

THE
BUSINESS
OLYMPIAN

THE BUSINESS OLYMPIAN

OVERCOMING HURDLES IN
TODAY'S BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT

Gavin Freeman



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Most importantly, I would like to thank my wife Fiona for supporting me through this process and my kids Jordyn and Cody who allowed me the peace and quiet to write this – well sort of.

Finally, thanks to Dirk Rossey for a damn good idea!

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Our friend was unusually insistent, not only that we should meet, but that we *must*. He knew what Gavin and I didn't – that in a sense we had each been scaling opposite sides of the same mountain, and he had the foresight to want to give us the opportunity to meet at the top.

I was working as a corporate lawyer for Sir Richard Branson and the Virgin group in Australia and the Asia Pacific region, and had just emerged from two years of intensive marathon swimming, culminating in a solo crossing of the English Channel in 2006.

Our different paths through the worlds of sports and business had led us each separately to the same conclusion: that there is a very fertile, yet under-

explored, field of mental training where sport and business intersect, and that elite performers in both fields on a daily basis use and perfect mental training techniques that can be adapted to hone performance in the other. I had drawn lessons from successful entrepreneurs like Sir Richard Branson on the role of risk-taking, decision-making, and mental focus which were invaluable in swimming the English Channel. Gavin's training of Olympic athletes had yielded techniques which he had successfully imparted to CEOs to sharpen their performance in the business world, creating 'Business Olympians'.

For both of us, our experiences in sport and business left us convinced that the elite performers in each of those areas shared an ability to harness the power of their minds to drive spectacular performance. It is this ability, and the methods they use to do so, that inform *The Business Olympian's* exploration of sporting and business excellence.

Gavin's book will take you inside the minds of elite athletes and give you an insight into how the power of the mind can be harnessed to improve your effectiveness in business. He has made accessible to his readers a range of invaluable tips, tricks and techniques to train and enhance the performance of a new generation of Business Olympians.

I trust that you will enjoy this important and brilliant book – and the rewards that mastery of its techniques will bring – as much as I did.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Ben McGuire". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Ben McGuire
Regional General Counsel
Virgin Management Asia Pacific

Preamble



BEFORE YOU START READING THIS BOOK you need to complete a small challenge. It is vital that you follow these instructions to the letter. Firstly for the male readers, remove your tie –Females, lose those high heels. Quickly, hurry up! OK, now remove the rest of your clothing. Good – don't look in the mirror just yet. Now put on a pair of shorts, a T-shirt and running shoes. Now head outside and sprint for 400 metres and measure your time. It might be worthwhile monitoring your heart rate while you run, just in case ...

Now that you're back and hopefully tired and sweaty, you have an idea how elite athletes feel most of the day. The pain you are experiencing replicates a minute amount of exertion that the average elite athlete feels on a regular basis. Their ongoing challenge is to be able to perform complex tasks consistently while experiencing this discomfort. While you may not experience pain in this same form during work, the pressure placed on you to perform consistently will be the same. Your pain may be different, but just as debilitating.

I want you to consider this – Maurice Green won the 100 metre sprint at the Sydney Olympics in 9.87 seconds. Kim Collins, who came last, ran the same distance in 10.17 – a time difference of 0.3 of a second. If you had set your goal to be in the top twenty per cent – that is, better than eighty per cent of the entire planet's population, assuming each country sends its best competitors to the Olympics – you would have run a time of 11.844. With that time you would not have even made the team. OK, what about the top ten per cent? Your time would have improved to 10.857 seconds, but you would still be sitting in the stands watching instead of competing.

This book is designed to let you in on the secrets that athletes have developed over the years so that you too can create an environment where you can realise your full potential by developing strategies and skills to cope with adverse influences which you may face.

Introduction



Don't look to great companies for inspirations. Instead look to the world's greatest sporting teams. Sport is the most relevant model for peak performance in business. Sport is about teamwork, inclusion and empowerment. It's about passion, fun, excitement, making magic, winning and being part of a dream.

Kevin Roberts, chairman and CEO of advertising agency
Saatchi and Saatchi world-wide

THE BACKGROUND TO THIS BOOK IS VERY INTERESTING. It all began on the thirty-second floor of a prestigious building in Sydney. I was presenting a proposal to the vice-president of learning and development of a major broking and banking firm. At the end of the presentation, the vice-president approached me and proposed the merging of my sporting expertise and passion and his experience in the business world. It just made sense. Sport and business on the surface appear to be poles apart, but on closer inspection the similarities are greater than many realise. A Paralympian shooting athlete once described a situation where he was able to maintain his concentration for a two-hour shooting event. He was required to sit absolutely still and fire a .22 pistol at a target twenty-five metres away. He was 'in the zone'. Sounds simple? Well it is – just get into the zone and remember how you got there and what it felt like and then just re-create it whenever you need to. Not so simple anymore? This book shows you how athletes discover how to get into their individual zone. It then shows you how you can do the same thing within your work environment.

Why should I bother?



OVER THE LAST FIFTY YEARS SPORTING TEAMS have turned to psychology as a means of optimising their performance and consistency. Just as in the world of business, athletes have been exposed to increased competition within their individual sporting events. The predominance of technology in sports training and the use of professionals such as physiologists, psychologists, biomechanists, trainers, physiotherapists, nutritionists and specialist coaches has reduced the gap between competing sporting teams and between individual athletes. To re-establish this gap, or to enhance the competitive performance of athletes in pursuit of world dominance, sporting bodies and institutes have turned to the largely untapped but extremely important domain of mental skills. Sport psychologists address the subtle and intangible aspects of sporting performance that leading players or athletes have recognised for centuries.

Success in a sport at the highest level is ten per cent physical and ninety per cent mental.

While there will be some who challenge this statement, my overall sense of the elite world confirms that once an athlete has achieved all the physical traits required to be successful on the world stage, it is the mental toughness which then allows them to compete effectively and remain at the top for years to come.

A similar trend is emerging in the commercial and business world. Proactive managers are beginning to realise that technology and marketing alone are not sufficient to sustain a competitive advantage in any industry. Most organisations have access to similar technologies and marketing strategies. Again, the business world has begun to address the untapped and intangible aspects of their operations by employing corporate psychologists. This is but one of the many apparent overlaps between sport and business and it demonstrates the diversity of psychology, beyond its often communicated and frequently reproduced stereotypes. In fact, the applied sport and organisational domains of psychology are surprisingly

‘normal’ in their approaches, as well as logical in their methodologies. Both are aimed at taking performance above those levels that are currently achievable, as well as sustaining or enhancing the consistency of excellent performance. The human element of performance in any domain is central to this endeavour.

So what can sport and business practitioners learn from one another in order for each of them to be more successful?

Atmosphere and climate



HISTORICALLY, SPORTING TEAMS WERE BOUND BY A CULTURE that suggested winning was the only acceptable goal. However, this orientation also means that one individual or team can only win when another loses. Therefore, at least one half of all Australian sports participants lose in any sporting contest (consider that in any major golf tournament, 144 start only one wins). This ‘winners’ versus ‘losers’ philosophy is commonly referred to by psychologists as an ‘ego’ involvement. That is, people associate so positively with winning and negatively with losing that the thought of ‘losing’ becomes debilitating. The general consensus is that people with a win-lose mentality can only cope so long as they continue to succeed. However, they are not able to cope well with unsuccessful outcomes. This can obviously become a problem within the context of competitive sport, where opponents are often well matched and equally capable. Outcomes of failure in ‘ego’ oriented athletes are often characterised by reduced effort, making excuses and increased cheating, followed by an overall reduction in confidence. A realisation has now developed that the win-lose mentality has created some major problems in the ways that players would react to and cope with failure.

Therefore, changes have been necessary to establish ways of helping athletes not only perform better and more consistently, but to learn from their performances and improve over time. After all, without athletes who can cope with failure, teams cannot be effective. For example, sports revenue will ultimately be threatened as spectators demand a certain level of achievement to be maintained. That is, spectators want to see their team be competitive each game, regardless of previous results. A new approach to competition was necessary.

Sporting teams have subsequently strived to create an atmosphere where the emphasis is placed on the performance of skills and the processes by which successful outcomes are realised. An inability to achieve a desired outcome is not seen as a failure, but more importantly, identifies areas in which the components of that performance can be improved. In contrast to an 'ego' climate, this approach to competition is commonly referred to as a 'task' climate. Thus sport psychologists have been less concerned with catching and punishing poor performance, than with providing for the development of the team or the individual athlete in subsequent performances. In short, this method has been used to foster consistent, high quality skill execution by improving performance rather than punishing undesired results.

Similarly, it is increasingly the case that managers must evaluate beyond the bottom line to look at how work is carried out. To simply look at the end result is to ignore the many actions that contributed to that outcome along the way. Business managers will also be aware of the problems of achieving and sustaining excellent performance from their workforce in times of high competition and customer service demands. As has been outlined in the context of competitive sport, it is necessary that workers learn and develop from their mistakes rather than simply being told they have not performed adequately.

Cheating and antisocial behaviour in sport have frequently resulted from a system that has focused on outcomes rather than the processes by which outcomes are reached. Similarly, business managers face the challenge of assessing the quality of work performed by their staff and providing relevant feedback about such work. This approach will motivate staff to be honest with their supervisors, even when they 'fail'. It will take away the fear of punishment. Blessed is the employee who is encouraged by their managers to learn and develop from the work they produce. After all, how many of today's managers have reached their position without at least the occasional mistake? And how many of these managers so feared the ramifications of these mistakes that they were motivated to cover them up, make excuses or ignore the problems until enough time had passed to blur their accountability? How many of these managers would have benefited from being encouraged to learn from their actions without fear of reprisal and without their future advancement being threatened? Coaches and managers need to direct

the energy of their employees towards developing better ways of performing rather than developing better ways of avoiding the negative consequences of their results.

In sport, as in business, there are a multitude of ways in which a group or individual can attain a beneficial outcome. In fact, there may be any number of ways to arrive at exactly the same outcome, be that a premiership or a major contract or sale. It follows that simply measuring an outcome, or knowing what the outcome was, gives little indication of the work that went into producing it. Nor does the manager or coach in this situation know why the particular approach utilised was successful or unsuccessful. This information is all the more important if we consider the vast number of alternative strategies that could have been used to achieve a similar result. Thus, corporate and sport psychologists look at observing or measuring the processes that contribute to an end result, in order to maximise the efficiency of the efforts of athletes and employees. It is important for athletes and employees alike to know what it was about a certain performance on the sporting field or at work that made the outcome either positive or negative, and in both cases, what can be done to subsequently improve on that outcome.

How to read this book. Self-help books abound and many will simply tell you what to do and if you follow what they say you will be guaranteed success. If that is what you are looking for then this is not the book for you. The aim of this book is to guide you in your own development, much like the young athlete who has all the talent inside them and simply requires some guidance to allow it to come through. Similarly, what works for some athletes will not work for others. Many of the suggestions contained in this book come from athletes but they're not guaranteed to work for everyone. In fact, it is my recommendation that you don't implement every suggestion word for word. Instead, read the suggestions and then explore what will work for you in practice. By adapting the ideas for your personal situation you will 'own' them yourself and this will increase not only their benefits but how long you will be able to reap those benefits.

This book is structured in two sections. Part One looks at gaining a deeper understanding of yourself. There are three chapters which allow you to complete some self-evaluation as well as gaining an understanding of several important concepts. Part Two contains the specific skills that athletes possess that you may

want to adapt and make your own. Each chapter will present information from a sporting perspective with examples which are designed to highlight the process in practice. You will then be able to read the tips from our Olympians on how that skill could be transferred into the corporate world.

As England wicketkeeper Paul Nixon said recently, 'In sport, we've worked on our bodies for the last hundred years and taken it as far as we can go. I think we'll be working on our minds for the next hundred'.

The ultimate goal of this book is to help you to develop the skills which will allow you to become a Business Olympian.



PART ONE



Chapter 1

Emotional profiling – ‘the zone’

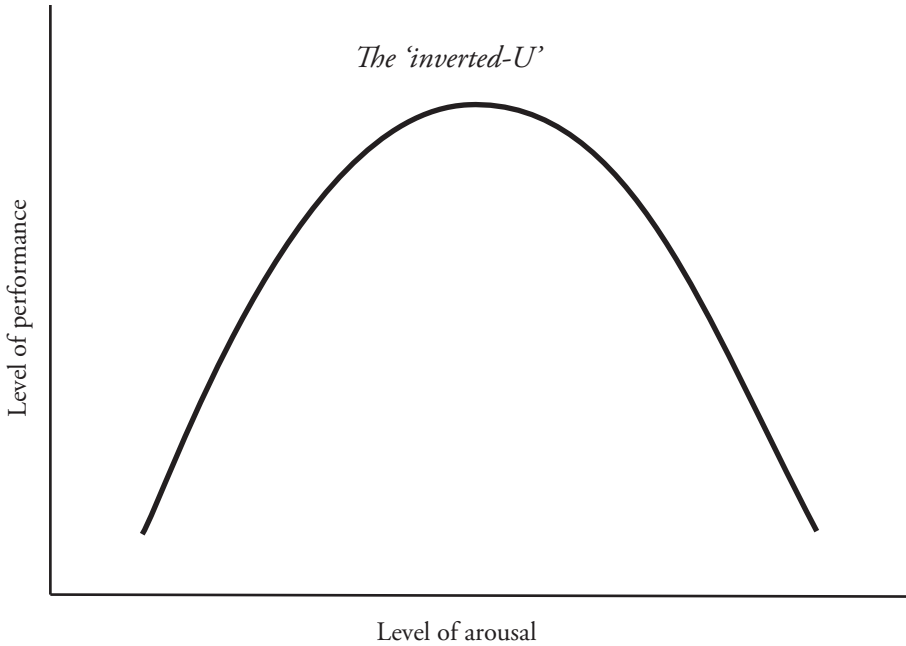


Getting into the zone is probably the most desired state any athlete strives to achieve. The challenge has always been how you find it and more importantly how you keep it.

Kristen Veal, WNBL and WNBA basketball player

THE ONE STATE ALL ATHLETES STRIVE FOR IS THE ILLUSIVE ‘ZONE’ – otherwise known as the ‘ideal performance state’. You hear them talk about it, they tell you they dream about achieving it, and you know they wish they could create it on demand. Most athletes will recall a time when they had it, or thought they had it. And all will want to get it back. But unfortunately most will tell you they don’t know how they created that mind space in the first place, nor how they can re-create it in the future. When an athlete is ‘in the zone’ everything is working at its optimum. You hear some athletes refer to the state as being effortless. Some say they feel like they are in slow motion, while others can’t recall how they were able to perform, they just did. When I was working with Olympic target shooters, the concept of the zone was always a hot topic. All agreed it existed, but none had a guaranteed way of getting into it. They all however would spend hours and hours trying to find ways to do so. I recall one shooter in particular who would liken the sensation of the zone to the sensation he would feel when breathing cool air in through a gap in his front teeth. The fresh feeling the air created put him well on the way to achieving this sought-after state. Sounds amazing. Imagine if you could perform in the zone like that at your next major sales pitch or that final presentation to a client on a huge project.

The current theories on this concept are all quite esoteric, but they can be summed up by the concept of the ‘inverted-U’.



The Y-axis represents performance and the X-axis the arousal state. The inverted-U theory suggests that at low levels of arousal, our performance is low and similarly, very high levels of arousal produce the same low levels of performance. The aim is to achieve the balance in the middle which is often referred to as the zone of optimal functioning. The problem starts now. Many performances will require a different zone, some are at the high end of the arousal axis while others are at the lower end. In essence, the theory holds true and it is still useful to understand the theory and the extension to the zone of optimal functioning.. However the theory falls way short of providing useful information for people to use effectively in their real lives. Because of this limitation, I propose the use of an emotional profile which will be more specific to you and your unique situation which I hope will allow you to re-create the emotional state you need to perform at your best.

My 'individual zone of optimal functioning' (IZOF) aims to relate the quality of a person's performance to their emotional state leading up to it. By documenting the quality of your performances and your emotional state before them you will be able to create your own emotional profile, and ultimately to determine the emotional state which is ideal for you to operate in.

The individual zone of optimal functioning allows a person to determine, with a high degree of accuracy, the state of awareness in which they are able to maintain high levels of performance. It is important to note that different zones may apply for different applications. A golfer will have different zones depending on the shot they are taking (for instance putting or driving). So too, in becoming a Business Olympian, you will need to be conscious of the fact that you may have to create several profiles depending on the requirements of your job.

