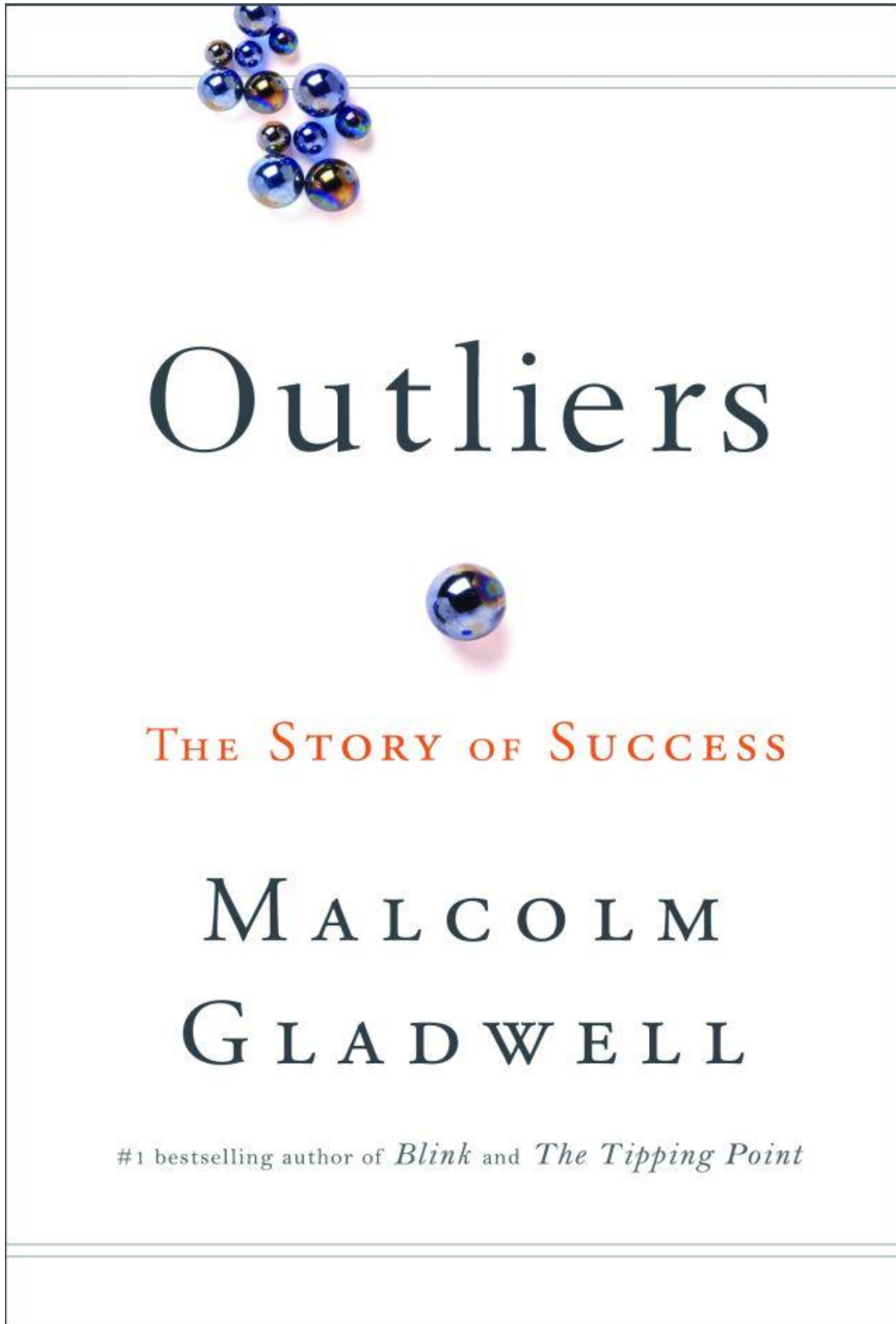


About the Book



Malcolm Gladwell has a knack for looking at things from a different perspective. In Outliers, he takes a new look at what makes someone successful. Most think successful people possess common traits, habits, or philosophies. Gladwell suggests we look deeper at heritage and culture as the basis of accomplishment. By looking at famous, successful people he shows their achievements are due to certain advantages in their lives. Advantages that others with similar talents have not had, and therefore have not succeeded. (Books & Authors)

