

## [Excellence isn't just winning a prize – it is how you live your life](#)

Posted March 24, 2011 by Rene' Street, Executive Director of the American Business Women's Association

You are no doubt familiar with many symbols of excellence. Many times these symbols take the form of prizes, such as the Nobel Prize, the Olympic gold medal or the Malcolm Baldrige Award for organizations in the business, healthcare, education and nonprofit sectors. Of course, in the American Business Women's Association we've established our own award for quality management known simply as BEST PRACTICES.

I believe these symbols of excellence are important for providing some motivation to businesses and individuals for going above and beyond the acceptable level of performance. The recognition that comes with being singled out for excellence will naturally boost our sense of self-esteem and can have a positive impact on our careers and our business performance. However, I would caution all reading this blog, striving for excellence with the goal of winning a prize, a statuette, or a moment to grace the stage with your presence, misses the point — by a landslide. When it comes to excellence, it's the arduous journey that's the most important versus the destination. I think Aristotle said it best.

*“Excellence is an art won by training and habituation. We do not act rightly because we have virtue or excellence, but we rather have those because we have acted rightly. We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence is not an act but a habit.”* Aristotle

So where and how do you learn about excellence? For me, the idea of excellence was a consequence of my career choice coupled with an amazing opportunity to study with several revered ballet masters. One such master named Vladimir Dokoudovsky (nicknamed the Duke), was not only popular but demanded your attention and commitment every time you stepped into his class at Carnegie Hall.

I can still picture the “Duke” today, walking through the door wearing his starched white shirt, black pants, and a cumber bun with a lit cigarette dangling out of the corner of his mouth. He would begin class by demonstrating the exercise he wanted us to perform in cadence with the music. If he was not satisfied, he would say in a low voice “again” (repeatedly) until the dancer or dancers had executed the movement to his satisfaction. It was the “Duke” who taught us that excellence is a product of **commitment AND opportunity**. The dancers were committed to excellence however, Mr. Dokoudovsky gave us the opportunity to learn, rehearse and master the art of dance.

That's exactly what we are doing here in the American Business Women's Association. We are providing working women and women business owners with the opportunity to LEARN, to REHEARSE and to MASTER the art of business through our educational forums, online learning and in our ABWA teams (chapters and Express Networks). Your opportunity for excellence is waiting for you here in the American Business Women's Association. All you need is the commitment. Join today at [www.abwa.org](http://www.abwa.org) or 1-800-228-0007.