As a starting point let's create a generic profile. This profile is how you feel on a day-to-day basis. Before starting to create your own profile, a very simple question needs to be discussed. Namely, how well can you evaluate your own emotional state?

The question is – how are you feeling today?

'Good' I hear you say. Well how good is good? Can you define it? Can you compare it to how you felt yesterday? Not so easy anymore.

Next – how happy are you right now on a scale of 1 to 10?

Now think back to a time when you were very happy, maybe a wedding day, birth of a child or job promotion. Now compare your happiness right now to that day.

What this should point out is that we are generally quite poor at measuring our emotions and it will take a little practice to get it right. Generally the testing period should last for about three to four weeks, recognising that the first week will be part of the 'emotional recognition phase'. The next part of this chapter will take you through the process of creating your own emotional profile. Have fun with it, and remember, it's yours and no one else needs to see it.

Creating a profile

To create an emotional profile requires two very distinct steps. The first is to understand what emotions you feel during the task at hand. The second is to use your profile in real-life situations. So let's begin.

Phase 1: List all these emotions you feel on a day-to-day basis. If you are struggling think back to a specific day at work, and think of all the emotions you felt. Next, label each emotion as negative or positive – this is just a label, not the effect the emotion has on you. Once you have identified whether the emotion is positive or negative, then indicate the effect that it has on you. It is not uncommon for someone to experience an emotion which could best be described as negative, but which actually has quite a positive effect on the person. Several Olympians I have worked with over the years have been concerned that they had several negative emotions in their profile. In most cases it was identified that the negative emotions either had a positive effect on their performance, or they were comfortable with having them in the background, and were actually glad they were able to compete with them there.

Here is an example:

Emotion	Positive or negative emotion	Effect on me
Aggression	Negative	Positive
Happiness	Positive	Positive
Frustrated	Negative	Negative
Content	Positive	Negative

Use this space to start completing your own list

Emotion	Positive or negative emotion	Effect on me

Now that you have your list, over the next four weeks carry it around with you. At the end of each day, you need to make a quick distinction. Was it a good or bad day? You are forced to make a call here – you can’t say you had an ‘average day’.

Once you have decided this, you need to then rate all those emotions on your list on a 1 to 10 scale, with 10 indicating you have maxed out that emotion and 1 suggesting it is not even present. The reason you need to keep this data for four weeks is that during the first week you will struggle to quantify your emotions. Therefore discard the first week’s data. The last three weeks (as you have discarded the first week) should give you fairly reliable data. Enter your scores into any spreadsheet program and create a graph based on the means of the ‘good days’ scores. Discard the ‘bad day’ scores. Your graph should have from five to fifteen words describing emotions along the X-axis and numbers from 1 to 10 describing your rating of each emotion on the Y-axis. Remember that your profile will differ from those of just about everybody else you know. Furthermore your profile will also differ depending on the task you were doing when you recorded it. Much like the golfer who will have a completely different profile for teeing-off than for putting.

Here is what the spreadsheet should look like – remember you need to insert your own emotions.

Emotion	Date	Date	Date	Date	Date	Date	Date	Date	Date
Scared									
Happy									
Focused									
Angry									
Jittery									
Assertive									
Relaxed									
Confident									
Good or bad day	Good Bad	Good Bad	Good Bad	Good Bad	Good Bad	Good Bad	Good Bad	Good Bad	Good Bad

You have now created your generic profile. You may need to create a specific profile for different tasks. Lawyers will often have a different profile for working

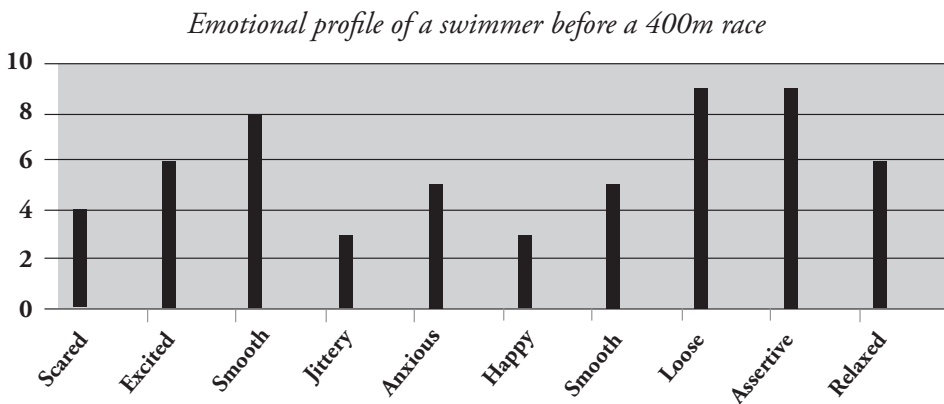
with their clients in the office to when they are in the court room. Similarly surgeons may alter their emotional needs when they enter the operating theatre.

In this first stage you have used your experiences to create an emotional profile. Now we need to use the profile to help create the emotional state you need to perform well. We are going to turn the tables on your emotions and use them to work for you instead of against you.

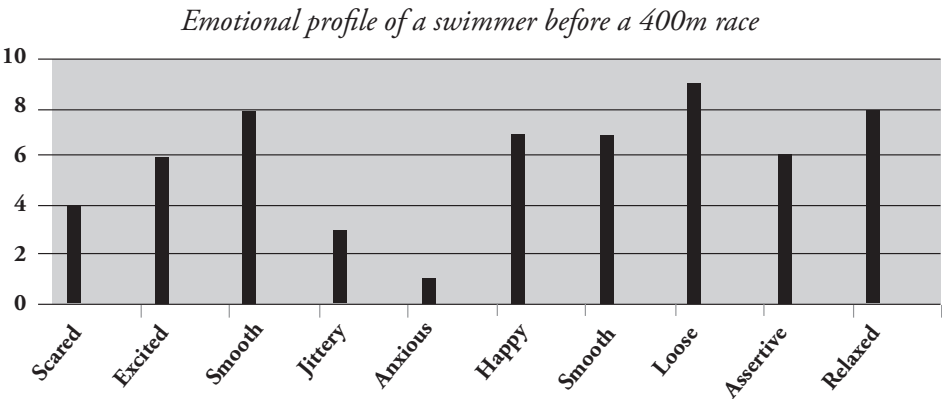
Phase 2: Your profile. Have a close look at it, as it now highlights the emotional state you need to enable your mind and body to realise your full potential. To use your profile, ask yourself how well your profile represents your current mood. You may find yourself either too high or too low on a particular emotion. This process should highlight the areas you may need to address.

The following is an example of a very successful swimmer’s emotional profile before a 400 m swim.

What this profile suggests is that for the swimmer to be successful, each of these emotions need to present, but at different levels. For example, he needs to be a little bit scared (4/10), but feeling very smooth (8/10). What you will notice is that he is comfortable with both positive and negative emotions. You will never be completely free of negative emotions and as this profile shows, you may actually need them to perform effectively. Note that in this instance when the swimmer uses the word ‘smooth’, the meaning of the word is unique to him. The word you use is not as important as the meaning behind the word.



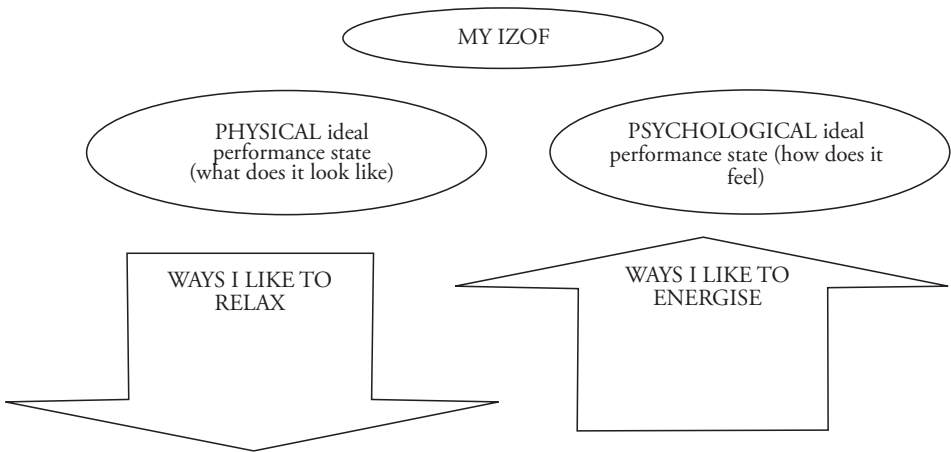
Here is the same athlete's profile before a 1500 m swim.



The differences are quite noticeable!

Steps to altering your emotional profile

The following diagram is a visual representation of the ideal performance state. Attempt to fill it in. The goal would be to identify your physical ideal performance state as well as your psychological performance state – the emotional profile you completed will provide you with the insight for the psychological component – the physical component requires you to reflect on your own body as to ‘how it likes to feel’ when you are ready to fire. The next step is to reflect on how you like to relax (refer to Chapter 15 for some additional ideas on relaxation) and what you need to boost your energy.



Chapter 2

Concentration and attention



Stockbrokers, bankers, traders, they are all the same beast, trying to maintain their focus all the time while not allowing distracting thoughts or stimuli to tear their minds away from the market. The best of the best would be clinical in their concentration. I often would get athletes to come in and speak with the team as a way of capturing some of their abilities to focus.

Dirk Rossey, former Vice-President Learning and Development
JP Morgan

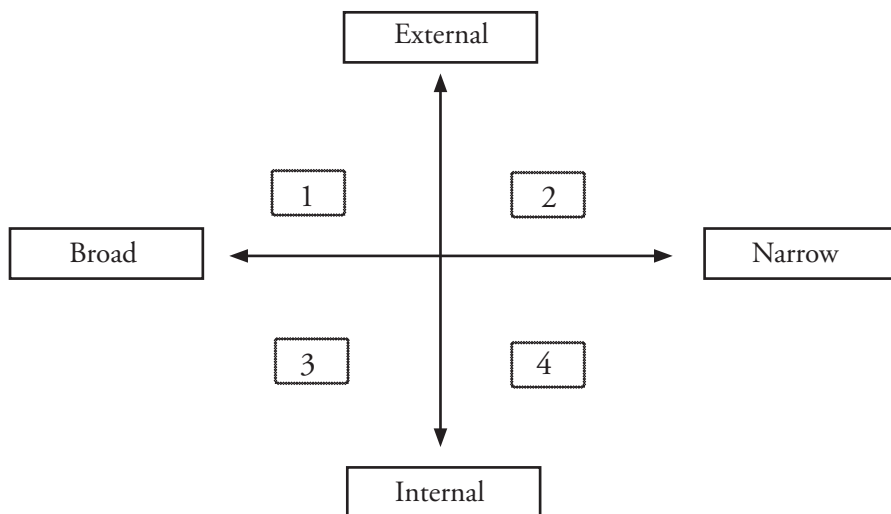
JUMP – I SAID JUMP! SHOULD BE EASY ENOUGH. If I am right you are currently jumping up and down trying your best to read the next couple of pages. Jumping is an easy concept. Now consider the following command – CONCENTRATE! It’s not as easy as we often make out! How many times have we been asked to just concentrate? The word is used as if it is a simple and straightforward task. It isn’t.

The diagram below shows that there are four separate areas we need to look at when we attempt to concentrate. To effectively concentrate you have to successfully operate within each of the four quadrants. Each quadrant is as important as the others and unless all are negotiated successfully your ability to concentrate will be greatly diminished. As an individual we will each have both strengths and weaknesses in each of these quadrants. It is unlikely that we will have strengths

in all four quadrants. In fact, we are guaranteed to have one quadrant containing a weakness, and that weakness will present itself as soon as we are placed in a position of adversity.

Figure 1 The four quadrants of concentration (Nideffer, R.M. 1995, Test of Attentional and Interpersonal Style - Revised, Assessment Systems International, New Berlin, WI.)

)



Consider the following example.

Tiger Woods stands on the first tee of the US PGA. It's a beautiful day, not a cloud in the sky, a brisk wind is blowing left to right (at around 6 km/h, so his caddy tells him). He has four full days of golf ahead of him and if he wins this tournament it will cement his number one spot and further solidify his claim to be one of the all time greats. Last night he received a call from his manager informing him that all the paper work was through on his new house and that the manager was negotiating a new sponsorship deal which would be quite lucrative. So, back to the first hole – how is Tiger concentrating and what is he attending to?

Quadrant one in the diagram represents a focus on the external world from a broad perspective. This focus is usually used in situations where you are observing your surroundings – as well as seeing, hearing, and feeling them. Tiger is standing on the tee, he is likely to be observing the hole, where the bunkers are, what the

length of the grass is, how fast the wind is blowing and its direction, and where he would like his golf ball to land. The key element here is to ensure you are looking in the right place. Once you have surveyed your surroundings you then shift into the second quadrant.

Quadrant two requires a more internal focus, but still in the broad sense. During this phase you will be deciding on the most appropriate action to take, and what tools you might use. This is the problem-solving quadrant. Tiger will be looking at his bag and the clubs he has, he will be contemplating the type of shot he will be playing and how best to utilise the elements. During this phase you may utilise information you have gained from previous occasions and apply it to the current circumstances.

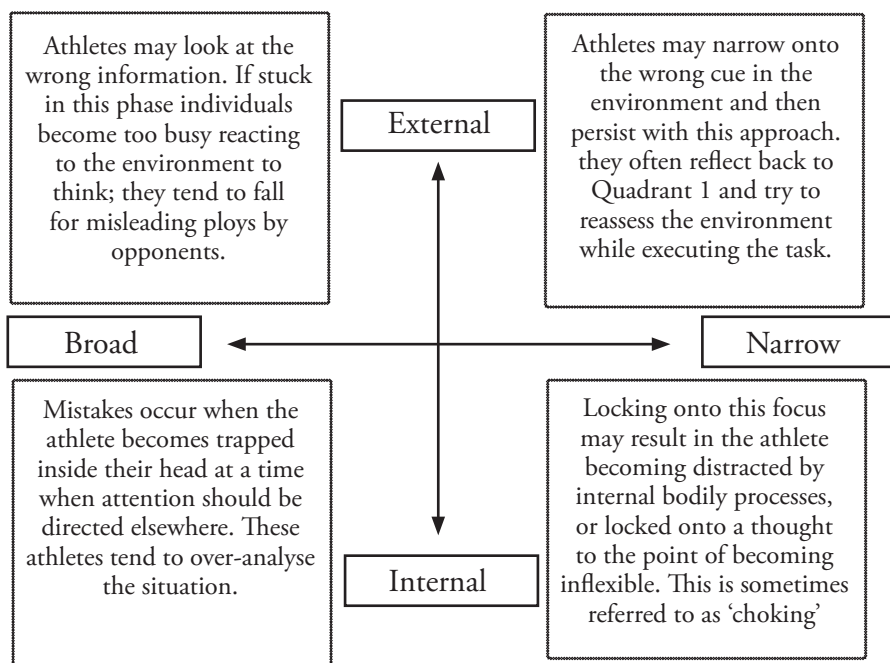
Moving into the third quadrant you maintain the internal focus of attention but move to a narrow focal point. During this phase you decide on the best option and rehearse it in your mind – this may sound like a lengthy process, but experienced athletes will only spend a second or two in this phase during a game. Tiger will have his club out, he will visualise the shot in his mind and may even have a practice swing. He will address the ball and again will be rehearsing the shot in his mind and ensuring his mind is clear. This stage is needed to enhance your awareness of aspects of your body's reaction to stress such as tight muscles and a high heart rate.

Moving into the fourth quadrant requires your attention to shift from internal to external, while still maintaining a narrow point of reference. This allows you to execute the task without being distracted by your surroundings or by letting your mind move back into other quadrants. Here Tiger begins his swing, maintains a process-like approach and hits the ball without allowing his attention to shift.

The diagram highlights the fact that concentration is made up of separate parts. The problem for many people is that half way through quadrant four they revert to examining their environment, allowing self-doubt in. And there goes their concentration.

So what kind of concentration mistakes do athletes make? The following table highlights some of the common errors which occur in each phase of the process of concentrating. The effect of an error in quadrant one may not become apparent

until you initiate the actual task. At this point many athletes misinterpret the error as an inability to perform the task, when in fact the error actually occurs earlier in the process.