About the Author: (gladwell.com)

Malcolm Gladwell has been a staff writer with *The New Yorker* magazine since 1996. His 1999 profile of Ron Popeil won a National Magazine Award, and in 2005 he was named one of Time Magazine's 100 Most Influential People. He is the author of four books, "The Tipping Point: How Little Things Make a Big Difference," (2000) , "Blink: The Power of Thinking Without Thinking" (2005), and "Outliers: The Story of Success" (2008) all of which were number one New York Times bestsellers. His latest book, "What the Dog Saw" (2009) is a compilation of stories published in *The New Yorker*.

From 1987 to 1996, he was a reporter with the Washington Post, where he covered business, science, and then served as the newspaper's New York City bureau chief. He graduated from the University of Toronto, Trinity College, with a degree in history. He was born in England, grew up in rural Ontario, and now lives in New York City.

Awards: (Books & Authors)

National Magazine Award for Profiles, 2001, for piece on Ron Popeil titled "The Pitchman"; Award for Excellence in the Reporting of Social Issues, American Sociological Association, 2007; *Time* magazine's 100 Most Influential People distinction, 2005. Recipient of honorary degrees from the University of Waterloo and the University of Toronto.

Personal Information:

Born September 3, 1963, in London, England; son of Graham (a mathematics professor) and Joyce (a psychotherapist) Gladwell.

Education: University of Toronto, Trinity College, graduated, 1984.

Memberships: Order of Canada (2011--).

Addresses: Home: New York, NY.

E-mail: malcolm@gladwell.com; contact@gladwell.com.

Career Information:

Writer, journalist, and public speaker. *Washington Post*, Washington, DC, reporter, science writer, and New York City bureau chief, 1987-96; *New Yorker* magazine, New York, NY, staff writer, 1996--. Also worked at *American Spectator*.

Writings

- [*The Tipping Point: How Little Things Can Make a Big Difference*](#), Little, Brown (Boston, MA), 2000, with a new afterword by the author, Back Bay Books (Boston, MA), 2002.
- [*Blink: The Power of Thinking without Thinking*](#), Little, Brown (Boston, MA), 2005.
- [*Outliers: The Story of Success*](#), Little, Brown (Boston, MA), 2008.
- [*What the Dog Saw: And Other Adventures*](#), Little, Brown (New York, NY), 2009.
- *Malcolm Gladwell: Collected*, Little, Brown (New York, NY), 2011.
- Contributor of articles to *Slate* and *People*; contributing editor, *Grantland* (a sports journalism Web site); author of the blog *Gladwell.com*

Sidelights

Journalist Malcolm Gladwell is the author of books that look at how the human mind works. In his first book, *The Tipping Point: How Little Things Can Make a Big Difference*, Gladwell takes a look at human behavior patterns and how seemingly insignificant factors can build into momentous changes. Specifically, he focuses on how various ideas take hold in the human mind and society, such as the succession of trends that pass in and out of style. Describing the phenomenon in the context of three laws called the "Law of the Few," the "Stickiness Factor," and the "Power of Context," the author substantiates his theories with research and case studies focusing on everything from how the television show *Sesame Street* became such a success to the factors that motivated infamous New York City subway shooter Bernard Goetz to open fire on his perceived attackers. In the case of Goetz, Gladwell attributes the shooting to the "Power of Context." He argues that the most important factors in the shooting were not the backgrounds or psychology of either Goetz or the four black youths he shot, but rather the overall condition of New York's subway system, a state then highlighted by such factors as the system's general disorder and the graffiti on the subway walls.

Writing in the *Library Journal*, Ellen Gilbert called *The Tipping Point* "an entertaining read." Miriam Udel Lambert, writing in the *American Prospect*, praised "the vigorous activism it champions. For those overwhelmed by the insurmountability of certain social ills or the intractability of human behavior generally, Gladwell's approach offers

succor." *The Tipping Point* has also been widely embraced by the business community, which sees Gladwell's theories as offering important insights into areas such as marketing. Writing in the *Ivy Business Journal*, John S. McCallum noted that the book is "full of astute observations and excellent suggestions for executives who must manage change."

