

Lessons from Building Praxis – Part 10

“There is no silver bullet that’s going to fix that. No, we are going to have to use a lot of lead bullets.” – Bill Turpin (quoted by Ben Horowitz)

There’s always that one hurdle that won’t give. It’s the bottleneck slowing growth. There’s got to be some big, clever tactic that vaults you over in one swift motion.

You start banging your head against the wall, hoping to have a eureka moment that solves it. I did. Then I picked up *The Hard Thing About Hard Things* by Ben Horowitz and confirmed a depressing, freeing suspicion.

You probably won’t find a silver bullet. You probably have to destroy that hurdle with thousands of lead bullets.

Stop looking for a silver bullet and start spraying lead

In the first year of Praxis, there were several desperate-for-a-silver-bullet moments. Bewildering circumstances where the gum in the works couldn’t be pinpointed. Just a tough slog. Every step forward took Herculean effort.

This can’t continue if we’re going to grow like we want to!

The temptation to find a silver bullet crept in. I’d lay awake at night wonder what the one breakthrough was that would free us from the relentless grind. I’d fantasize about a big PR hit out of nowhere, a new vertical that would sell itself, an investment that would magically grow everything, or a new employee who had all the secrets.

Silver bullets are rare, and probably can’t be found on purpose. For me, even the desire for one was (and is) dangerous.

The desire for a silver bullet shifts energy and attention away from what’s in my control to a series of delightful hypotheticals about what might happen if lightning struck. It slowly dragged me into a passive, victim mindset, away from an ownership, action bias.

This happened many times and I had to fight it every time. Whenever I caught myself saying, “If only we had...” I administered a figurative slap on the wrist.

Consistent firing of lead bullets isn’t glorious. It’s ugly. Even when stuff starts to hit the target, you’ve got so much ballistic material flying everywhere it’s hard to isolate the accurate shots and repeat them.

This is not an argument in favor of wild inefficiency. The more you can narrow it down to

the most effective and repeatable tactics, the better. But continuing the salvo is more important early on than putting the action on hold while you try to guess the perfect attack.

Every time I think we've finally outgrown the chaotic lead bullet phase and become deadly silver bullet snipers, I'm wrong. There are areas of the business that mature into tighter tactics for sure, but there is always some frontier somewhere with no silver bullet that demands a pistol-packed posse to recklessly drain lead.

A lot of people go down in search of a silver bullet. I decided that wouldn't be me, and if I went down, I'd go down firing whatever I had, silver or lead.