The Business Olympian

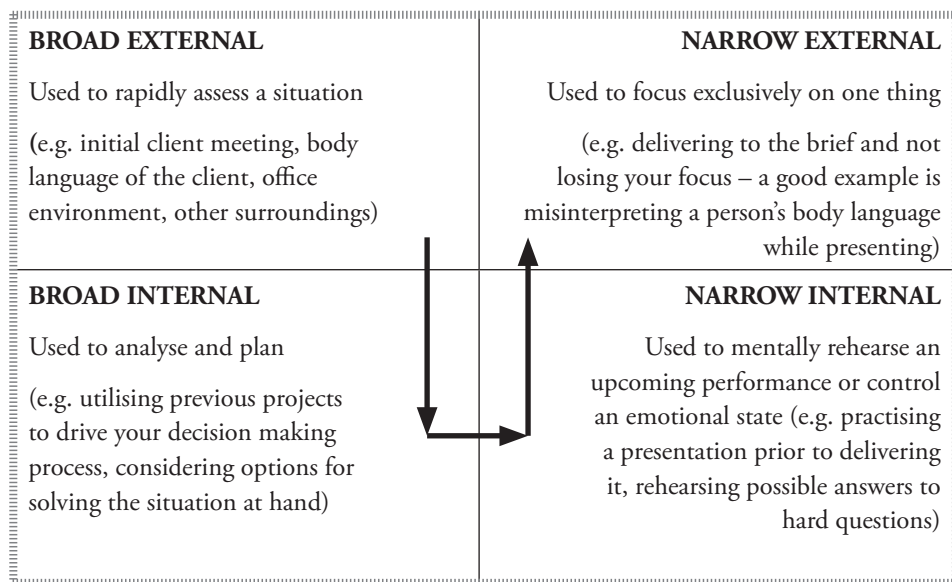
The business world presents a wonderful array of situations in which the operation of the four quadrants is obvious. In fact most of the situations you will face in the business world will require you to spend time in each quadrant.

A common situation where an understanding of the four quadrants can help is 'overloading'. Overloading occurs when there is just too much going on and you become confused and unsure as to what you should be focusing on. Overload can be internal or external.

Internal overloading occurs when there are too many thoughts rushing through your head, may be too many points from your manager, too many conflicting negative statements, and so on.

External overloading occurs when there is too much noise (from colleagues, managers, clients), too much movement around you (consider this if you work in an open plan environment) or the situation is simply too complex for you.

Let's take two situations and explore how the four quadrants may help. You are heading off to a new client's offices to discuss a large brief they have for you. This is the first time you have met with this client, so you might be a little nervous. You arrive at their office and introduce yourself to the receptionist. She picks up the phone and calls them to let them know you have arrived. Two minutes later they open the door and greet you. You pick up your note pad and head down to meet in their boardroom. All the way down the corridor you are operating in quadrant one, taking in all the information in your environment – what they are wearing, how they are walking, their eye contact, their hand shake. Much of this information will not be helpful but the brain takes it all in. You sit at the table and start to listen to their request. At the same time you are moving into quadrant two, while listening to their requests, you are contemplating the options you have. You may be thinking back to other projects and the approach you took. You will also be contemplating the options and offer your company may have developed. Once you have the information on board you quickly move into quadrant three and rehearse your options. In many cases this will be completed very quickly(experienced consultants usually complete this step in seconds), but it is used to create a sense of confidence before speaking and giving them some options. While responding you are operating in quadrant four. The main difference between the athlete and the Business Olympian is that in this environment you will find yourself jumping into other quadrants depending on the information you are receiving from these quadrants. Below is a general description of the process.



Lets examine another case, a medical situation – you have just been diagnosed with a serious illness and your GP refers you to a specialist. You sit in the waiting area and wait your turn. The specialist comes out and calls your name. From the moment you stand up and walk into the room the specialist is operating in quadrant one, they are taking in all the relevant information from your behaviour. What happens next is usually you sitting in the office while they briefly read the report from your GP. Soon after they start to ask you a series of questions. Tiger Woods is doing this standing on the first tee looking over the green. As you answer the questions, they are shifting from quadrant one to two and back again. In their head they are problem solving and trying to match your symptoms to a medical model they have studied and experienced. At some point in time they will come up with a conclusion and discuss this with you. The specialist when speaking with you will spend most of their time in quadrant one and quadrant two and deliver their conclusion with very little effort. This will change somewhat when they move you into the hospital and prepare you for surgery. Here the full four quadrants will come into play. The surgeon will examine their surroundings and once they have decided on the correct procedure, they will briefly rehearse their action before picking up the scalpel and beginning the operation.

Any person who has ever gone in for an operation will be very grateful that the surgeon has the ability to work through the first three quadrants effectively before actually operating and making that first incision. Tiger woods hits his golf ball with confidence, staying in quadrant four – so too, we hope, the surgeon performs your surgery without self-doubt creeping in.

Before reviewing some tips from our Olympic athletes, think of a situation in your working environment where you need to concentrate. Analyse what you are doing at each stage and write in the table below.

Broad external		Narrow external	
What I do now		What I do now	
How I could improve		How I could improve	
Broad internal		Narrow internal	
What I do now		What I do now	
How I could improve		How I could improve	

 Tips from our Olympians

Deal with overload – plan and practice

Under overload situations, all levels of athletes will make mistakes. One sure-fire way to overcome these errors is to have a very clear, well-thought-out plan of attack. This will enable you to identify the important aspects of your particular situation and not become distracted by superfluous stimuli. Elite athletes learn what to focus on and what to block out.

When acting under severe pressure, we tend to narrow our concentration. Unfortunately this can lead to us acting irrationally. Often we will kick ourselves afterwards, perhaps commenting to others that we can't believe we acted like that, but at the time did not see that we had any other options. We will address this issue in Chapter 11 on performing under pressure – where we discover that the only solution is significant experiential learning, otherwise known as practice.

The more we can practice something under controlled conditions, the better we will be at performing it when it really counts. Consider the training a fireman receives before they actually go into a real fire or that a pilot receives in handling emergencies.

Here are some suggestions, based on the four quadrants, to improve your focus and attention in situations where overload is likely to be a problem.

BROAD EXTERNAL Consider undertaking some time management courses to ensure you can complete all your tasks on time. A classic error made is when people are unable to prioritise work. Having too many distractions around you will prevent you from utilising each quadrant effectively. Ensure you have understood the situation perfectly, do not rush into the second quadrant before you have completely scanned the environment and processed the relevant stimuli.	NARROW EXTERNAL Cue words – Athletes use cue words to maintain their focus on the task. Consider developing a series of words which when repeated remind you of the process and allow you to focus wholly on that task. Bounce your new ideas off a colleague or mentor. Gaining self-confidence will allow you to perform better when needed, especially if you struggle in quadrant four, where self-doubt creeps in.
BROAD INTERNAL Understand range of skills you have and how they are used in different contexts. Look at improving yourself by enrolling in courses which will increase your armoury of skills. When in doubt head back to quadrant one and ensure you have gathered all the relevant information. Seek a second opinion on situations where you feel that your own skills are not adequate.	NARROW INTERNAL Create some scenarios in your head and practice what you would do to overcome them. Always ensure you have a contingency plan in place should the need arise. See yourself focusing effectively. Do you practice your presentations before you give them? Simply rehearsing a skill prior to performing it will allow you to concentrate more effectively than if you don't rehearse.

Use self-talk

Our ‘inner dialogue’ can help us get back on track when we lose concentration. Negative or irrelevant thoughts often run through our minds, when remaining in control is crucial to enhancing performance. Challenge your negative thoughts when they appear. You can overcome many of these thoughts by simply recognising the facts of the situation. If you are prone to ongoing negative talk, you may want to consider creating a list of positive affirmations you can use to combat the negative ones. Positive affirmations are a list of phrases which are all positive in nature and remind you of a particular positive attitude.

Some Olympic examples include:

‘I am confident’

‘I have the ability to succeed’

‘I am powerful and strong’

‘No one trains harder than me’

Recognise your limitations

It can be very helpful to understand in which quadrant your limitations lie. Many people assume they are unable to deliver a skill at the crucial point – that they are limited in the fourth quadrant. While in some cases this may be correct, it is also just as likely they have made an error in an earlier quadrant and are simply carrying it forward. This may be a surprise to most people, but the majority of people actually struggle in the first quadrant. They miss relevant cues from the environment and therefore make decisions based on inadequate information. Spending extra time in quadrant one is usually well worthwhile.

Remember

Good preparation = appropriate focus + positive thinking = confidence

Develop your own concentration style profile

Here is a very basic questionnaire to help identify your concentration styles. The full questionnaire consists of 144 questions and will give you a complete and accurate picture of your concentration ability and styles. See the Business Olympian website <www.businessolympian.com.au> if you wish to complete the full questionnaire.

Circle one option for each item below.

N = Never

R = Rarely

S = Sometimes

F = Frequently

A = Always

1. I have difficulty clearing my mind of a single thought or idea.	N R S F A
2. I have so many things on my mind that I become forgetful and confused.	N R S F A
3. I am good at quickly analysing complex strategies and situations (for example, in team games).	N R S F A
4. When people talk to me I find myself distracted by my own thoughts and ideas.	N R S F A
5. I get confused trying to watch complex team games where many things are happening at the same time.	N R S F A
6. In a room filled with people I know what everyone is doing.	N R S F A
7. It is easy for me to keep sights and sounds from interfering with my thoughts.	N R S F A
8. In group situations I make mistakes because I attend to what one person says or does and forget about the others.	N R S F A
9. All I need is a little information and I can come up with a large number of ideas.	N R S F A
10. It is easy for me to keep thoughts from interfering with something I am attending to.	N R S F A
11. It is easy for me to bring together ideas from a number of different areas.	N R S F A
12. When people talk to me I find myself distracted by sights and sounds around me.	N R S F A

Concentration style profile

Assign points to each of your answers as follows:

N = 0, R = 1, S = 2, F = 3, A = 4

Item	Points	Item	Points
1. N R S F A		7. N R S F A	
2. N R S F A		8. N R S F A	
3. N R S F A		9. N R S F A	
4. N R S F A		10. N R S F A	
5. N R S F A		11. N R S F A	
6. N R S F A		12. N R S F A	

Now, add up the points for the pairs of items shown next to the concentration style below. You can see that the maximum score for a particular style is eight and the minimum is zero.

Concentration style	Add points for items	My total for this style (out of 8)
Broad External Focus (BEF)	3 + 6	
Overload External Focus (OEF)	5 + 12	
Broad Internal Focus (BIF)	9 + 11	
Overload Internal Focus (OIF)	2 + 4	
Narrow Focus (NAR)	7 + 10	
Reduce Focus (RED)	1 + 8	

Interpreting your scores

The next section explains the basic features of the concentrating styles.

BEF – Broad External Focus

People who rate high on BEF are very sensitive to body movements and facial expressions and seem to be able to predict better than most what other people are feeling or thinking. Their ability to anticipate behaviour is usually well advanced and they have high spatial and time awareness. High BEF scores suggest:

- May make mistakes when pressure starts to build.
- May pay too much attention to surroundings before you act.
- Struggle when they are required to control your reactive tendencies.

Low BEF scores suggest that:

- You may feel uncomfortable in situations where there is significant amounts of information to attend to.
- The trading floor would be incredibly stressful, but analysing the research data might be more your style.

OEF – Overload External Focus

The OEF score reflects your ability to deal with distractions. It is hard for you, when under pressure, to block out the irrelevant parts of the environment. The higher the score, the harder it is for you to switch off this overload and you will struggle to focus on the details at hand.

If your OEF score is higher than your BEF score then you may find that:

- you have difficulty paying attention
- you are easily distracted, and struggle to concentrate when the environment is noisy
- your level of frustration and error making will be on the rise
- you feel much more at ease in one-on-one situations and will try to create those in your day-to-day working
- you may avoid situations where there are large amounts of external information to decode.

BIF – Broad Internal Focus

The Broad Internal focus allows you to plan, organise and analyse information or situations. Whenever you are planning or strategising into the future you are using this system, to recall information, merge it with the current situation, and then draw a logical conclusion from it. You can often tell when people are engaging their BIF system as they appear to be gazing into the distance and almost

appear to not be thinking about anything. ‘Looking before you leap’ captures the essence of the BIF system.

High BIF scores suggest that:

- you may spend extra time assessing the situation before making a decision – suggesting you are generally not very reactive
- you often miss parts of a conversation or presentation as you may already be jumping ahead to a conclusion or determining what you are going to say
- you often look to where something is supposed to be, rather than where it is.

Low BIF scores indicate that:

- you would rather, for example, just read a book and not want to analyse its style
- you will try and stay with the systems you like to use to interpret information and not attempt to try others
- long-range planning makes you feel uncomfortable
- you will feel stressed when you are forced to use your analytical ability to predict an outcome.

OIF – Overload Internal Focus

OIF scores indicate your tendency to be distracted by your own thoughts. High OIF scores suggest a likelihood of being overloaded by your thoughts, emotions and concerns surrounding your particular environment. People who experience the concept of ‘paralysis by analysis’ often have high OIF scores. While the phrase suggests paralysis, in fact, it is often the case that your thoughts are moving around so fast in your head that your body can’t simply react. Either way you are still not reacting to your environment.

If your OIF score is higher than your BIF score you may find that:

- under pressure, you will avoid using your analytical mind and will not want to plan for the future
- you get confused with the information you are having to process.

NAR – narrow focus of attention.

This indicates your ability to focus your attention in a disciplined way and avoid being distracted. People with high NAR scores are extremely dedicated and have a great ability to follow through on even boring tasks. You will follow directions to the letter regardless of your surroundings. You will be left with a feeling of discomfort when projects are left unfinished, and would prefer to do one thing well at a time.

High NAR scores suggest that:

- under pressure you will have a tendency to become very focused and may miss better alternatives
- you have difficulty altering your plans and hearing new ideas
- your perfectionism may come across as boring to others
- you may work long hours and may not consider the needs of those around you.

Low NAR scores indicate that:

- you will avoid situations that require a great deal of careful attention and planning
- you will always have a number of projects going on
- you may leave a trail of unfinished projects behind, but all were great ideas
- you dislike sticking to a routine.

RED – Reducing focus

RED reflects your tendency for your concentration to go awry especially under pressure. People with high RED scores will have a tendency to narrow their focus too much during stressful situations. Narrowing of your focus can be both internal and external. Internal distractions are often described as being focused on a negative trait such as self-doubt, while an external distraction may be that dripping tap while you are trying to study. In both cases, the distractions usually have nothing to do with the task at hand.

If you have a high RED and high OEF you may fail to analyse and think through possible consequences because you get too distracted and confused by what is going on in the environment around you.

If you have high RED and high OIF, you are more likely to over analyse the situation and then become confused with all the alternatives you have created. You may tune out to the environment and make mistakes as you fail to see what you should be reacting to.

If your RED score is higher than your NAR you may find that:

- you feel pressure a great deal of the time
- you worry a lot, and find it difficult to forget your concerns without help from the outside world
- you get stressed by fast-paced situations which require you to broaden your attention
- you feel uncomfortable having to come up with alternatives
- you often reduce your breadth of attention under pressure so you miss important cues or feel confused since you are peripherally aware that there is a great deal going on around you.

This chapter has been about the process of concentrating and giving attention to the task in hand. The simple steps given should provide you with a basic understanding of your concentration styles. The full concentration and attention profile, available on the Business Olympian website <www.businessolympian.com.au>, will produce a more complete analysis. By going through the process of analysing your concentration styles, you will understand which of them are strengths for you and which are weaknesses. You can then work on your weaknesses, and try to get the most out of your strengths. Once you understand how to concentrate to the best of your ability, you can start thinking about the ways in which you best learn new ideas and skills – your learning style.

Chapter 3

Learning styles



Working with Paralympians has given me a unique perspective into the incredible abilities of these athletes. However, it has also opened my eyes to incredible learning that can occur when you the coach have a deeper understanding of how your athlete learns. It not only helps you instruct them more effectively, but allows them to learn in the most efficient way.

Brendon Keogh – Head swimming coach, Australian Paralympic team

I AM SURE YOU HAVE ASKED THE QUESTION, why do some people learn something quickly while others seem to take longer? Early in the 1970s the idea of individualised learning styles emerged, but it was not until the late 1990s that it become more popular in the working world. Coaches had often been baffled and frustrated because some athletes seemed to be able to listen to their instructions and then simply carry them out, while others required significantly more effort before they would gain a similar understanding.