In *Blink: The Power of Thinking without Thinking*, Gladwell sets forth his belief that people in all walks of life should rely more on their instinctual powers and ability to make snap decisions. Gladwell explains how people's "adaptive unconsciousness" enable them to take stock of situations quickly and make quick decisions that, more often than not, turn out to be the right decisions. For example, he talks about "thin-slicing," which is the mind's ability to draw conclusions from little data or "narrow slices of experience." Throughout the book, the author provides numerous stories and examples to bolster his case, such as a tennis coach who can predict students' errors before they happen or the male orchestra conductor who can somehow identify whether the musician playing an instrument is male or female without seeing them. In the end, Gladwell argues that decisions made very quickly and based on a gut instinct can be just as valid and ultimately successful as those made by gathering huge volumes of data and pondering over the question for extended periods of time. Nevertheless, Gladwell also points out that snap judgments can be wrong, such as in the case of a shooting by police officers of an innocent man in New York. In either case, the author writes, understanding this phenomenon can have an impact on many aspects of people's lives.

Writing in the *New Republic*, Richard A. Posner commented that many of the issues discussed in *Blink* are "obscured rather than elucidated by Gladwell's parade of poorly understood yarns." On the other hand, the reviewer went on to note that the book contains "interesting and even illuminating facts." In a review for *Booklist*, Donna Seaman noted that the author "brilliantly illuminates an aspect of our mental lives," adding that "Gladwell's groundbreaking explication of a key aspect of human nature is enlightening, provocative, and great fun to read." Mary Ann Hughes, writing in *Library Journal*, commented that "Gladwell gets the science facts right and has the journalistic skills to make them utterly engrossing."

The phenomenal success of Gladwell's first two books has led to fame and fortune for the author. For example, according to Jason Zengerle, writing for *New York* magazine, the author was offered 80,000 dollars for a speaking engagement with a dental-supply company, and a rumored four-million-dollar advance for his next book, *Outliers: The Story of Success*. Zengerle remarked, "Since the 2000 publication of *The Tipping Point*, he has been less a journalist than, as *Fast Company* once deemed him, a rock star, a spiritual leader, a stud. Business executives seek him out for his insights, adoring fans stop him on the street to shake his hand, and other writers strive to emulate the genre he essentially pioneered ... the idea-driven narrative that upends the way we think about everything from cigarettes to ketchup."

In *Outliers*, published in 2008, the author once again offers

his theory on an aspect of modern life, this time focusing on why some people are high achievers who garner phenomenal success. Examining a wide range of people, from Amadeus Mozart to Microsoft founder Bill Gates, the author calls his achievers "outliers." On his home page, Gladwell explains that the term refers to those things that occur beyond normal human experience, including people whose achievements go far beyond the usual life experiences that most people have during their lives.

Writing for the *Independent*, David Usborne noted that Gladwell "suggests that, while grit and intelligence do matter, other factors are critical in determining who makes it into this super-league of achievers. Such as personal circumstance, culture and sheer luck." For example, Gladwell points out that Gates happened to grow up in Seattle, where he had access to the latest in computer technology via the private school that he attended, Lakeside. As a result, Gates gained early experience with technology that most of his contemporaries would not have until years later. According to Gladwell, Gates was lucky enough not only to grow up in the right place and attend the right school, but also to be born at the right time, as nascent technological advances would be made during his youth that he and others would learn about and capitalize on.

"Coincidence?" asked a writer for *Business Week Online*. "Microsoft cofounder Paul Allen was born in 1953, Apple (AAPL) founder Steve Jobs in 1955, and Sun Microsystems (SUNW) founders Bill Joy and Scott McNealy

in 1954. All of these Silicon Valley pioneers succeeded not just on their extraordinary talent but also because they had the right opportunities at exactly the right time."

As Gladwell profiles numerous outliers, he presents the readers with numerous facts and tidbits about success. For example, according to the author, most people only become fantastically good at what they do after practicing in their field for about 10,000 hours. As an example, he points to the Beatles. In the early stages of their career, the Beatles played clubs in Hamburg, Germany, where they were required to play extremely long sets and in various styles, which led to extensive performance time, experimentation with their music, and ultimately heightened creativity.

