

The Power of Perseverance: Dr. Rainer Zitelmann Shares Insights From 'Unbreakable Spirit'

by **Craig Richer** — November 29, 2023

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Dr. Rainer Zitelmann is a distinguished scholar, entrepreneur, and author whose multifaceted career has left an indelible mark on the fields of business, economics, and personal development. With a background in history and philosophy, Dr. Zitelmann has seamlessly blended academic rigor with real-world insights, positioning himself as a thought leader at the nexus of wealth creation and human achievement. His extensive research has given rise to a body of work that explores the psychology of success, dissecting the lives of high achievers to uncover the principles that drive exceptional outcomes.

In addition to his scholarly pursuits, Dr. Zitelmann is a seasoned entrepreneur, having successfully navigated the intricate landscapes of business and finance. His practical experience enriches his perspectives, offering audiences a nuanced understanding of the dynamics that underpin prosperity. Driven by a mission to empower individuals to realize their full potential, Dr. Rainer Zitelmann continues to inspire and inform through his writings, lectures, and media engagements, making him a revered figure in the realms of personal development and success psychology.

Can you share a bit about your background and what led you to specialize in the fields of history, sociology, and economics?

I was already very interested in politics at the age of eight. Later, as a teenager, I was very left-wing, like many young people. But over time, my attitudes have changed. I think we can learn a lot from history, especially about which systems improve people's lives and which do not. The greatest trick anti-capitalists have pulled is to compare the real-world system under which we live with an ideal of the perfect world of their dreams, an ideal that does not and has never existed anywhere in the world. Anti-capitalists rely on the fact that most people know little about history and the extreme poverty and inhumane circumstances our ancestors lived in before capitalism emerged. And they know that most people today will have learned very little from their teachers at school or university about the cruel and callous conditions under socialism.

Finally, they paint the future in the blackest colors, whereby they attribute every problem and crisis not to failures of the state, but to alleged deficiencies in the market. And the fact that every single anti-capitalist system without exception has ended in failure is an argument socialists are not willing to accept. They always have a response ready – that was not “true” socialism at all! – and confidently insinuate that, after 100 years of failed socialist experiments, they have finally found the right recipe to make socialism work after all.

Talk to us about your newest book, “Unbreakable Spirit: Rising Above All Odds.” Did your research for this book lead you to any personal insights or reflections on the nature of resilience and the human spirit?

Ludwig van Beethoven, who composed his Ninth Symphony when he was already almost completely deaf (and, incidentally, half blind), once wrote to his friend Nikolaus Zmeskall, “strength is the morality of the man who stands out from the rest, and it is mine.” An important lesson is that successful people are even able to turn a disadvantage into an advantage. For example, we can learn a lot from the physicist Stephen Hawking. Hawking is, according to the aforementioned survey in the United States, the most famous “successful person with a disability.” In his autobiography, he writes, “I haven't had to lecture or teach undergraduates, and I haven't had to sit in on tedious and time-consuming committees. So I have been able to devote myself completely to research.” In his opinion, people with disabilities should “concentrate on things that their handicap doesn't prevent them from doing and not regret those they can't do.”

What are your thoughts on the impact of social media on perceptions of success and wealth, especially among younger generations?

Social media can inspire and motivate people because they can find stories of very successful people. But they can also mislead people if they create the illusion that success and wealth can be achieved in just a few years. This may happen in exceptional cases, but the rule is that you need at least 10 years before you can achieve extraordinary things in any area.

How do you see the role of education in shaping individuals' perspectives on success, wealth, and

How do you see the role of education in shaping individuals' perspectives on success, wealth, and capitalism?

I think learning about history is particularly important. History has many lessons for us, including the fact that capitalism is the most successful system the world has ever seen and that all socialist systems have failed. But most young people unfortunately know far too little about history. I give lectures all over the world, this year I have been to 30 countries in Asia, Europe, Latin America and the USA. And whenever I give talks, I always ask people, "how many of you have heard in school about Mao Zedong's "Great Leap Forward," the greatest socialist experiment in human history? Wherever I speak, very, very few people respond. At school or university, 95 percent have never heard that 45 million people died between 1958 and 1962 as a result of this socialist experiment in Mao's China. I find that shocking. It says a lot about our schools and universities.

How do you approach the topic of work-life balance, and do you believe it is achievable for individuals pursuing ambitious goals?

Doing a job you don't love is tantamount to throwing your life away. Even if you only have a part-time job, you are bound to spend the better part of your waking life working. Once you've subtracted the hours you spend sleeping, shopping, running bureaucratic errands, looking after your personal hygiene and bodily needs, getting to work, and other routines, you will probably find that you spend more than two thirds of your day working. The concept of "work / life balance" is one of the most unfortunate expressions to have been coined in recent years, as it implies that life and work are two separate, even mutually exclusive areas of human activity. If you feel that your life takes place outside of and away from your workplace, you may want to consider changing your job – or at least changing those aspects of your current job that stand in the way of enjoying your everyday work.