The original theory of learning styles maintained that there were three different styles – visual, verbal and kinaesthetic (body awareness). This suggested that athletes learned in one of these styles and one only. Soon afterwards it became apparent that the styles of learning were somewhat more complex and required more of a sliding scale, or continuum, than a black or white distinction. That is, an individual will have a preference for a particular style, but this does not preclude them from learning in alternative styles. It merely suggests they will

learn quicker and more efficiently in their preferred style. There are eight styles, grouped into four pairs. Each pair represents opposite ends of a continuum of styles. The four continuums are the:

Active – reflective continuum

Sensing – intuitive continuum

Visual – verbal continuum

Sequential – global continuum

This chapter will examine each of these and provide some suggestions on how to learn most efficiently by knowing and understanding your preferred learning style. A questionnaire for analysing your learning style can be found in the Appendix.

Learning style continuums

Active and reflective learners

Active learners	Reflective learners
You generally understand and retain information best if you can do something practical with it, such as discussing or explaining it to other people.	You may prefer to think about any information quietly before you take any action.
‘Let’s test it out and see how it works.’	‘Let’s think it through first, before trying it out.’
You like group or teamwork more than working alone, and some of you may prefer team works to individual works.	You prefer working alone to group or teamwork, and some of you may prefer individual athletic competition over team works.

Active learning athletes are usually fun to watch. They will throw themselves into situations and try things without necessarily reflecting on the possible outcomes. They also tend to be the ones who fall the hardest if things go wrong.

If you constantly act before reflecting you may jump into tasks prematurely and make errors, or even injure yourself. This is particularly important in high-risk activities. Conversely, if you spend too much time reflecting, you may never learn the necessary skills for your work, or fear may get the better of you.

Sensing and intuitive learners

Sensing learners	Intuitive learners
You tend to enjoy learning facts, or technical information about your work.	You prefer learning about possibilities and relationships, and are good at putting all the pieces together into something new.
Generally you prefer solving problems with tried and tested methods, and dislike surprises or complications.	Innovation is important to you, and you enjoy trying a new approach rather than repeating an old one.
You may be more easily caught out by new variations of an old skill.	You enjoy mixing and matching your existing skills to develop new expertise.
Strategies and directions work well for you when you can prepare and plan well in advance. You prefer to take your time and be cautious.	You enjoy adapting your strategies to what you see unfolding in competition. You tend to work fast and innovatively.

Athletes will tend to be sensing at some times and intuitive at others. They will however possess a dominant style. The most successful athletes are able to function in both ways. In a conversation with John Eales, the former Australian Wallabies captain, he pointed out that not only could he sense how a game was panning out, or how his team-mates were travelling, but he was also very intuitive in his captaincy. The point to make is that if you are overly intuitive, you may miss important details or make careless mistakes when performing. Alternatively, if you are too sensing, you may rely too heavily on memorised strategies and plays, and not concentrate enough on new ways of performing or reacting to the competition. Peter Bush, CEO of MacDonald's made a similar comment, suggesting that he surrounded himself with smart people who would provide a holistic approach to running the business.

‘It is important for some people to just feel the pulse of the business, while others need to logically make sense of it.’

Visual and verbal learners

Visual learners	Verbal learners
You remember what you see best – pictures, diagrams of projects, flow charts, performance graphs.	You gather most of your information from words, whether written or spoken.
Generally you learn better after seeing a demonstration of a skill.	Generally you learn more effectively by being talked through a new technique or skill, or receiving verbal or written feedback.

Though most athletes display a preference for visual learning, everyone learns more overall when information is presented both visually and verbally. This enables you to confirm verbally presented information with visual information, or vice versa. Most coaches will use both verbal and visual aids to get their message across. However, the dominant style of coaching is verbal. While research had shown us that the preference of most athletes is for visual learning, the technology had not allowed for this to occur. Recently coaches have realised this and now use ‘smart boards’, portable plasma screens, laptops, video cameras and the good old clipboard to present information in a visual as well as verbal manner.

Sequential and global learners

Sequential learners	Global learners
You generally gather and understand information in logical steps, before piecing everything together.	You like to learn in larger chunks, understanding the overall picture before understanding the details.
You like to be presented with all the steps in a process before you can put a new technique or strategy into practice.	You may grasp a new skill or strategy particularly quickly, but you may have trouble breaking it down into smaller chunks if needed.

You may learn information sequentially at times, and more globally at other times. It is likely, however, that you hold a preference for one of these styles. Sequential learners may not fully understand a strategy or technique, but can still partly use it, as the parts they have learned will be in logical order. In other words, they may be able to perform the skill or technique, but find it hard to place it amongst other skills until they fully understand the skill. People with a strong global preference, conversely, may have real trouble until they grasp the big picture. Even after they have it, they may remain fuzzy about specifics of a skill, whereas sequential learners may know a lot about the specific components of a skill but may have trouble relating them to other skills within their work.

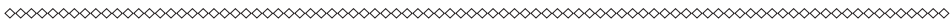
While reading the tables in this chapter, you would have found yourself agreeing with one side or the other.

A person whose preferred learning style lies completely at the active end of the active – reflective continuum would have a score of ‘11 Active’ while someone who was equally happy with active or reflective learning styles might have a score on that continuum of ‘1 Active’ or ‘1 Reflective’.

You will probably find you tend to have one end dominant in each of the continuums. Obviously the higher the score the greater the dominance of that end of the continuum. A low score suggests that you could learn from the style at either end of the continuum, but merely have a preference for one.

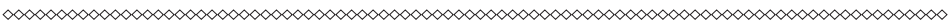
A copy of the questionnaire and an automated scoring system can be found at the Business Olympian website <www.businessolympian.com.au> as well as in the appendix.

Learning styles – a skier with a ‘sensing’ learning style



During the winter of 2003 I spent several weeks on the slopes with our Australian mogul-skiing team. For those who don’t know what mogul skiers are, they are the skiers who fly down a slope covered in small mounds called moguls, and then launch themselves off a small ramp into the air where they complete several tricks and spins before landing and heading off to negotiate some more moguls. I spent some time with the coach discussing a particular athlete who was struggling with a technical aspect of his mogul

skiing. He said that the athlete had been told on several occasions to keep his bottom ski closer to his body to prevent it from slowing down. It was very clear that the verbal approach to learning was not working. He couldn't seem to get it. We then spent some time working out how this particular skier best understood information and how he incorporated that information into his technique. It became very clear that he favoured a sensing style of learning and needed to feel what he was doing rather than just thinking about making a change. A plan was devised. We asked him to spend some time deliberately pushing his bottom leg out. At the bottom of the hill we discussed how that felt and asked him to describe it in his own words. On his next run he was asked to try and keep his bottom leg in and on the following run he was to deliberately push it out again. This continued until he was able to recognise the difference. The important point of this plan is that at no time would he be focusing on the mistakes he was making. We simply asked him to sense the difference between his old and new skiing styles. We then asked him to hit the moguls using his old style and when he heard a whistle he was to change to his new style. He nailed it on the first time and he has never pushed his bottom ski out again. It seems that he is now able to recognise when he is starting to push his bottom ski out and he can make the necessary adjustment mid-run.



The Business Olympian

The concept of learning styles applies equally well to learning situations in business as in sport. Managers in business need to understand their own learning style preferences and those of their employees. It can be a challenge when you are teaching people and you recognise that they have different learning style preferences. You may feel you do not have the ability to either change your teaching style to suit the individual learner, or help the individual adapt to your style.

Andrew Williams, general manager of Link Recruitment (Sydney), recognised this early on his career and makes a conscious effort to recognise the different preferences in people around him.

Everybody will be different, and there are no right or wrong ways of learning – there are only different ways. As a manager, understanding this is the absolutely first and most vital step in ensuring your team works well together.

Andrew continued on in this vein when he suggested,

I don't expect myself to be able to alter my style on a continual basis, but I do expect myself to ensure that I am very clear on the process I use.

What Andrew is suggesting is that the Business Olympian requires the ability to understand that there are differences, and to ensure that they have articulated this to their staff.

Over the years I have had many managers comment to me that they feel they are unable to change themselves. Initially it may be difficult. However, what they also tend to say is that they have not discussed the process of change with their team. It is my belief that we are all very flexible and by being open in our communication we can create pathways for all styles of learning to work together as a team.

Is there one style that is better than another? Currently there is no research to show that any particular style leads to better learning. What research does show is that a person will learn most efficiently, that is with the least effort from them and their teacher, if material is presented to them in their preferred learning style.



Tips from our Olympians

Suggestions for sensing learners

Sensing learners retain and understand information more effectively if they can see how it connects with their work. If you are talking purely about strategy, for example, in the absence of a practical demonstration, you may have difficulties. Ask your manager for specific examples of skills, and find out how these skills apply in performance. If your manager does not provide enough specifics, try to brainstorm with a colleague and come up with some of your own. You will probably feel more comfortable if you can memorise patterns of play and skills.

Suggestions for intuitive learners

A session that deals entirely with repetition of memorised skills and situations can lead to boredom. Think about different ways to use your learned skills, or how to place them into a strategy. Alternatively, ask your manager to help you come up with some ideas. You may also be prone to careless mistakes in performance because you are impatient with details and dislike repetition. Be aware of this possibility.

Suggestions for visual learners

If you are a mainly visual learner, try to find diagrams, sketches, photographs, or video footage of training drills or strategies. Any demonstrations by colleagues or managers will also be helpful. If you feel like you don't understand something, ask the manager or someone else to demonstrate again, or to draw a diagram for you. There is no need to leave a meeting feeling like you don't understand. Reading books about your work that contain diagrams may also be useful. In group settings, or when problem solving, prepare a concept map by listing key points, enclosing them in boxes or circles, and drawing arrows between them to link ideas. 'Mind Mapping' has become quite the rage. There are several programs which are available free of charge on the internet – hit those search engines.

Suggestions for verbal learners

Be sure to seek verbal explanations and feedback from your manager. Books about your work that contain written explanations of techniques may also be useful. In practice, talking yourself through a technique (in your head if you wish!) will help you to retain information. If possible, working as part of a group can be particularly effective – you gain understanding of skills and strategies by hearing colleagues' feedback, and you learn even more when you give feedback to others. A portable dictating machine can be very useful – most devices these days are able to download your recording on a computer to allow reflection later on.

Suggestions for active learners

You may prefer testing out new information with other people. You will probably appreciate it when your manager allows learning by trial and error. If you can find ways to actively use new information, you will retain it better, so make the effort to practice new skills as soon as possible after learning them. Visualise using your

new skill in a competitive situation. If you are part of a team, working with other members and sharing information will also be helpful. Rod Leaver, CEO of Lend Lease commented to me that at the executive level he prefers his staff to ask for forgiveness instead of permission – he did reflect on this and comment that they better not ask for forgiveness twice on the same issue.

Suggestions for reflective learners

If you find you are not getting enough time to think about new ideas during work, set some time aside outside these sessions to practice your new skills. This should help solidify them for you, and you won't feel like you're being rushed or holding anyone up. This is especially useful for young graduates who have to learn how to use specific systems for work. Take the time to think about where at work you will be using this skill, and visualise possible situations where it will be useful to you. When working, don't just read or memorise information. Stop periodically to review and think about possible uses or questions about the information. Summarising meetings and projects into your own words may be more time consuming initially, but it will help you retain information more effectively, saving you time when you are placed into a pressured situation.

Suggestions for sequential learners

If you have a preference for sequential learning, and have a manager who teaches things out of order or skips steps in a process, you may have difficulty learning. Ask the manager or a colleague to fill in the blanks, or fill them in yourself after the meeting. You may also try and strengthen your global learning skills by relating each technique learned to skills you already know. The more you can do this, the deeper your understanding of your work is likely to be. If studying, take a little time to outline the course material for yourself in logical and connected order, as this will save you time in the long run and enhance retention.

Suggestions for global learners

If you are mainly a global learner, it can be helpful for you to realise that you need the overall picture before you can master details. For example, you would need to know when a strategy would be used, before learning specific steps. If your manager plunges directly into a new skill without explaining how it relates to what you already know, you may have trouble. There are steps that you can

take to help you learn better. Ask questions about how the skill will be used, how it adds to your existing knowledge, and perhaps ask the manager to give an example of using the new technique amongst existing skills. Though it may sometimes take a little more effort, once you fully understand the information you will be quick to adapt it for use in your competition. When working, skim through material first to get an overview of the contents. You may also find it more productive to work on individual aspects of the project in large blocks, immersing yourself in the material. Try to relate the new information to things you already know.

That's the end of Part One.

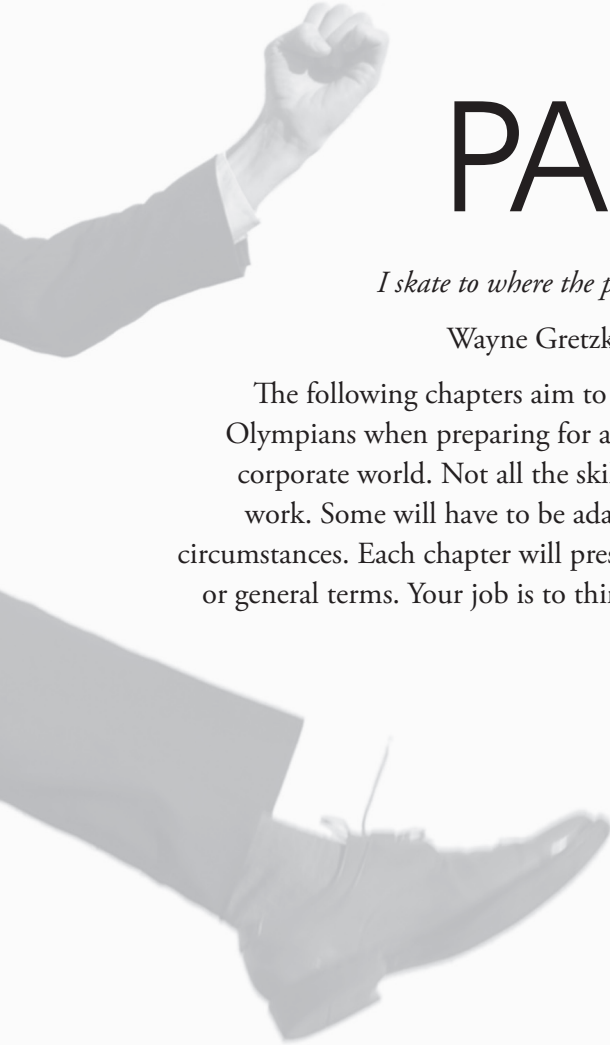
Part One gave you some ideas for gaining a deeper understanding of yourself. By understanding how we listen to information, comprehend information, and process information – allows you to integrate the information from the remainder of the book to develop your skills.

Some points to reflect back on:

- Emotional profiling – how well do you understand your emotions – can you use them to your advantage?
- Which quadrant of concentration and attention is your strength and which is your weakness?

What type of learning style reflects your approach to learning and are you receiving information in the best possible way?





PART TWO

I skate to where the puck is going to be, not to where it has been.

Wayne Gretzky, former National Hockey League MVP

The following chapters aim to show you how to apply the skills used by Olympians when preparing for and during competition to your life in the corporate world. Not all the skills will translate directly into the world of work. Some will have to be adapted by the individual to fit their specific circumstances. Each chapter will present a skill and discuss it in either specific or general terms. Your job is to think laterally about your situation and how these ideas can be applied to it.

Chapter 4

Setting objectives



When I first started out with MacDonald's, there was a lot to do. The board had charged me with a number of tasks, with the main task being the re-branding of the MacDonald's image. Talk about setting objectives, we sat down and went through a step-by-step process of identifying all the tasks we needed to achieve and then set out a plan to systematically achieve each one of them. We are not there yet, but having the steps along the way allows us to have some small victories and that definitely keeps people motivated.

Peter Bush – CEO MacDonald's

AIMING FOR THE TOP TEN PER CENT OF YOUR MARKET is pretty common in business. What if elite athletes had used this approach? We would never had a Kathy Freeman or a John Eales. Imagine no Kieren Perkins. Remember this paragraph from the preamble?

I want you to consider this – Maurice Green won the 100 metre sprint at the Sydney Olympics in 9.87 seconds. Kim Collins, who came last, ran the same distance in 10.17 – a time difference of 0.3 of a second. If you had set your goal to be in the top twenty per cent – that is, better than eighty per cent of the entire planet's population, assuming each country sends its best competitors to the Olympics – you would have run a time of 11.844. With that time you would

not have even made the team. OK, what about the top ten per cent? Your time would have improved to 10.857 seconds, but you would still be sitting in the stands watching instead of competing.