In addition to software pioneers and musicians, the author examines people successful in law and sports, such as hockey players. In many instances, the author looks at specific social and cultural factors that can influence success, at times bordering on racial stereotyping as he asks specific questions about achievement. A reviewer for the *Reading in Bed* Web site noted that "Gladwell tramples the concept of political correctness by dissecting these questions: Why are people of Asian ethnicity so good at math? Why are so many of the highest flying law firms run by individuals of Jewish heritage?"

In answering the question about Asians and math, Gladwell points out that the Asian number system is much more logical than the English system. For example, instead of the number eleven, the Asian system's equivalent is

ten-one and so on, with twenty-four, for example, being two-tens-four. Gladwell postulates that this difference enables Asian children to learn to count much quicker than their English counterparts, who, when they are four years old, can only count to fifteen, while Asian children of the same age can count to forty. Even though by the time they are five American children, too, can count to forty, Gladwell points out that they have already fallen a year behind the Asian children.

In a chapter titled "The Ethnic Theory of Plane Crashes: 'Captain, the weather radar has helped us a lot,'" the author writes about air accidents, including the one-time relatively high rate of Korean airplane crashes. According to Gladwell, the Korean cultural background greatly influenced the ability of pilots and copilots to work effectively together because copilots were too deferential to pilots. When Korean Air recognized the problem, they sent their copilots to classes and trained them to be more assertive.

Outliers received a wide range of reviews. Several reviewers noted that the author, in some ways, is expounding on the obvious--that is, that brains and hard work alone do not always answer the question as to why someone has achieved phenomenal success. Noting that some of Gladwell's conclusions are "obviously self-evident," *Guardian* contributor Jason Cowley nevertheless went on to write in the review, "Even when he is not at his best he is worth taking seriously. He has a lucid, aphoristic style." Other reviewers were more direct in their praise of the book. "Fascinating stuff this; but Malcolm Gladwell and

fascinating stuff is what we have come to expect from him," wrote a *Basil & Spice* Web site contributor, who advised readers to "buy and read this book--you'll get a kick out of it." A writer in the *Economist* called the book "a compelling read with an important message: by understanding better what makes people successful we should be able to produce more successful (and happy) people."

[*What the Dog Saw: And Other Adventures*](#) is a collection of nineteen essays collected from Gladwell's work in the *New Yorker*. "What distinguishes each of them is a surprising, often counterintuitive, insight or two, delivered in a no-frills--even formulaic--writing style that could be a flaw in some other context, but here works beautifully, ensuring that the words don't distract from the ideas," observed Porus P. Cooper in a review posted at *PopMatters*. London *Guardian* contributor Ian Sample commented, "Brought together, the pieces form a dazzling record of Gladwell's art. There is depth to his research and clarity in his arguments, but it is the breadth of subjects he applies himself to that is truly impressive." Gladwell takes on topics such as the spectacular and crime-ridden collapse of energy company Enron, the problem of homelessness, the errors that led to the fatal plane crash of John F. Kennedy, Jr., and how improved photography and imaging techniques have not necessarily led to better results in medical, military, business, and other applications.

In [*What the Dog Saw*](#) Gladwell profiles notable personalities such as Ron Popeil, a longtime television

pitchman and gadget salesman whose affable charm and sincerity has sold millions of dollars worth of items such as the Pocket Fisherman, the Veg-o-Matic, and, most recently, the Showtime Rotisserie; Cesar Milan, the dog trainer whose ability to calm and work with difficult animals seems nearly supernatural and whose work with dogs gives the book its title; and advertising genius Shirley Polykoff, whose timeless slogans for Miss Clairol hair coloring ("Does she or doesn't she? Only her hairdresser knows for sure") commingled with the rise of American feminism and made it acceptable, even desirable for women to dye their hair.

