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The “T” in the G.O.A.T.

• By Astrid Ambroziak

*“... never to rest and never to have: only to grow.
Always the beautiful answer who asks a more beautiful question.”*

- e.e. cummings

What makes for the Greatest of All Time? What constitutes the best day? What ingredients create the best product or the best event? What makes anything better? And what is the greatest parking experience?

Although, during the pandemic, many hotels were shut down, the Hollywood Hotel was able to pivot.

In his book “Outliers,” Malcolm Gladwell popularized the idea that the secret to greatness is natural aptitude plus 10,000 hours of appropriate practice, focused practice. Yes, there are exceptions to the rule. Especially when a person utilizes time more efficiently. In classical music, for the 73 great composers who took 10 years to excel, there is also Satie, Paganini and Shostakovich. At 18, in 1800, Nicolo Paganini was appointed first violin of the Republic of Lucca. Erik Satie was publishing salon compositions in 1881 at 15. Dimitri Shostakovich, at 13, in 1919, was admitted to the Petrograd Conservatory.

On Feb 7, 2021, Tom Brady won his 7th Super Bowl Ring in his 10th appearance in the championship game. Unequivocally, Tom is a talented athlete. He has the natural ability yet, it is his 10,000 specific, focused hours over and over that make him the GOAT. And those endless hours all start with a question. Tom is legendary for studying the tapes of previous games. Of looking within and learning from his own mistakes. In other words, Tom Brady constantly questions.

Perhaps it was Tom Brady, Gladwell, the pandemic, the piles of books I have read lately, including Warren Berger’s “A More Beautiful Question: The Power of Inquiry to Spark Breakthrough Ideas,” that have led me to living in a question. Yes, I “smile more, talk less” and ask more questions. Yet, through all of it, I have learned that the right questions are more difficult than any answers. Two of the questions I have been asking myself this past year are: what if I don’t have time for 10,000 hours practice? And can I find a way to be better, do better with less time involved? How? Time and focus have become the answer.

Therefore, the other day, while on a conference call with a.lot’s Saul Umbrasas, I asked him where I could see their system at work. Saul graciously arranged for me to take a field trip to the Hollywood Hotel on Vermont Street in Los Angeles to see his system at work and meet one of the hotel’s owners, Kian Zarrinam. I gave Saul my license plate number and I was ready to go to ask my questions. I was super excited to see the ANPR system, but also to visit the hotel where Rudolph Valentino, who lived in the previous location of the hotel in room 264, met his first wife, Jean Acker.

It all went as smooth as butter without any obstacles, and only pleasant surprises. For one, I pulled up to the gate of the parking lot of the hotel and ‘boom’ the gates opened up. A camera read my license plate and I was in. And although the ghost of Rudolph was nowhere in sight, Kian Zarrinam possessed the good looks and the charm of Mr. Valentino himself.

I asked him why did they decide to choose this system? How pleased were they with the system? And what was the most important ingredient of a good parking system?

To the first question, Kian told me about the previous system they had and how dissatisfied they were. The former provider left them in the dark and didn’t deliver. Basically, left them with a



Hollywood Hotel Owner Kian Zarrinam and the author at the hotel's main auto entry.

system that cost a fortune and didn't work. Zarrinnam was burned out, lost money, and was left with a toxic taste in his mouth. Yet, he continued to ask questions. He called around. He found Saul, who came in and asked what the Hollywood Hotel needed and listened to their experience. They provided solutions that would fit the hotel. They defined its needs and fulfilled them. They provided cameras and a sleek Softra pay station machine and an easy exit gate. And then they followed up, and do so until this day.

Although, during the pandemic, many hotels were shut down, the Hollywood Hotel was able to pivot. The hotel neighbors many medical facilities and hospitals. The first responders have been staying there until life returns to normal and all the tourists are back. How important is parking for first responders after they have been putting their lives on the line to keep us safe? Non-eventful parking is the best parking for them. The parking system made it possible for these front-line workers to come and go and focus on the larger picture.

Also, in partnership with SpotHero, the system allows a patient visiting her doctor in a nearby medical facility to book a parking spot online and move onto more important things. The hotel no longer has to hire booth staff to mind the parking facility. So yes, Hollywood Hotel is beyond pleased. They found a system provider that cares about them and their bottom line.

As to that special ingredient that makes parking good and the parking experience the greatest of all time, the most

important one, Zarrinnam responded, is *time*. It is all about time. The system must be simple. It must be non-eventful and intuitive both for the customer and the hotel owners. The hotel can manage their own parking. No need for extra staff. They save time. And time is money. Time is fleeting. Stress steals time. Zarrinnam had a need, so he asked questions. And in the process of asking these questions he found a perfect parking system provider for the hotel. He studied his options just as Tom Brady religiously studies his tapes at 5 am in the morning and thus, at age 43, brings a Super Bowl win to the city that last won 18 years ago.

How many of us still have 10,000 hours anymore to be the best? Yet, we have some time to get better in everything we do as long as we start with the question. What? What if? How? To paraphrase e.e. cummings: when living in a beautiful question, we always get a beautiful answer. Perhaps not right away, but we become a beautiful answer in the process. We grow. Parking became a beautiful answer to the Hollywood Hotel, and Tom Brady the answer to all of us "old" people in Florida and beyond. The "T" in G.O.A.T for Tampa Bay is "Tom." For the Hollywood Hotel, it's as it was originally, "time."

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