What this attempts to illustrate is the process of effectively setting objectives. In the sporting world athletes refer to this concept as goal setting. Goals need to fit the situation, not just the desire of the individual. Goals form the backbone of any athlete's pathway to success. The concept of goal setting is usually introduced to athletes very early on in their career. In sport, there are three types of goals – long-term, short-term, and training goals.

Long-term goals are goals which focus on a time frame which goes beyond the current season, and may extend for several years.

Short-term goals are goals which an athlete would like to achieve within the next year. They are usually focused on the current season or even a part of the season.

Training goals are goals for a specific training event and lead to a particular short-term goal. Training goals define the parameters of a training session, create a degree of urgency and force the athlete to focus on the outcomes of that training session.

There are two aspects to setting goals – process and outcome. Process goals are statements which are focused on a specific process in an attempt to display mastery over a particular task. Outcome goals focus on the delivery of a specific result.

A basketball athlete could set a short-term process goal of improving the extension of their shooting arm and ensuring a smooth follow through.

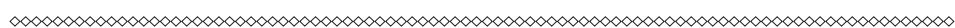
The same basketball athlete could set a short-term outcome goal of improving their free throw shooting percentage by ten per cent by the fifth game in the season. For followers of the NBA, it would be a guaranteed short-term goal of Shaquille O'Neill, the seven foot super star centre who shoots free throw at a measly fifty-six per cent.

Carrie Graf, the coach of the Canberra Capitals WNBL team is a master of the short-term outcome goal. She would make sure the team was focused on playing a mini-competition within the bigger competition. That is, the team would

reduce the forty-odd games in the season into lots of four. Their outcome goal was always to come out ahead in the mini-tournament. A 4-0 win loss record was great but she would settle for 3-1. It allowed the athletes to maintain their focus for a longer period of time. It also allowed them to put any losses 'to bed'. And once they had moved onto the next mini-tournament, the last was forgotten.

Long-term goals can also be either process focused or outcome focused. A soccer player may set a long-term process goal of increasing their fitness in the shuttle run, by one shuttle per week. The shuttle run is a test which athletes complete to measure their level of fitness. They are required to run twenty metres from a line, stop, turn around and run the twenty metres back. They have to complete this as many times as possible listening to a pre-recorded beep which indicates the time they have available to cover the twenty metres. By the way the time between beeps gets shorter and shorter, requiring the athletes to start at a walking pace but ending up in a full sprint. The longer you go the fitter you are.

That same player may set a long-term outcome goal of making the Olyroos team – the mens soccer team – for the next Olympics. Most people will recognise that long-term outcome goals can be easy to set, while the short-term goals and process goals can be a challenge. Long-term goals often reflect dreams or ideals, while short-term goals are absolutes that need to occur in the near future. Recognising this is the first step in overcoming resistance to setting goals. It is nice to dream, but one thing I have learnt from three Olympic Games is that the athletes who set their dreams, but fail to set the short-term goals to achieve them, very rarely do. One other aspect to consider if you only set long-term or outcome goals. If you don't win that gold medal, any other success along the way will be lost in the overall failure to achieve your long-term outcome goal. By having short-term and process focused goals you can enjoy the victories along the way, as well as giving yourself a chance to recover when you do have a 'hiccup' in your progress.



Here is a story that illustrates very well the process of setting goals, and what can be achieved when you set them properly. I was having a conversation with a male swimming athlete. He turned up at my office indicating he was not happy with the progress of his swimming and wanted to win the state championships in two years' time. It became very clear that this was

a determined young man and while he had a solid set of long-term goals, including making the Olympic Team for the Beijing Olympics, he was very light on his short-term goals. We started discussing what he needed to do to achieve his goal of winning the state championships. It came down to simply shaving four seconds off his personal best for the 100 metres freestyle. For any non-swimmers reading this, four seconds in the pool is no mean feat, especially over 100 metres. To cut the rest of the story short, while a goal of shaving four seconds was very ambitious and daunting, 0.0035 seconds wasn't. Where does the 0.0035 seconds come from? Well, he trained six days per week for forty-eight weeks in the year – totalling 288 sessions. On each day he trained twice, giving a total of 576 sessions per year. Over a two-year period he had a grand total of 1152 sessions before the next state championships. By dividing his four seconds by 1152 sessions, we got a goal of shaving 0.0035 seconds per training session. His long-term goal suddenly became very achievable. Two years later not only did he win the state championships, but he shaved almost 4.1 seconds off his personal best. As this book goes to print in 2008, I will be watching with anticipation to see if he makes it through the Olympic trials and gains a spot on the team for Beijing.

Regardless of the type of goal, they will all have the same characteristics, that is they need to be **SMART**. **Specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and within a time frame**. This sounds like common sense but many fall into the trap of not adhering to one of these and so set themselves up for failure. The best example I can think of was the young water polo player who, on making it into the Australian team, met with me in my office to discuss his goals. I asked him what his plans were and with a high degree of conviction he informed me that he was going to give 150% and try his hardest. While I will discuss the concept of 150% a little later, let's think about the words 'I will try my hardest'. Most people reading this will relate to that sentence. Let's see if it's a SMART goal.

Is it Specific? Well no, it doesn't describe what you will be trying to achieve.

Is it Measurable? Not sure how you will measure hardest, I have yet to find a 'hardest' calibre.

Is it Achievable? If you can't measure it, how will you know if you achieved it and how will you know what still needs to be completed?

Is it Realistic? Some could argue it is realistic to try hard, but what level of 'hardest'.

And finally, will it be completed in a Time frame? Well, he hasn't set a time frame, so he can always say he hasn't reached his goal because he hasn't had enough time yet.

Here are five statements that might help to encourage the reluctant to take a chance on the path they haven't been down before:

- You don't know what you don't know
- You can't do what you don't know
- You don't know until you measure
- You don't measure what you don't value
- You don't value what you don't measure.

Or simply 'You won't know until you try it'.



The Business Olympian

Most businesses would claim that the setting of objectives is an important part of their operation. However, in reality, it is often something that 'it would be nice to do if we had the time'. Often, when goals are set, they are not recorded or if they are, then the next time they are brought up is at an individual's yearly review. Sadly, this often takes the form of 'tick and flick' – tick the boxes and then get rid of the review as soon as possible, rather than looking at the goals and really discussing with the individual their progress towards them.

People need clear objectives and a clear process by which their progress is monitored, evaluated, and amended where necessary. Objectives will ensure the individual's goals are aligned with the companies vision. Having this transparency will allow you to see how all your hard work, late nights, and early mornings plays a part in the bigger picture. While I am in no way advocating working

ridiculous hours, we all recognise that there are moments when this happens and if the individual's goals are aligned with those of the business, it will definitely help their motivation to continue.

While setting objectives is important, there is no point if you are not going to have them monitored by your manager. As a Business Olympian, it is both your responsibility and your manager's responsibility to set clear objectives and to continuously monitor them.

Speak to your manager, examine your current objectives for the year and clarify how they will be evaluated and how they align to the overall company vision. If they don't, maybe lend your manager this book!

Before moving on, try and answer these five questions:

1. What is your company vision?
2. What are your objectives?
3. What are your manager's objectives?
4. Are your objectives aligned with your manager's goals and the overall company goals?
5. When did you last discuss your progress towards achieving your goals?

The answers may well tell you that you and your manager, and perhaps the whole company, have some work to do.

Aiming for the centre of the bullseye

Consider this question 'Does an archer aim at the centre of a target?'

Common business goal setting programs help people aim for the centre of the bullseye – that's where the best are. Being highly focused on the middle of the target seems to be logical and have practical applications in the real world. From a Business Olympian perspective however, it may lead to future failure. Zoning into the centre of the target can mean other relevant factors get ignored.

In a famous, IgNobel winning study, the audience is asked to count the number of times a group of people pass two basketballs to each other. During the clip a woman in a gorilla suit walks right through the middle of the group. In a

presentation I gave to over 600 people at a local government conference, more than half remained standing, despite being asked to sit if they saw the gorilla. What this suggests is that people can become so zoned in on an idea or thought or process that they block out all other information. Olympians, be they sporting or business, need to concentrate on the relevant idea while at the same time still recognising the potential for change. Having several contingency plans in place is a characteristic of all elite performing people. You can log onto <www.businessolympian.com.au> to view the gorilla video.

The majority of time the extraneous variables need to be ignored, but sometimes they are vital. An archer attempts to gain the highest possible score. To do this the arrow needs to be shot into the centre of the target, thus scoring ten points.

But do archers aim at the centre of the target?

No, not always. In fact it is very rare for an archer to aim at the centre. Why? The path of the arrow is affected by numerous factors and they all need to be taken into account when aiming. For example at high altitude the air is thinner and therefore the arrow will fly differently than at sea level. Secondly, on windy days the arrow can be moved up to fifteen centimetres during its seventy metre flight. Therefore it is not uncommon for an archer to be aiming off-centre to take these factors into account. The goal is still to achieve the ten, but the process is altered to reflect the conditions. The archer relies on a process in which they reflect inwards and focus on the process and allow the outcome to take care of itself. Tim Cuddihy, bronze medallist at the Athens Olympics said that,

When I first started to play this game, I found it very difficult to convince myself that aiming outside of the centre was actually a good thing. Fortunately in archery you have to shoot hundreds of arrows and sure enough, the need to aim in the centre of the target is usually not the main focus.

Giving 150 per cent

I mentioned above the athlete who gave as his goal 'to give 150%'. It sounds a nice idea but what does it really mean? It definitely does not have the characteristics of a SMART goal. Is it even possible to give 100%? Let's have a look at a more realistic approach to this idea.

Everything we do is made up of physical and mental aspects. It is unlikely that we will ever be at 100% on both scales – it's an ideal state but one which very few athletes ever achieve. Physical injuries are part of the game and the true professionals learn to compete within the parameters they are presented with.

Therefore, for you to be able to achieve your full potential, it is more important to recognise where you are sitting. For example, my body is about 80% and my mind at 90%. Now the challenge is to give 100% of what you have available to you. Often when we are not feeling 100% we tend to exaggerate how bad it is and ultimately work at a level which is substantially lower than what we actually have available.

Kristen Veal, championship winning basketballer with the Canberra Capitals maintains that,

It was very rare for your body to be 100% fit. There were always some niggles and if you tried to perform at a level higher than your body would physically allow the outcome was usually disastrous. Unfortunately the same concept also applied to your mind.

What you need to do is to make sure you are getting the best out of your abilities on any particular day. We often refer to 'working to your full potential'. In the athletic world, we hear 'This kid has so much potential, I just wish he could bring it out'. In Chapter 1 I referred to emotional profiling which attempts to identify the emotional state you require to produce the best possible performance. Have another look at it and start to realise what potential you have to perform.

Assessing your weaknesses

The person who is mentally the strongest is not the necessarily the person with the most strengths. If that person possesses a debilitating weakness it may override their strengths. The person who has the greatest understanding of their weakness is better placed to achieve their full potential. By understanding 'what you suck at' you can attack the weakness in two main ways. Firstly you will have to decide whether you are able to turn this weakness into a strength and if that effort is worth the outcome. Secondly if you decide that you are not able to change this weakness, you are in a position to ensure that it is well hidden from your adversaries. More importantly, by gaining insight you will be able to recognise

if this weakness is being exploited and if the time has come to implement one of your contingency plans. The unfortunate result of denying a weakness is that it will inevitably show its ugly head at the most inopportune moments. The chances are that if your opponent has done their homework, and lets face it most do, they will know what your weakness is and look to expose it.

Gaining true understanding of your weaknesses is quite a simple process, but it requires a lot of self-esteem and insight to achieve. Most people do not like hearing negative information about themselves so asking someone to openly state how they can be sabotaged and what mechanisms they put in place to defend against it can be quite a challenge. But it is dissonance that is worthwhile experiencing. 'Knowing your greatest weakness, becomes your greatest strength.'

Start by writing down your last couple of challenges. What were they? How did you approach each one? What was the outcome? Now split them up into successful outcomes and unsuccessful ones. We need to examine both. For your own self-confidence, lets start with the successful efforts. Have a closer look at what you did. Were there any hiccups along the way, did some hurdles present themselves? The more you can think of the better, as these will form the backbone of how you approach adverse situations. Write down the contingency plans you have developed, and how you knew when to use them. This is the start of understanding your own armoury. Once you have been through that task, we need to move onto the unsuccessful efforts. Unfortunately we need to pay more attention to these ones and dig a lot further, which, when done honestly, may cause some discomfort. But I promise you in the end the outcomes will be more beneficial. Consider some aspects of your life where you have failed and brutally examine the reasons behind it. Look for the signs that you were heading down a particular path and consider how you reacted. Did your reaction contribute to the overall outcome? Now head back to your positive list and consider the skills you have and whether they could have been used in this situation. In most cases you will find that had you recognised you were heading into trouble early enough you would have been able to prevent it. Or at least minimise the damage. Consider making a list of what your thoughts and behaviours are when you start to experience a failure and then match up a contingency plan to each one. Now all you have to do is remember to use that plan next time.

I have known several Olympians who have effectively used knowledge of their own weaknesses to their advantage. A particular Winter Olympian comes to mind whose particular discipline required the ability to accurately control his body as he was performing trick manoeuvres in mid-air. It appeared that a tendency to try and compete with others by copying their tricks was the cause of this athlete's poorer than expected performance. After several discussions it became clear that the root of the problem was a weakness in a particular type of spinning. In the past he had spent a lot of time trying to perfect this skill, and this process of continual attempts had led him to become quite anxious and extremely frustrated. Soon after recognising his weakness a decision was made to drop all the tricks that needed this manoeuvre from his repertoire and he went right back to basics to learn a whole new battery of tricks. Within months his skill set had returned to his original level and by the time he competed at the Winter Olympics, his skills were so far ahead of their original level that he achieved a personal best at the games.



Tips from our Olympians

Set your goals properly

Setting your goals is actually an easy process – as discussed there are several components you need prior to starting. The most important is the vision of the company. Once you have a clear understanding of where the company is going, it would be worthwhile speaking to your manager and attempting to gain an understanding of their objectives. If nothing else, you may be able to prompt them to speak to their manager. Let's assume your manager has some direction. Consider the work you do on a regular basis and attempt to create four to six objectives. These objectives should be umbrella statements which may cover a number of tasks. It should not look like a 'to do' list. The statement in itself needs to possess some standard characteristics.

Firstly a verb –you need to be 'doing' something.

Then the action – what is the something?

Have a time frame – when will you achieve this by?

Quality statement – this refers to quality that is required while achieving the goal – for example you may have an objective to increase sales by 15% by the end of the second quarter. This looks fine except it does not mention the quality you need to achieve. It could be argued that you could achieve that increase in sales but at the same drive off customers due to bad customer service.

Once you have set your objectives, test them by running the SMART acronym over them.

Now that you have your objectives what are you going to do with them and where are you going to keep them? Most athletes will maintain a diary and keep all this information in it. Diaries and PDAs have been used in business for years, so it would be a small step to include your objectives somewhere in them. The next step is the regular evaluation of your objectives. Most effective managers will meet with their staff on a regular basis – my suggestion is that this should occur at least monthly. The purpose of this meeting is to check on the person's objectives and how they are progressing. It gives both parties an opportunity to discuss hurdles and successes. It is vital that important information discussed at these meeting are recorded. Remember you may only have one full evaluation per year and I am guessing you are not going to remember all these conversations when you are sitting in that room reviewing the year and discussing salaries and future directions. The annual review process should include a review of all your objectives and an evaluation of your performance against these objectives – taking all the one-on-one conversations throughout the year into the process.

Remember in this aspect the athlete has a much easier ride. They will be evaluated on a weekly basis with feedback given regularly and a restructuring of goals appropriately. They also receive the big evaluations at set points in time and the outcome is undeniable. Grand finals, Olympic Games, Commonwealth Games – all good examples of evaluation sessions for athletes. What do you have in place?

Know your weaknesses

Make the effort to identify your weaknesses, even if this causes some discomfort. Once you know your weaknesses, you can plan on how to avoid them becoming a liability. You can learn when things are starting to go wrong and how to take corrective action before it is too late.