Gladwell "is a writer of many gifts," commented Steven Pinker in a *New York Times* review. Pinker added, "He avoids shopworn topics, easy moralization, and conventional wisdom, encouraging his readers to think again and think different. His prose is transparent, with lucid explanations and a sense that we are chatting with the experts ourselves. Some chapters are masterpieces in the art of the essay." *Financial Times* reviewer Hugh Carnegy noted, "Gladwell's range is impressive and his writing never less than engaging. There is nothing wearying about his choice of subjects and his ability to shed light on aspects of life that puzzle us, consciously or unconsciously." Cooper remarked that *What the Dog Saw* "would be the perfect introduction to Gladwell to those unfamiliar with him."

Reviews

Booklist

Gladwell, author and journalist, sets out to provide an understanding of success using outliers, men and women with skills, talent, and drive who do things out of the ordinary. He contends that we must look beyond the merits of a successful individual to understand his culture, where he comes from, his friends and family, and the community values he inherits and shares. We learn that society's rules play a large role in who makes it and who does not. Success is a gift, and when opportunities are presented, some people have the strength and presence of mind to seize them, exhibiting qualities such as persistence and doggedness. Successful people are the products of history and community, of opportunity and legacy, and success ultimately is not exceptional or unattainable, nor does it depend upon innate ability. It is an attitude of willingness to try without regard for the sacrifice required. This is an excellent book for a wide range of library patrons. --Whaley, Mary

Publisher's Weekly

In *Outliers*, Gladwell (*The Tipping Point*) once again proves masterful in a genre he essentially pioneered--the book that illuminates secret patterns behind everyday phenomena. His gift for spotting an intriguing mystery, luring the reader in, then gradually revealing his lessons in lucid prose, is on vivid display. *Outliers* begins with a provocative look at why certain five-year-old boys enjoy an

advantage in ice hockey, and how these advantages accumulate over time. We learn what Bill Gates, the Beatles and Mozart had in common: along with talent and ambition, each enjoyed an unusual opportunity to intensively cultivate a skill that allowed them to rise above their peers. A detailed investigation of the unique culture and skills of Eastern European Jewish immigrants persuasively explains their rise in 20th-century New York, first in the garment trade and then in the legal profession. Through case studies ranging from Canadian junior hockey champions to the robber barons of the Gilded Age, from Asian math whizzes to software entrepreneurs to the rise of his own family in Jamaica, Gladwell tears down the myth of individual merit to explore how culture, circumstance, timing, birth and luck account for success--and how historical legacies can hold others back despite ample individual gifts. Even as we know how many of these stories end, Gladwell restores the suspense and serendipity to these narratives that make them fresh and surprising. One hazard of this genre is glibness. In seeking to understand why Asian children score higher on math tests, Gladwell explores the persistence and painstaking labor required to cultivate rice as it has been done in East Asia for thousands of years; though fascinating in its details, the study does not prove that a rice-growing heritage explains math prowess, as Gladwell asserts. Another pitfall is the urge to state the obvious: "No one," Gladwell concludes in a chapter comparing a high-IQ failure named Chris Langan with the brilliantly successful J. Robert Oppenheimer, "not rock stars, not professional athletes, not software billionaires and not even geniuses--ever makes it alone." But who in this day and age believes

that a high intelligence quotient in itself promises success? In structuring his book against that assumption, Gladwell has set up a decidedly flimsy straw man. In the end it is the seemingly airtight nature of Gladwell's arguments that works against him. His conclusions are built almost exclusively on the findings of others--sociologists, psychologists, economists, historians--yet he rarely delves into the methodology behind those studies. And he is free to cherry-pick those cases that best illustrate his points; one is always left wondering about the data he evaluated and rejected because it did not support his argument, or perhaps contradicted it altogether. Real life is seldom as neat as it appears in a Malcolm Gladwell book. -- Leslie T. Chang

Kirkus Review

There is a logic behind why some people become successful, and it has more to do with legacy and opportunity than high IQ.

