge and failure. This is how it has to be, because failure is part of the skill acquisition process.

To help manage and overcome this sense of overwhelm quickly, break the skill down into subskills.

For example, learning the skill of bike riding in 20 hours (or less!) brings you to 4 subskills:

- balancing whilst moving
- braking
- steering
- pedalling

Kids learn to cycle faster and easier these days because a balance bike helps the rider learn two of the subskills quickly and easily (balance and steering). Pedalling comes last when the other subskills have been mastered.

Can you work out the subskills of your next skill acquisition and in which order you should learn them? This is something you can do with your colleagues to build your skill acquisition proficiency! Or you can seek specific help in Google.

## 5. Have your tools readily available...

The right tools and the right environment for learning are crucial.

Learning the ukulele without a ukulele, a tuning device and your 'ukulele for dummies' book of chords will make rapid skill acquisition impossible!

And you need a bicycle to learn to ride a bike!

Similarly, if your learning environment is not well-suited to learning new skills (because of too many distractions or interruptions, for example) then you're setting yourself up to fail. It's hard to learn meditation or yoga in a messy hall next to a busy trainline or school.

## 6. Remove the handbrakes...

Four barriers can hold you back, slow you down and even derail your new skill acquisition. Remove these handbrakes and you increase your skill acquisition capabilities:

- a. **Too much pre-practice effort and energy** – missing or misplaced tools; resetting a room; getting too many people together – all these things can derail you before you even get going! Make it easy for yourself instead. For example, if you want to master video capture skills, have a good camera permanently set up so you can quickly get going.
- b. **Patchy resource availability** – borrowed or faulty kit or unsuitable opening hours can also derail your efforts – don't stand for low quality equipment or resources.
- c. **Environmental distractions** – as already mentioned, interruptions from electronics (phones, TV, email, unnecessary software) can all help you lose focus – turn them off! Choosing a location away from people-distractions helps too.
- d. **Emotional blocks** – fear, doubt, embarrassment and other concerns can also hold you back. Acknowledging these feelings and then creating an environment and finding tools to help you reduce or overcome these unhelpful emotions will help you get going and keep going.

*"By rearranging your environment to make it as easy as possible to start practicing, you'll acquire the skill in far less time and far less effort."* – Josh Kaufman

Learn to ride a bike on a quiet car park, not on a busy main road; learn

the ukulele with the TV and your phone switched off! Make sure your work environment is suited to the skill you are working on.

## 7. Commit diary time...

Pre-commit 20 hours in your diary at times that suit your life-work routine.

If you're not willing to make this commitment, then chances are you don't want this new skill enough to make it happen.

Like most human beings, you want to do everything you already do and find time to acquire a new skill. But finding time to acquire a new skill is a fiction!

1,440 minutes in every day – there's no more to be found!

Rather than planning new diary time, it's better to swap diary time. Identify low-value uses of your 1,440 minutes each day and swap this low-value time for your new skill acquisition time.

If it's a personal skill, swap TV-watching time for skill acquisition. If it's a business skill, swap low-urgency, low-importance work for your skill acquisition.

## 8. Fast feedback helps fast skill acquisition...

*"If feedback arrives immediately, or with a very short delay, it's much easier to connect that information to your actions and make the appropriate adjustments."*

– Josh Kaufman

The science behind skill building and habit building shows that a fast

feedback loop is like adrenalin – it fuels the energy in your skill acquisition. This need for fast feedback is why a good coach or trainer is such a valuable investment – they give immediate and targeted feedback.

If there's no coach available, what about playing back video or audio recordings or setting up other forms of capture you can quickly review?

*"The more sources of fast feedback you integrate into your practice, the faster you'll acquire the skill"*

– Josh Kaufman

## 9. Respect the clock...

When you're new to a skill and you're no good at it, time can seem to drag, making it feel as if you've been practising longer than you really have.

Practice by the clock.

If you've diarised 45 minutes then stick to 45 minutes! To help manage your environment, use the timer on your phone or invest in a count-down clock to tell you when time is up.

The more diarised periods of sustained practice, the sooner your new skill will get easier and you will become more competent. Respect your diary commitment and the time commitment.

## 10. Quantity trumps quality!

Before the *quality* of a skill shows up *quantity* of skill-practice must happen.

Right first time is a fiction.

Fast skill acquisition means many mistakes!

Quantity first. Quality second.

## GET YOUR BITESIZE SUPPORT TOOLS NOW

<https://businessbreakthrough.online/new-skills-fast-tools-and-resources/>

## 4 helping hands for you...

Rapid skill acquisition is a process with 4 major steps to success – follow the process deliberately and you'll acquire the new skills (or improve existing skills) to give you and your team a competitive advantage in a rapidly changing world:

1. **Deconstruct** the skill into the smallest possible subskills
2. **Learn enough** about each subskill to be able to practice intelligently and to self-correct during practice
3. **Remove** physical, mental and emotional barriers that get in the way of practice
4. **Practice** the most important subskills for at least 20 hours



## TIME TO DISAGREE:

**“20 hours and 10 steps all feels a bit unwieldy and unlikely to get team buy-in!”**

Yes it would be great if we could simply plug ourselves into a computer and download the skills, but we can't – we have to work at skill acquisition.

Which is why working on a big enough reason for acquiring the skill in the first place (step 1) is so important. If you or your colleagues see and believe it's important, 20 hours of effort won't seem so challenging.

Also, whilst acknowledging the need for instant gratification, it pays to work on fast feedback so that there is a quick sense of progress.

**“We need to build lots of new skills over time across our team, but there is always resistance to change.”**

Humans have proved themselves to be the most adaptable beings on the planet. They change jobs and careers, they change where they live, they have children. Humans are good at change when it suits them!

Building the good-enough, big-enough reasons for the new skill together as a team helps ensure your team feel it's their choice, rather than having the change imposed upon them.

People do change. However, people resist change being inflicted on them.

Work the 10 steps together.

## YOUR 'RAPID SKILL AQUISITION' CHECKLIST:

1. Real desire is the first step...
2. One and only one...
3. Set SMART goals...
4. Deconstruct your skill into subskills...
5. Have your tools readily available...
6. Remove the handbrakes...
7. Commit diary time...
8. Fast feedback helps fast skill acquisition...
9. Respect the clock...
10. Quantity trumps quality!

Are you ready to give it a try?

See how this 10-step checklist is applied to learning the ukulele in the downloadable tools and resources.

## ULTIMATE ARGUMENT:

**“Isn't it a case of just getting started with new skill acquisition rather than making a big thing out of it?”**

Yes and no!

Like Kaufman says:

*“It doesn't take much practice to go from 'very slow and grossly incompetent' to 'reasonably fast and noticeably competent.’”*

– Josh Kaufman

But for skill acquisition to happen quickly, it pays to follow a proven system for rapid skill acquisition.

Yes, just get started.

But get started using the 10-point checklist that has been proven to work quickly, rather than struggling needlessly.

## Want to know more?

Good people and good systems, working together, can achieve remarkable results. Josh Kaufman is



a bestselling author who brilliantly unpacks a system for rapid skill acquisition which you and your team can easily put to work.

Like Seth Godin says: “Lots of books promise to change your life. This one actually will.”

In *The First 20 Hours*, Josh Kaufman offers a systematic approach to rapid skill acquisition. His method shows you how to develop skills by removing the common barriers to learning, as well as how to make the most of practice. Josh field tests his proof and shows that by completing just 20 hours of focused, deliberate practice you'll go from knowing absolutely nothing to performing well.

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Use these tools and resources to enhance and build new skills within your team and build a better business.

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