Chapter 5

The ‘ideal performance state’



I had trained for two years, physically pushed my body till I couldn't train anymore. But the most important aspect of my preparation was ensuring I had all the contingency plans in place in addition to a rock solid swim plan. I knew exactly how fast I was going to go, how I was going to pace my stroke rate, how many breaks I would have, when I would re-hydrate etc. If it wasn't for my routine there is no way I would have made it across the channel.

Ben Macguire – lead counsel Virgin management team, who swam across the English Channel for charity raising over \$100,000 dollars in the process.

CHAPTER 1 DISCUSSED THE CONCEPT OF BEING ‘in the zone’ or in the ‘ideal performance state’. An ideal performance state is one in which the athlete believes they have achieved an equilibrium in both their cognitive state and behavioural state. That is, they are thinking clearly and focusing on the appropriate goal and they are feeling physiologically up to the task. The difficulty some athletes face is trying to get both aspects right on the day. You often hear athletes referring to not being 100%. This is generally referring to their injury status, but on occasion it does refer to their mindset and a lack of focus. There are several strategies that athletes will use to get them into the ideal performance state. One important technique is the use of routines. This chapter will focus on the different types of routines athletes use at different stages of preparation to

help create their ideal performance state. Clearly, being in the ideal performance state does not guarantee success. But it does create an ideal starting point from which success can be achieved.

Pre-competition routines

The pre-competition routine generally refers to the preparation an athlete will undertake in the immediate lead-up to an event. For most the pre-competition routine is the most mundane and would on the surface appear to have little effect on the overall performance. However, many Olympians will tell you that they have to ensure that these types of routines are followed, or they may as well not compete. Here are some examples of the types of routines an Olympian may follow just before a competitive performance:

- How and when to pack their bags
- What to eat the night before and the morning of competition
- Getting ready to perform, how they get dressed.
- Warm up
- Positive affirmations
- Running onto the pitch.

Each of these tasks is carried out according to a pre-determined plan. The idea is simply to remove unnecessary trivial decision making from the athlete so they don't have to worry about inappropriate information.

Pre-competition routines – trivial or important?



Many years ago while at a basketball competition, I was talking to the head coach when all of a sudden the starting centre ran over and told us that he had broken the laces of his shoe. I calmly turned to him and asked where his bags were, as we had discussed the previous week that all the players needed to pack their bags the night before and check they had all the spares we had discussed, including shoe laces. With what was now becoming a very red face, he informed me that not only had he not packed

his bag the night before, he had ignored our advice on the spare equipment he should keep. Given that laces were renowned for breaking all the time, we did not want to use another player's laces, so I volunteered mine. What we didn't expect was the lacklustre performance which followed for the first five minutes of the quarter. He simply could not focus on what he was supposed to be doing and he was eventually benched. On reflection, he informed me later that he was so worried about what the coach was going to say to him after the game that he lost all his focus during the game. What an effect from a case of broken laces!

Another aspect which is often talked about in the media is the dressing routines that many athletes use. In an interview, Michael Jordan made the following point:

I go through the same routine before every game. I lace up my shoes in a certain way. I wear my Carolina shorts all the time. I wear new socks every game, new shoes every game. And I always notice where my wife or my parents are so I don't have to worry if they got in an accident or didn't get the tickets or whatever.

You can get the sense of his mindset from his pre-game routine. It's as much about creating a sense of calm for himself and removing any possible stressful situations as it is ensuring he is focused on the coming game. Many athletes will utilise the ritualistic dressing routines as a way of creating their ideal performance state. There are however some points which need to be considered:

- Your routine needs to reflect your personality and not be copied from a role model, hoping that because it works for them it will work for you.
- Your routine needs to be simple enough to be performed in the comfort of your home as well as when you are playing away from home.
- Your routine should not include other people as they will have a tendency to let you down.
- Your routine should be reviewed regularly to ensure it's still relevant to your current situation.

Pre-shot and contingency routines

Pre-shot routines are similar to pre-competition routines in that they are designed to create a performance mindset which will help the athlete create the perfect performance. The difference with the pre-shot routine is that the skill which is to be performed is imminent. That is, the routines are designed to be used just before a person carries out the task.

Imagine John, a pro golfer. He walks up to tee, he places his ball on top of the tee before he places it into the ground. This is the start of his routine, he always places the ball on top of the tee and pushes it and the ball into the ground. At the same time he uses his cue word of 'stroke it'. The phrase in conjunction with the setting of the ball has created a sense of calm and allows him to move on to the next phase of his pre-shot routine. He steps up to his bag and grabs his number three wood. Pulling it out of the bag, he pushes it up into the air, allowing the club to spin through his fingers. In his head he thinks to himself, 'this shot is mine'. The club returns to the ground, he grips the handle and addresses the ball. Standing in front of the ball, he always places the club just behind the ball and gently taps the ground. On the third tap he thinks, 'sssssmooth', he draws his club back and hits the ball. His pre-shot routine started with placing the ball on the tee and ended on the third tap of the club. Each part of his pre-shot routine is designed to allow him to focus effectively on his shot.

Pre-shot routines are most effective on closed skills. Closed skills are skills in which you are in control and there is little influence from the outside world. A basketball free throw shot is a closed skill, while running the ball up the court would be regarded as an open skill. In golf, every shot you take is a closed skill, while in AFL the best example of a closed skill is the free kick.

The pre-shot routine has two components, behavioural and cognitive. The behavioural aspect covers any behavioural action which the athlete performs prior to the action being performed. For those of you with internet access head to <<http://www.titleist.com/news/preshotroutine.asp?bhcp=1>>. At the time of publication this site had video footage of the pre-shot routines of some of the

worlds best golfers. You will notice they all do something different, but the end goal is the same, 'the perfect shot'.

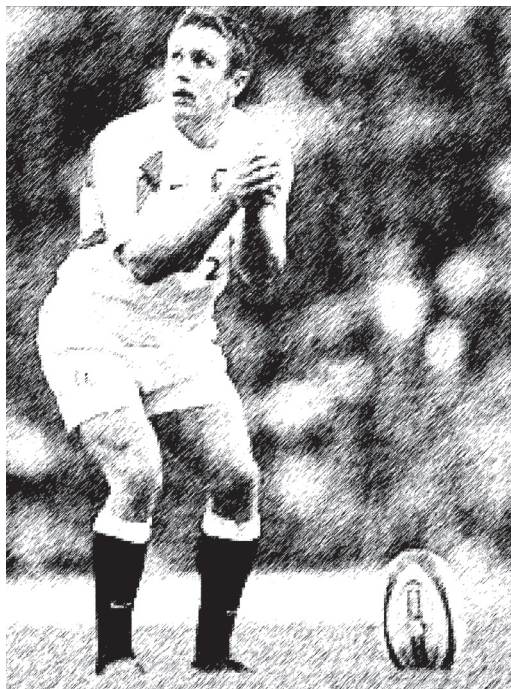
The cognitive component is concerned with the thoughts the individual has, and how those thoughts are directed to the task at hand. If you reflect back to Chapter 2 on concentration, once the athlete has passed through quadrant 2 and moves into the rehearsal stage they will be utilising the behavioural rehearsal as well as using a variety of cognitive cues. The cognitive cues usually take the form of simple, yet powerful words or short sentences which capture the essence of the performance. A professional basketball athlete I spent some time with developed a rather unique phrase. He would repeat the word 'fish' prior to every free throw shot. On the surface this wouldn't make sense, however for him, the word fish reminded him of the day he was fishing with his father and received the phone call from his agent informing him he had received a professional contract. His dad on hearing the news said to him, 'Son, there will be times when you will be required to performed with hundreds, maybe thousands of eyes on you. At those times, just go fishing in your mind, relax and let your skill shine through.' He used that cue word every game until he retired. Cue words and phrases can be used to trigger a particular competitive response. They help athletes narrow focus when necessary. Cue words and phrases can be either instructional (such as follow-through, relax, watch the ball) or motivational (explode, do it now, strong) to help focus on the task at hand. Cues are also useful when varying or changing a movement pattern, breaking a bad habit, or regaining concentration. For example, an ice hockey player might say 'stick to ice' as a reminder to keep the stick on the ice until the puck is controlled. In much the same way a soccer player might say 'first to the ball' to concentrate on gaining possessing of the ball rather than running after an offending opponent who has angered them. You will recognise that cue words and phrases mean a lot to the athlete and remind them very quickly of the process they are carrying out.

A classic pre-shot routine



Let's reflect on the 2007 Rugby Union World Cup or for that matter the previous one in 2003. Look at the artist's sketch on the next page. I am sure you remember this moment and it conjures up feelings of despair

and anger – OK, maybe joy and excitement if you're British. It is the start of Jonny Wilkinson's kick at goal. What is fantastic about this moment, is that it would be impossible to tell which particular kick this was. The reason for that is that the start of every one of Jonny's kicks looked exactly the same, regardless of where he was kicking the ball from. We can see the behavioural component of his pre-shot routine but unfortunately what we can't see is what is going through his mind – the cognitive component.



The Business Olympian

What a simple mechanism the 'pre-competition routine' is to help you on your way to performing at your best. Most workers out there already have a routine in place. We tend to get up at a certain time, have a shower, some breakfast, catch the same bus. By default you have created this to ensure you can get to work on time, but also so that you can focus your attention at work effectively. Most people will recall a time when one or more of these components have not worked out. Perhaps we've slept in and this has created a chain reaction of deviations from the routine which usually result in us feeling very flustered when we get to work and needing to take some time to get on top of everything. It's quite a simple concept to see working, the challenge is to examine your routine and ensure it meets the criteria of the points above. So here are two questions to consider when examining your routine:

1. Will your routine work on an overseas trip?

2. Do you rely on other human being for your routine to be effective? Many of us will fail this one as we often rely on public transport to get where we need to be going.

When designing your routines, make sure you plan for any contingencies that may arise.

Business Olympians will recognise the importance of these routines and ensure they have them set up to be beneficial and not a hindrance. This suggests a degree of simplicity in the routine, but still a recognition of its importance. I wonder how many executive assistants out there, have that cup of coffee ready for their manager first thing in the morning?

Having a pre-shot routine in business is one of the greatest tools or skills you can develop. It is simple in design, and incredible powerful in its output. Developing a routine is a very simple process and only requires some time and effort to identify the aspects of your work environment which would benefit from this process. Over the years I have had many executives comment to me that don't see the benefit of this process. After many interesting discussions I have yet to have a disappointed client. A respected barrister commented to me once on the pre-shot routine he would use prior to his opening statement in court. To him the 'shot' was his opening statement and was identified by him as a critical aspect of his work. While sitting at the desk, he would have his notes in front of him, but would not look at them. On instruction from the bench, he would get up and take a sip of water, clear his throat and take a deep breath in with his teeth slightly open. The effect would be a cool sensation on his tongue and a feeling of freshness. His cue word was 'fresh'. His overall goal was to deliver a fresh and powerful opening statement and this routine went a long way in aiding this process. Developing your own pre-shot routine should be quite easy. However, remember to make your routine reflect your personality. Copying Tiger Woods' pre-shot routine is not going to make you a world champion golfer.



Tips from our Olympians

1. Not having a routine can be more damaging than actually having one.
2. A routine should be 'doable' in any location. For people who travel a lot, having a routine that uses a stimulus from your 'home ground' – your

- work place – will put you at a disadvantage when you are ‘playing away’ from home.
3. Always make sure your routine is specific to yourself and not just copied from someone else you have seen be successful. You would be surprised how many golfers will try to copy the great players, thinking it will allow them to replicate their performance. It doesn’t.
 4. Routines are required for all types of performances – even the most mundane ones will have some basic routine.
 5. Ask someone close to you to let you know what you do in certain specific situations – you may be surprised how insightful others can be when you are too close to the situation.
 6. Remember under pressure you are more likely to forget to use your routines – pressured times are when you really need them and have some reminders for when the pressure builds. Reminders on your computer, phone, post-it notes are all useful.

Chapter 6

Race plans



RACE PLANS ARE A LITTLE DIFFERENT FROM ROUTINES. Routines as described before are a series of steps you follow prior to performing a skill, while a race plan is a structured game plan which provides a map for you to follow to achieve your desired outcome. Here is a simple race plan from a young triathlete:

Working with my coach Jill, the plan was a steady swim, a heart-rate-based race plan (148 first loop, 150 2nd loop, 152 3rd loop, maybe a little harder on the 3rd loop if RPE is good), and then a ‘go for it’ sub-four-hour, negative split marathon based on a pace for each of the three loops. I had these numbers written on my hand just in case.

While obviously quite simple the plan sets up some guidelines which he has decided to follow. The emphasis of a race plan is to set up a structure which will not be deviated from and one from which you will draw confidence. The characteristic of a successful race plan is one which utilises the skills of the athlete and creates a process which if followed will allow the athlete to produce that gold medal performance. Race plans work just as well in team sports, they are just called game plans. The game plan is exactly the same as the race plan, the difference is simply that more people are involved which adds to the complexity.

Some may remember the story in which Dominic Sheldrick, an Australian swimmer was heading for guaranteed selection to the 1988 Olympic Games – leukaemia robbed him of a spot on the team. Four years later after beating the disease he once again stood up on the blocks attempting to secure a spot for the 1992 Games. From his own account he remembers hitting the wall after the first fifty metres and seeing himself so far ahead of the pack, he decided to forgo his race plan and maintain the stroke and kick rate that he had used for the first fifty metres. By the time the race had finished, he had used up all the energy in his tank and had slipped too far down the placing to be included in the Olympic team.

Here is part of the race plan of a nationally successful rowing pair for a standard 2000 metre race.

Start to 500 m

- 3/4 – 1/2 – 3/4 length – full
- First 20 strokes @ 42–46 strokes per minute (SPM)
- One stroke lengthen to race pace @ 35–37 SPM
- 10–15 strokes at race pace
- Next 10 strokes @ race pace + 2 SPM
- One stroke lengthen to race pace, cross the 500 m line in first place

500 m to 1000 m

Stroke for stroke at our base cadence rate

1000 m to 1500 m

Five strokes after the line, up two on the drive for a power ten.

- If the race wasn't locked up in the first thousand, it is now.
- Lengthen our lead, make everyone else fight for second place, first is ours.
- Pay the physiology price for the strategic advantage of leading, and the psychology advantage of getting far enough in the lead that we are out of our opponents' field of vision.

Ten strokes from the final 500, power fifteen to drive our opponents away. Clean finishes, strong sync'ed backs to bow. This takes us into the final stretch, the tenth or twelfth stroke has us crossing the 1500 m line.

1500 m to 2000 m

(The finishing strategy depends on where everyone else is on a six-lane course.)

If someone is within four seats:

Coming off the last commitment, up two beats for ten, then up two every twenty. Sit up a little taller, pry the legs down. Whatever it takes to get to the line first.

If we are up by more than half a boat and are moving away.

Coming off the last commitment, 10–15 strokes at base cadence. Up two for twenty, then up two to the line.

The points to note from this plan are that;

- it is complete
- it is detailed
- it covers contingencies – see the ‘if’ statements such as ‘If someone is within four seats’
- it contains cue phrases to remind them of what they need to be doing at a particular stage of the race – for instance ‘Clean finishes’ and ‘Sit up a little taller’. These have a special meaning to the crew at the appropriate times and trigger the right response in them.



The Business Olympian

After working in several consultancy firms, I have found that the concept of mapping out an approach to delivering a service is quite well established. It only fails to produce results when people fail to follow the plan through. If your company has a process, critically analyse the approach and understand why each step exists and set up markers for yourself to indicate that you have passed that point. In many cases a simple checklist will prove to very useful. Interestingly, in most cases although there is a plan for successful delivery of a project, there

is very rarely a plan for re-engaging your client should the ‘train come off the rails’. In my experience, when this happens the person fails to recognise that the derailing has occurred and then has no choice but to try and fight through it. The outcome is very rarely positive. Having contingency routines can be very useful and I am confident that they will almost always be needed. To effectively set out a project, race or game plan, you should follow some simple steps:

1. Understand the goal which is to be achieved.
2. Define the workable parameters within which that goal will operate.
3. Utilise the four quadrant model of concentrating – see Chapter 2 – and define what should occur during each quadrant.
4. Systematically set up the steps which need to occur and the measures which will indicate their successful completion.
5. Make sure you have contingency plans in place – see the rowing example above
6. Debrief after the project.