In his latest book, New Yorker contributor Gladwell (*Blink*, 2005, etc.) casts his inquisitive eye on those who have risen meteorically to the top of their fields, analyzing developmental patterns and searching for a common thread. The author asserts that there is no such thing as a self-made man, that "the true origins of high achievement" lie instead in the circumstances and influences of one's upbringing, combined with excellent timing. The Beatles had Hamburg in 1960-62; Bill Gates had access to an ASR-33 Teletype in 1968. Both put in thousands of hours--Gladwell posits that 10,000 is the magic number--on their

craft at a young age, resulting in an above-average head start. The author makes sure to note that to begin with, these individuals possessed once-in-a-generation talent in their fields. He simply makes the point that both encountered the kind of "right place at the right time" opportunity that allowed them to capitalize on their talent, a delineation that often separates moderate from extraordinary success. This is also why Asians excel at mathematics--their culture demands it. If other countries schooled their children as rigorously, the author argues, scores would even out. Gladwell also looks at "demographic luck," the effect of one's birth date. He demonstrates how being born in the decades of the 1830s or 1930s proved an enormous advantage for any future entrepreneur, as both saw economic booms and demographic troughs, meaning that class sizes were small, teachers were overqualified, universities were looking to enroll and companies were looking for employees. In short, possibility comes "from the particular opportunities that our particular place in history presents us with." This theme appears throughout the varied anecdotes, but is it groundbreaking information? At times it seems an exercise in repackaged *carpe diem*, especially from a mind as attuned as Gladwell's. Nonetheless, the author's lively storytelling and infectious enthusiasm make it an engaging, perhaps even inspiring, read. Sure to be a crowd-pleaser.

Discussion Questions (www.litlovers.com/)

- 1.** Malcolm Gladwell is interested in what makes some people more successful than others. Overall, how would you describe his thesis, or central premise? Do you agree or disagree with his ideas?
- 2.** What does Gladwell mean by the term "outlier"?
- 3.** Why does Gladwell insist that IQ is not the determining factor in one's ability to achieve success? What does he mean when he suggests that IQ reaches a point of diminishing returns after reaching 130?
- 4.** Gladwell draws upon Robert Sternberg's idea of "practical intelligence." What is practical intelligence, and how does it differ from IQ?
- 5.** According to Gladwell, what is the reason that Asians excel at mathematics? Discuss the cultural and educational differences that he points to as explanation.
- 6.** Why does Gladwell feel there is no such thing as a self-made person. Do you agree? Can you name people who overcame great odds—circumstances not in their favor—to attain success? What about those people that Gladwell offers in support of his argument (Steve Jobs, Bill Gates, or the Beatles, among others)? Do you agree with his assessment that much depends on timing?
- 7.** Do Gladwell's many anecdotes prove his hypothesis? Or do his stories exemplify his ideas? Is there a difference...if

so, what? Some critics suggest that Gladwell cherry-picks his facts in order to support his premise. Is that a valid observation or not?

8. Is Gladwell suggesting that success is a matter of luck, the roll of the die? If so—if success depends on timing, birth, and opportunities—then do innate qualities (ambition or raw talent) have any role to play?

9. What personal experiences—people and incidents in your own life—can you think of that support or challenge Gladwell's ideas?

10. What did you find most surprising, humorous or thought-provoking in Gladwell's book? Any "ah-ha!" moments? Any-thing strike you as dubious? Have you come away thinking differently than before? What, if anything, do you feel you've learned?

11. Gladwell gives differing definitions of intelligence. Yet his definition of success is singular—"worldly" success in terms of of wealth, power, and fame. Are there also differing definitions of success that Gladwell doesn't consider? If so, what are they, and what does it take to achieve those versions of success?

Read-Alikes

Tony Hsieh, [*Delivering Happiness : A Path to Profits, Passion, and Purpose*](#) (2010)

Pay brand-new employees \$2,000 to quit. Make customer service the responsibility of the entire company -- not just a department. Focus on company culture as the #1 priority. Apply research from the science of happiness to running a business. Help employees grow-both personally and professionally. Seek to change the world. Oh, and make money too... Sound crazy? It's all standard operating procedure at Zappos, the online retailer that's doing over \$1 billion in gross merchandise sales annually. After debuting as the highest-ranking newcomer in Fortune magazine's annual "Best Companies to Work For" list in 2009, Zappos was acquired by Amazon in a deal valued at over \$1.2 billion on the day of closing. In *Delivering Happiness*, Zappos CEO Tony Hsieh shares the different lessons he has learned in business and life, from starting a worm farm to running a pizza business, through Link Exchange, Zappos, and more. Fast-paced and down-to-earth, *Delivering Happiness* shows how a very different kind of corporate culture is a powerful model for achieving success-and how by concentrating on the happiness of those around you, you can dramatically increase your own.