A personal race plan is also important and useful in defining how you will approach situations and the steps you take to ensure you utilise all your appropriate skills. All too often I hear people comment they would have or should have done things differently. Setting up a personal race plan follows similar steps to the team game plan, but everything is on an individual basis. Race plans can include any number of steps, ranging from what you need on your desk before starting an analysis of a project, to the step-by-step process you follow to ensure you have not missed anything in the work environment. Remember your plan is a guide which should not be altered unless you have insurmountable evidence to prove it is not working.

Tim's futures trading 'race plan'

Set up

1. Fundamental situation – make sure supply and demand models confirm the idea

2. Trend – Make sure the trend is in your favour

Position size

- Calculate the dollar move between estimated entry and initial stop
- Divide dollar move into 2% of portfolio value
- This will tell you how many shares or contracts to trade.

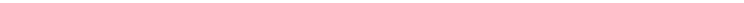
Entry

Monitor feelings of wanting to hesitate or jump the gun, they will probably be wrong.

Which tool to trade, shares, options or futures?

1. For futures, check that the price curve is in my favour. If so trade as far out as reasonable liquidity allows. If not, look for shares in the sector and buy a basket.
2. Check for mis-priced options (do not use option pricing models, check the option asking price and compare the premium with the daily average true range and % of contract price).

and so on.



Tim McGavin, a successful futures trader, developed his ‘race plan’ over several years of self-reflection and exploration. His plan was written out and followed to the word. It included how he would enter a position (to trade), when he would check prices, when he would pull out. This was his reason for success. Tim’s plan is shown in the box.

Tim's plan created a sense of calm in his interpretation of the market and reduced his anxiety when having to make important decisions.



Tips from our Olympians

1. The message is that the plan needs to set the scene and you need to stick to it.
2. The plan should fit the situation – Tim's plan was significantly more detailed than the rowers' but both were successful.

3. Discuss your plan with your manager and ensure it actually meets the needs of the specific project you are working towards.
4. Review your plan at the end of the project to ensure it worked effectively. Make the necessary changes prior to the next project.
5. Don't forget the contingency plan should everything go 'pear shaped'.

Chapter 7

Time travel



I have been asked so many times, how was I able to shoot arrow after arrow during the gold medal match and not be aware of the score. The answer is simple. Each shot is its own shot, you can't focus on the previous shot, either to beat yourself up for a poor shot, or predict your future score if you kept it going. The conditions are different, the arrow is different. The challenge is to focus on the process, stay in the here and now, and make each shot its own master.

Simon Fairweather – 2000 Olympic Gold Medallist Archery

AND YOU THOUGHT TIME TRAVELLING WASN'T POSSIBLE! Let me pose this question: should a swimmer standing on the block be focused on hitting the wall first, or a runner waiting for the gun, be focused on passing the line first? It's a common misconception that the answer is 'yes'. For some reason we human beings strive for 'time travel'. We either want to be further ahead than we really are, or we want to make up for something that has occurred in the past. I vividly remember sitting in the change room of a team that had just lost a grand final. The team was upset, contemplating what had happened – they had gone in absolute favourites. The head coach came in some time later and began talking – well talking is an interesting way of describing the conversation. She started by asking who had gone into the game thinking they were going to win. The majority nodded. She then asked how they had approach the last quarter, in which they had gone in ten points up. Again they said they were sure they were

going to win. This interaction took about five minutes during which the coach didn't say much. Once the athletes had let off a little steam she made a point which still rings in my head. Her speech went something like this:

That was bullshit, you went into this game thinking you were going to win. Basically your mind was 45 minutes into the future and you were not in anyway focused on what your job was. You had already decided which finger you were going to wear the diamond on and how much fun you were going to have at the party afterwards. What happened to your blocking out, what happened to your defence, did you think somebody was going to do your job for you ...?

Travelling into the future

Athletes who travel into the future usually have one of two types of thoughts:

1. If I maintain this effort, I will end up with a score of X, or
2. The error I just made will mean I will only be able achieve a certain score, or I won't be able to set that new record.

You will note that the theme in both thought processes is one of prediction. Predictions can be either negative – 'after that we're never going to win' – or positive – 'we scored, that's this game in the bag'.

More specifically, during my eight years with the Australian Olympic archery team I can vividly recall a time when one of the archers hit three tens in a row to start his round off with a perfect score of 30/30. (An archery competition requires the archer to shoot 12 arrows). This 'time travelling' archer then started to predict his final score, based on the current score – 'Awesome I am going to set a new personal best'. Unfortunately what happened next was catastrophic. Filled with supreme confidence and feeling bullet proof he chose not to maintain his pre-shot routine and just 'let fly'. The outcome was a dismal total score of 95 out of a possible 140. An all too common outcome when 'travelling into the future'. The 1500 metre swimmer may be ahead of the pack after the first 250 metres and assume they are going to win – travelling forward in time, risking losing their concentration and forgetting to follow their race plan. Before they realise it the opposition has caught up and they are now fighting to regain their place in the lead.

Alternatively, the first 250metres may not have gone to plan. The swimmer may realise they are in fifth place when they had planned to be leading the pack at this stage. In their mind they may have already failed and they may 'beat themselves up' mentally for the next five laps, ultimately destroying any chance they may have had. Just as bad, they may attempt to change their game plan and 'wing' it. The effect of changing your race plan during a competition creates a disharmony in your mental flow and reduces your ability to perform.

The net effect of thinking into the future prevents the athlete from actually doing their job. Many would argue that this is common sense, but anyone who has ever played golf and placed a wager on the final score will be acutely aware of the concept of predicting into the future. Consider Tiger Woods shooting a bogey on his first hole of a four-day competition. Do you really think he will be calculating his final score based on that hole? I suspect not. It would not be uncommon though, for the amateur golfer to develop a mindset that becomes very predictive with every shot.

So far all these examples have come from individual sports. 'Time travelling' is just as common in team sports. For the basketballer who takes a shot and misses, time travelling can be quite common. 'Oh well, we are going to lose now' is a common thought. The difficulty is by travelling into the future the athlete loses focus on their job at hand and starts to process the 'end' failure as if it were occurring in the present. These athletes appear to lose focus, and become quite disconnected from the game. While it would be true to say that it is easier for team athletes to hide in the team – diffusion of responsibility – it still does not protect them from the effect of time travelling.

A paradoxical challenge for the athlete occurs when the time travelling is positive. The football team who has scored several goals in the first half could easily time travel into the future and start to predict the outcome of the event prior to the end of the game. The main effect of this prediction is a similar loss in focus as a degree of arrogance takes hold. The team who starts to enjoy the win prior to final whistle is also the team who is setting themselves up to fail. The difficulty that is often faced is that future time travelling doesn't always predict failure and any previous success may actually give the athlete a false sense of their own ability. One thing that is guaranteed, you won't be able to continue this behaviour

forever. It will catch up with you. The second effect of positive future travelling is a tendency for the athlete to stop following the routine or game plan. It is essential that athletes stick to a plan regardless of the environment. We have all witnessed the effect of the top-of-the-table team losing to the team ranked at the bottom of the table. In essence what has happened is the team on a whole has started time travelling prior to the game and assumed it is in the bag. Their need to follow the game plan becomes moot and ultimately their focus is lost.

Travelling into the past

We can also travel back in time. A good example is a golfer who hits a bad shot and then ruminates over it while they are preparing for the next shot. Here the mindset shifts from the process of hitting the next ball, to a mindset of making up for the last poor performance.

Golf is not the only sport where we see this behaviour; here are some other areas where backward time travelling appears quite frequently.

The tennis serve, dart throwing, free kick, mark, basketball free throw shot. The common theme is that backward time travelling, unlike forward time travelling, appears to be most commonly a problem of 'closed skills'. A closed skill is one which is usually pre-programmed and where little interference is possible from the outside world or other competitors. A good example is a basketball free throw shot, in which the athlete stands at the free throw line and performs a shot with no interference from the opposition. The nature of a closed skill is that you are able to reflect on the skill, quite vividly. In the business world, an example of a closed skill would be preparing a presentation – you can work alone with few or no distractions. An open skill would be the delivery of the presentation where you are out in the 'real world' with other people. Using your imagery skills you will be surprised how easy it is to remember a previous event. Try to recall a particular action you performed, remember it should be a closed skill. Now repeat that performance over and over in your head. Congratulations you have travelled back in time!

As discussed in more depth in Chapter 10 on imagery, travelling backward in time can at times be quite useful. You can review a performance, you can look for details you maybe missed the first time. The key is to use the information as

a means of improving a future performance. Not as a way of ‘beating yourself up’ and then desperately trying to make up for what went wrong. Sometimes the captain or coach, when giving the team a ‘pep talk’ refers to a previous poor performance which the team needs to make up for. Sometimes they use phrases such as ‘You need to perform today for the fans’, or even more damaging, ‘Your last performance was very poor, so you had better win this one’. They are unconsciously forcing their team members to travel back in time and focus on something negative, to the almost certain detriment of their next performance.

What’s happening

Here we are predominately dealing with the concept of self-doubt. It has been described to me as the duck that keeps quacking in the back of your head. ‘Am I going to be good enough?’, ‘Can I achieve what I said I was going to?’. Quack, quack, quack ...

Where does the quacking’ come from? From an early age we are conditioned to react to information that is presented to us. At school we are reminded of poor performances and instructed to ensure it doesn’t happen again. Information is sent home to our parents highlighting these poor performances and we are conditioned to ‘make up for it, the next time round’. The net effect of this is a constant state of ‘time travelling’, and no real focus on the task at hand.

Sport is just as much to blame, ‘If you win this game you may make it to the finals in three months and possibly get picked for the state team’. Imagine how those athletes feel when they are failing and all of a sudden their goals are looking further and further away. It is completely understandable why a decrease in effort could start to creep in.

Self-doubt is related to the concept known as ‘self-efficacy’, first described by psychologist Albert Bandura in the 1950s. The concept of self-efficacy is often misunderstood. Its definition is ‘the belief you have in your ability to complete a task’ which should not be confused with ‘self-confidence’, which is the belief you have that you can actually complete the task. The key word here is ability. Let’s explain it this way. Answer these two questions:

1. Do I believe I could fulfil the requirements given to me by a parachute

instructor? That is, do I believe I have the ability to fold my arms, stay in a ball till he touches my shoulder, then open up my body with my legs bent behind me?

2. Now the second question. Will you skydive?

It should be easy to see that you have a high level of self-efficacy when it comes to sky diving. You know you could perform those tasks. But your self-confidence to skydive could be very low. In most cases, it is impossible to have high self-confidence without high self-efficacy but the opposite is very common. Given this understanding of self-efficacy and its direct link to self-doubt, I hope your understanding of 'time travelling' makes more sense.



The Business Olympian

In business we have to look to the past to gain insight into the future, but the challenge is still the same as in sport. How to ensure that reflecting on past mistakes is not detracting from your ability to perform now, while still allowing yourself to learn from the past. Errors will always occur. You need to be mentally strong so you can 'stay in the moment'. If you have a tendency to want to make up for past errors now is the time to stop. Should you be unsuccessful in an endeavour, it is time to explore your misgivings and create stepping-stones to future successes. Remember that in business a deal is not a deal until the final negotiations have been signed, sealed and delivered.

Tony Rowlinson, Chief Operating Officer of the Photon Group commented to me that in the business of acquisitions and mergers, you will have as many failed efforts as successes. Each merger needs to be treated as its own beast, and while you can learn from your previous efforts, you have to ensure you approach the next one stands on its own merits.

Here are some situations in business where time travelling into the past is quite common. Imagine you are in the waiting area about to go in to see the board about another new idea. As we sit in the waiting area the little duck starts to quack, the self-doubt starts to creep in and all of a sudden the thought process switches from one of 'I am going to knock their socks off with this idea' to 'I better not stuff this up again like I did last time'. The effect on the body is one

which is best described as a sense of hyper-vigilance. We become very sensitive to everything around us and start to misinterpret cues from the people in the room. The managing director looking down, someone in the corner checking their PDA, the person who kept checking their emails last time doesn't even look like he is listening. How do you think you are going to perform?

Similarly in the business world we can spend more time in the future – dreaming about it and preparing for it – than actually experiencing the present. When we are focused on the future we begin to interpret each event based on how it will affect our overall goal. For example, when the share market drops a few points and your shares lose value, the tendency is to look into the future, assume you won't achieve your goals and failure is imminent. For the more pessimistic person it makes the goal look further away and potentially less achievable. Again this is not the case. If you have followed our earlier arguments it will become clear that contingencies should be in place and these hiccups will be overcome.

The difficulty here is that in most cases business men and women are required to project into the future. We prepare contracts, proposals, submit them for consideration and hope for a positive outcome. This is different, however, from allowing your focus to be constantly on the future and thereby preventing you from paying attention to the present and the job at hand.

Once while listening to the radio, I heard a reporter discussing the process he went through in preparing to interview David Beckham. He had prepared the questions the night before, rehearsed them and had even role played them in front of the mirror. All excellent ideas, but it all fell apart the next morning, when literally thirty seconds before the interview, the director whispered in his ear, 'If you stuff this up, thousands of people will remember you as the guy who had an opportunity to interview one of the greatest football players on this planet and completely stuffed it up'. Instantly he travelled into the future, visions of being unemployed flashed through his mind and he promptly forgot every single question he was going to ask. Fortunately, his director fed him all the questions through his ear piece and the interview was a success. Many of us don't have someone in our ear to ensure we stay on track.

The concept of time travelling or negative reflection transfers seamlessly from sport to the business world and I believe business men and women fall into

the same traps as elite athletes. Becoming a true Business Olympian requires an understanding of how your mind works. Why would you waste energy attempting to right an earlier wrong? Similarly why would you move your focus away from your job and begin predicting the outcome?



Tips from our Olympians

1. Set yourself very clear objectives (see Chapter 4 on setting objectives) – identify the task, plan your attack, write it down and follow it.
2. Use information from the past as a reflecting tool, use the information to alter your current plan to ensure you don't make the same mistake. But don't allow your current performance be driven by a need to make amends for the previous performance.
3. Have a process for dealing with failure or imminent failure. Be prepared to de-personalise the situation, and allow constructive feedback from managers and other people who you trust.
4. Use support to maintain your focus. If you have an executive coach use them as with a mentor. Someone who has the ability to look at your performance from an impartial perspective will provide the clarity you need to stay in the moment.
5. Ensure each performance is its own performance. While it may be part of a bigger scheme, it still needs to be performed effectively for the whole project to come together.
6. Develop routines and ensure you can use these routines in the majority of situations you tend to find yourself in. Having a routine allows you to create an ideal performance state and allows you to stay in the here and now.
7. Recognise when are time travelling and catch yourself before it causes you to lose your focus. Keeping a diary will allow you to identify moments from the past and plan for when they may occur in the future.

Chapter 8

Fear of success



Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate. Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure. It is our light, not our darkness that most frightens us. We ask ourselves, who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous, talented, fabulous? Actually, who are we not to be? ... Your playing small does not serve the world. There is nothing enlightened about shrinking so that other people won't feel insecure around you. We were all meant to shine, as children do ... As we let our own light shine, we unconsciously give other people permission to do the same. As we are liberated from our own fear, our presence automatically liberates others.

Excerpt from *Our deepest fear* by Marianne Williamson

THE FEAR OF SUCCESS IS A VERY REAL ISSUE THAT ARISES when we are genuinely creating change in our lives and moving forward. The fear of success can be a very real experience for some people as they see negative things occurring as a side effect of being successful. This all occurs in our imagination about what the future will hold. What we imagine for our future has an enormous influence on us in the present. If you're like most people, a fear of success involves a fear of achieving the very things that we truly want. It is the fear of the unknown, of what will come with that success, that is the main point here.

There are side effects to success that you may not consciously be aware of, but sub-consciously they can be enough to prevent you from taking committed action.

I once had an athlete who came to me wanting to lose weight. She had tried and tried but was never truly successful at achieving her desired goals. After talking for a while, and once I started to understand her situation, we began to see the possible side effects that were undermining her efforts. It turned out that she was fearful of many side effects that she had presumed would happen, if she lost the weight she wanted to. She believed that people would notice if she lost weight and people would comment about it. She thought that people would ask her for advice, and as such, she would then feel pressured by others to maintain her weight. She was overwhelmed by the prospect of having to buy all new clothes. She was afraid of becoming more attractive to others and thereby attract more social attention (both wanted and unwanted). She also expressed a fear that her overweight friends might become jealous, her family may resist her changing, and was stressed about her ability to keep the weight off. She was also concerned that she would miss the foods that she enjoyed so much in her diet. But most importantly she was concerned that with all this effort she would actually improve on her chosen sport and was unsure as to whether she could handle the additional pressure. All her concerns about what life would be like if she did succeed had caused her to never move from her standard weight. She felt safe at that weight. Whilst she consciously desired to be thinner, unconsciously she was so scared of what that might mean and what might occur. As a result, she sabotaged her own efforts so that she could play it safe and stick to what she knew, even if that meant being miserable and dissatisfied with her body.