Stephen Covey, [*The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*](#) (1989)

Dr. Stephen Covey draws upon years of studying success literature in this analysis of the common mental habits of truly successful people. Each habit builds on the one before it, until they all come together in one smooth way of thinking. They all build on Covey's central themes: change must come from the inside, and success is built on character, not on organization.

Geoff Colvin, [*Talent Is Overrated: What Really Separates World-Class Performers from Everybody Else*](#) (2010)

Talent is Overrated is based on an article that Colvin wrote on the topic of success and talent for Fortune magazine titled "What It Takes to Be Great." In the article and subsequent book, Colvin argues that what leads to success in one's career, or in any field, is not innate talent but rather practice and determination, and a specific type of practice at that. Colvin uses examples of prominent figures such as Tiger Woods, Winston Churchill, and Warren Buffet, among others, to illustrate his points. He theorizes that many of the skills used in the business world follow the same principles that lead to greatness, so it is possible to learn how to systematically practice, analyze results, learn from mistakes, and improve in any area that one desires.

Dan Ariely, [*Predictably Irrational*](#) (2008)

Economist Dan Ariely takes a look at consumer spending and social norms in *Predictably Irrational*. Using "behavioral economics" --part psychology and part finance--Ariely explores why we buy what buy. For example, why do some people prefer Coke over Pepsi, or why do people think generic drugs are less effective than brand names? *Predictably Irrational* raises thought provoking questions on consumerism, while showcasing the irrationality of human behavior in an entertaining way. The author suggests we redefine the way we look at spending and the motivations behind it, thus creating a new economic model.

Daniel H. Pink, [*Drive: The Surprising Truth About What Motivates Us*](#) (2009)

Why do people do what they do? What is the drive that makes them act, and act in a particular way? Daniel H. Pink explores this ancient question in *Drive: The Surprising Truth About What Motivates Us*. Pink breaks down several means by which people are motivated, such as the need to find primary necessities, the desire for reward, or the fear of punishment. Pink's book posits that motivation evolves along with humanity. At first, people operated with "Motivation 1.0"--the desire to meet basic needs and stay alive. Then, civilized people devised "Motivation 2.0," a "carrot on a stick" system of working for a reward and to avoid a punishment. Pink feels this stage is no longer sufficient and it's time for humanity to discover or invent a "Motivation 3.0" that allows people to become more fully fulfilled.

Watch-Alikes

[*Freakonomics*](#), Magnolia (2011)

The highly anticipated film version of the phenomenally bestselling book about incentives-based thinking by renowned economists Steven Levitt and Stephen Dubner. Like the book, the film examines human behavior with provocative and sometimes hilarious case studies, bringing together a dream team of filmmakers responsible for some of the most acclaimed and entertaining documentaries in recent years.

[*2 Million Minutes*](#), Broken Pencil Productions (2007)

Examines the daily lives, pressures, and ambitions of six high school students the US, China, and India, and their future prospects in the global economy.

[*Naturally Successful*](#), Arnold Creek Productions (2008)

A new type of entrepreneur is changing industries and the world at the speed of business. Making a profit is essential, but their measures of success include the social, environment and economic impacts. Entrepreneur innovators see limitless opportunities in the challenges of the 21st century.

[The Social Network](#), Sony Pictures (2011)

On a fall night in 2003, Harvard undergrad and computer programming genius Mark Zuckerberg sits down at his computer and heatedly begins working on a new idea. In a fury of blogging and programming, what begins in his dorm room soon becomes a global social network and a revolution in communication. A mere six years and 500 million friends later, Zuckerberg is the youngest billionaire in history, but for this entrepreneur, success leads to both personal and legal complications.

[Acorn Entrepreneurs](#), Big Kids Productions (2005)

Interviews with eight young entrepreneurs, ages 9-17, who share their experiences of starting and operating their own business, covering subjects such as managing money, social responsibility, overcoming obstacles, and making mistakes.



Ann Arbor District Library