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It is not the fear of success itself, but rather the fear of things that come with the success. These fears are often unconscious, and if not dealt with consciously they have a tendency to grow stronger as the success grows nearer. This occurs through a simple process of behavioural conditioning. When you avoid an unwanted stimulus, you automatically reinforce the avoidance behaviour. So when you avoid working on your goals or don't take the actions which you planned to take, because of an unconscious fear, you end up reinforcing the habit of procrastination. As a result, the more time that goes by, the harder it becomes to take action.

The good news is that when you identify you have a fear, or multiple fears of success, you can learn to decrease their power and work around them. By uprooting unconscious fears they can no longer sabotage your efforts. Once you examine your thoughts and beliefs, and figure out a way to deal with the realistic side effects of success in advance, you are reinforcing messages to your subconscious that you don't need to worry about the negative side effects of success, as you have a plan of how to handle them.

It is not socially acceptable to acknowledge the negative side effects that may come with success. We are socially conditioned to assume that all changes from success will be positive. But unless we can prepare ourselves for a realistic picture of success, then we may push success away. If you are not comfortable with what success may bring, then you may end up sabotaging your efforts to achieve it. In general, we are not conditioned to handle success. From a young age, we are conditioned to cope with failure. It seems to be a more frequent occurrence and we learn how to cognitively manage it. The conditioning to cope with success however, is less common. As a result, the outcomes of success may be more frightening than the outcomes of failure as failure is more familiar.

Success is frightening due to the weight one gives it, the weight one places on what success means. Athletes can experience a fear of success as a result of thinking 'If I do achieve that goal, I won't be who I am. I'll end up changing, becoming a different person'. Sometimes people are afraid that if they succeed then they will have to stop being who they are and change into someone else. But realising that life is in constant motion, that we are changing everyday, and that tomorrow you will be different to who you are today, helps allow athletes to put change into perspective.

The following are some common experiences when an athlete has a fear of success.

Fear of emotional isolation. This is when athletes believe that if they become successful, their friends and other support people around them will think they have become someone else. As a result they fear possible disapproval from others. They think that if they win the gold medal at the Olympics then rather than being surrounded by people who love and care for them, they will become isolated and alone.

Guilt over ones self-assertion or aggressive drive. Some athletes have a self-image of how they see themselves as very loving, sweet, non-confrontational. They believe that being a determined person has negative qualities of asserting yourself, and such behaviour is socially unacceptable.

Fear of showing one's potential. This fear, whilst it is hidden in the unconscious, still affects an athlete's experience of life. They may be confronted with the possibility that they could be better than what they think they are. That they actually have what it takes to win could be a scary thought when the athlete thinks of themselves as someone who does not have what it takes. Having their self-image challenged in this way is a frightening experience. As a result the athlete may subtly undermine their own efforts for achieving their goal.

Fear of old traditions. Some athletes, especially females, do experience a fear of what is called sex role inappropriate behaviour. It is a view that females should behave in a certain way. It is learnt through social conditioning from the people around them and their family. It can result in some women experiencing a fear of success because they are afraid that being powerful enough to create the life they desire will make them unlovable to others.

Fear of the burden that comes with success. Some athletes believe that if they become successful, they will no longer be treated as normal. They will be singled out as 'special' and people will relate to them as someone different than who they know themselves as.

How do athletes handle success and fame?

Nick was in his final year of under-18 football. He had been identified as a possibility for an AFL career by talent scouts. He came to see me midway through his final season before the AFL draft. He expressed having great concerns about a possible career in the AFL and what it all meant. He was a nice young man with a strong family identity and a very close friendship group. He was fearful that if he was selected to play for an AFL team, then he would experience an altering of his routine in life, and altering of the life of his family, and a possible impact on his relationship with his friends. He had a fear of the unknown experiences that may come with an AFL career. He was concerned about moving away from his family, moving away from his friends, and changing his environment. Whilst he wanted to play AFL, and it had been a dream for him for a long time, he was also torn due to the possible negatives that may go along with an AFL career. He was experiencing decreased motivation for training, an inability to focus during games, and his quality of football had decreased from where it was normally.

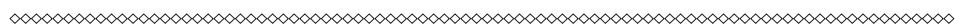
Athletes can experience a fear of success even after having achieved it. We think that fear of success would only be present prior to the success occurring. In fact, it can be present whilst the success is occurring, and even after the success has occurred.

Once athletes 'arrive' so to speak, they then could have great fears about their ability to continue their current level of performances or a fear of not being able to repeat their previous performances. The story in the box is of an Olympic athlete who experienced a fear of success based on a fear of repeated effort.

Fear of repeat effort

An Australian runner had been successful at an Olympic games. It had been her first big competition for Australia and she had done exceptionally well, earning herself a personal best and medal to show for it. With that

performance came a lot of media attention and publicity. With the help of her management she found herself at many 'A-List' functions, celebrity parties, public appearances, and speaking engagements. She was the toast of the town so to speak. She started to let her training regime slip and lost a little bit of her dedication to running. She still trained hard, mind you, but not in the same way she did in her years before the Olympics. When she went to the world championships, a little over a year after the Olympics, not only did she not match her performance from the Olympics – the opposite of what the media had predicted – but she performed well below her normal standard, not even making it through to the semi-finals. This resulted in her questioning her ability for the sport. Even though it was only 18 months after her Olympic experience, she felt she had lost her ability and was questioning whether she was able to compete at the same level any more. She then turned her attention to trying to get back to her best. She trained hard and re-focused on her sport. She was not able to let go of the poor performance, which weakened her belief in herself. She experienced anxiety about what the repercussions would be if she did not make it back to the top again. She kept asking herself 'What will people think of me if I don't win again? Will they think my performance at the Olympics was a fluke?'



What the runner whose story is in the box experienced is something that occurs not only in sports, but in the entertainment industry, and also business. When you arrive at the top you say, 'Ahhh, finally I have arrived'. Because you have been focused on the outcome that you were shooting for so long, you lost sight of the process. You forgot about the process that got you there and started to feel invincible. As a result it is possible to neglect the fundamental things you need to focus on to stay there and it is possible to start to set yourself up for failure.

One activity I have found useful to help people who experience a fear of success is to ask them 'What will happen if you succeed? Don't worry about what you hope will happen, or what you fear might happen, but what realistically is most likely to occur. So you achieve your goal, then what? What will actually change?' Once you identify what realistically will change, then you have an opportunity to start to prepare.

Overcoming ‘roadblocks’ which interfere with your ability to use the talents or skills you have, involves identifying them, exploring the meanings you have created around them, and initiating a change that will decrease their impact. If you hear the ‘quack quack’ in your head, or you catch yourself sabotaging your efforts, simply thank the little duck for sharing and re-focus onto what you need to do in the here and now.

Often, once athletes have identified that they have some sort of a fear of success, either through discussions with their coach, their sport psychologist, or maybe even team mates, they will start to reduce the fear by engaging in tasks or activities that will help them chip away at the fear and reduce its power over them.



The Business Olympian

How do you personally rate success? Have you placed values on what you deem success to be? Is it being at the top, is it earning a certain amount of money, or is it achieving the dream you have in the back of your mind? But has this dream always been present? I suspect not. Dreams and goals develop as we go through life. They start off small when we are children – getting a bike and then learning how to ride it equals success. Getting your first job equals success. As we finish school our dreams start to expand and grow. How you rate success now is different from how you rated it ten years ago. Was your rating of success once smaller than it is now? For many people they reach a point where they have had some successes in life. As they achieve these successes, their station in life grows and then they find themselves wanting more.

Lets take the case of Daniel. Daniel is a thirty-five-year-old businessman. When Daniel was starting with the company, he dreamt of being an executive. Having the prestige, power, and income that comes with being an executive was his idea of success. Now that he has achieved his goal, he is finding himself dreaming of a new one, a bigger one. He dreams of being the CEO of his company. Many would say that Daniel has succeeded. He grew through the ranks well and has shown great talent. But his new dream brings up fears for him. Daniel continually imagines what it would mean to be CEO and how it would alter his life. He finds himself fearing that he won't have the tools or capabilities to handle such a change from how life currently is to what it would be like as CEO. The key point here is that

Daniel may not have the capabilities to function as CEO *yet*. If Daniel looked back at how far he has come he may see that his life has altered. His social groups, environment, tasks he does and projects he is responsible for have all changed and developed. He does not have a belief in himself as he is always looking into the future and focusing on the void between what he would need to do as CEO and his current role as an executive. But if Daniel were to look back in time he would realise that ten years ago, when he was just starting with the company, he felt the same feelings of uncertainty. If he looked back he would see that ten years ago he did not have the capabilities to be an executive, but he learnt and developed them as he went along. His ability to function as a CEO could develop in a similar fashion if he desired it. His ability to function as a CEO would not be thrust upon him tomorrow, but rather he would have the opportunity to grow into it. His life, while it would be different to what it is today, would just be life for him. He would manage just as his is today. If he was not managing then he would have an opportunity to learn how to manage personally or to alter his situation. The pain and struggle of getting there would teach him how to handle it. The challenges he would have to overcome are his training ground.



Tips from our Olympians

If you are wanting to achieve success, but feel scared about your ability to handle it, then find a mentor who is already where you want to be. Ask them what is different in their life as a result of their success. Assess how your presumptions are different to what the mentor reports. Then do some goal setting around the mental skills or attitudes required to function effectively with that possible new level of success.

Speak to a sport or organisational psychologist and find ‘where the weeds are growing’. Often it is difficult to see the weeds because you are too close to step back and see them. Reflecting off someone else enables you to see where you are fearful and how you stop yourself unconsciously.

If you are not comfortable about seeing a psychologist, then you can engage in your own self-enquiry and see what comes up. The following questions are a good start. When answering them, don’t try to look for the ‘right’ answer, simply acknowledge what comes up and write it down – don’t dismiss anything.

- What do I think will happen if I become successful?
- How would success look in this area of my life?
- In what ways do I feel not worthy of success in this area?
- Who am I afraid of intimidating or hurting by becoming or continuing my success in this area?
- What are my biggest concerns about succeeding?
- Are there others I think who would be more deserving of success in this area than me? Why do I think this?
- How motivated am I in the struggle for success in this area?
- In what ways do I think that I'll be unsatisfied or feel unworthy if I achieve success in this area?
- What evidence is there that I have not put in enough effort to achieve my goals in this area?
- What are my long-range goals for this area?
- In what ways do I destroy my own efforts?
- How much of a problem do I have in making decisions here?
- In what ways has my motivation been diminished in this area?
- In what ways have I been an underachiever in this area?
- Have I ever felt guilty, confused or anxious when I did achieve a level of success here?
- Have I ever feared losing people's attention, sympathy, or concern if I achieved success here?
- Have I ever chosen just the opposite of what I needed to be successful in this area?
- Have I ever put myself down for achieving success in this area?

After looking at your beliefs about negative consequences of success, challenge them if they seem irrational and replace them with more rational statements or points of view.

After you have identified your irrational beliefs, and replaced them with rational ones, move on to identifying the new behaviours that you need to develop.

- How can I improve the ways in which I reinforce myself?
- How can I make a more honest appraisal of my accomplishments?
- How can I accept myself as being successful?
- How can I eliminate all excuses for being unsuccessful?
- Who needs to have permission to give me honest feedback when they see me self-destructing?
- How can I monitor my level of commitment and motivation to succeed?
- How can I improve the ways I visualise what it will be like when I achieve my goals?
- How can I improve the ways in which I offer others reinforcement and praise for their individual success and achievements?
- How can I improve my self-talk to assist me in achieving my goals?
- How can I learn to accept the compliments and recognition of others for my success?

Once you have seen any themes that run through your answers, make a plan of how to overcome them. If you continue to have a fear of success then re-assess responses to these questions and come up with a new plan.

Chapter 9

Motivation



If you're not motivated to succeed and keep pushing yourself, you are guaranteed to sink and fail. While reflecting on my early career, it was my involvement in both individual and team sport that helped me develop my competitive drive. Team sports taught me how important it is to get 'buy in' from everyone, to ensure future success, while individual sport taught me how to cope with failing.

Tony Rowlinson – Chief Operating Officer of the Photon Group

WHILE YOU MAY HAVE HEARD ABOUT A THOUSAND different things that motivate people, there are only two types of motivation. They are aptly called *motivation to succeed* and *motivation to avoid failure*.

Motivation to succeed is when athletes focus on succeeding and ensure they have set up appropriate processes to ensure they achieve their full potential. Full potential doesn't necessarily suggest the only option is winning. In fact these athletes are able to see failure as a stepping stone to success. They accept failure when it occurs and use the information they have gathered to determine their next move. While it is the goal of all athletes, anecdotal evidence suggests that the majority of athletes struggle to achieve this mindset. The types of athletes who are motivated to succeed are often considered arrogant, as they appear to not care what anyone thinks of them or their performance. This is a misjudgement – they deeply care, but the care is driven by their own interpretation of the event. Think

of your favourite athlete, now think of how they reacted the last time they lost or performed poorly. How did they explain their performance? Did they blame someone else, did they create a series of excuses ...?

On the other hand athletes who are motivated to avoid failure still want to succeed but are overly focused on how they will be negatively evaluated by themselves and others on the experience of failure. The difficulty arises from the fact that in most situations athletes are constantly being evaluated by the public, sponsors, coaches, team mates and parents. It is hard not to personalise any defeats. They place an emphasis on the negative evaluation and their behaviour is driven by trying to avoid this evaluation. Athletes who are motivated to avoid failure will display certain behavioural characteristics. Generally speaking they will choose to take the safe road and not place themselves in a situation in which the negative evaluation will occur. They're often the great players who for some reason will always seem to be safe, they never push the barrier, they rarely take a chance, and they will be reluctant to try something completely new. The other characteristics you will see include deliberately putting themselves in situations where they are guaranteed success or guaranteed failure. The easiest way to explain this would be by using a golfing scenario. Let's assume you are a reasonably talented golfer, but motivated to avoid failure. Your behaviour would take one of two paths – you will either challenge the least athletic looking person to a game of skins where you are assured success. Or you will challenge Tiger Woods to a game. Here you are guaranteed failure, but given his ability, the likelihood of you being negatively evaluated by others is non-existent. In short your ego will remain intact.

More realistically, athletes motivated to avoid failure will often be found competing in a very easy competition or one that is vastly above their ability. They do this to make the failure easier to deal with as they are prepared for guaranteed success or failure. It is unlikely that such athletes will take any risks. They are often regarded as the people who simply like to tread the path most worn. A classic example would be in the last sixty seconds of a basketball competition, when your team is down by two points and the star player is fouled out. The athlete who is motivated to avoid failure will be praying that they are not selected to be subbed in, while the athlete who is motivated to succeed will be chomping at the bit to get in there and do their stuff.

Consider these questions and jot your thoughts from your own perspective

- Who do I compete or work for? (For instance, my company, my managers, myself)
- How do I evaluate failure?
- How could I use a failure to increase performance?

Always remember that everyone has to learn from their failures in order to develop.

Some background on the theory of motivation

Understanding motivation can be somewhat complicated. Many of you would have come across the concept of internal versus external motivation. From my perspective this is a superficial factor, albeit an important one. ‘Internal drivers of motivation’ refer to factors inside us, like our will to win or our need to improve on a particular task. ‘External drivers of motivation’ include factors like financial incentives. What I mean by superficial factors is that it would be too easy to simply say that if you throw someone more money that will fix their motivation issues, or if you simply ask them to do it for the team or themselves, that will in fact turn a person around. The external versus internal debate is useful once you know the orientation of the individual, as that will help you understand why each of those factors will be successful and how to maximise the effect of the type of motivation.

Athletes are customarily described as having a ‘task orientation’ or an ‘ego orientation’ in their motivation.

Task oriented people are concerned with mastery attainment, hard work, and persistence. They are also concerned with their individual coping and capabilities when faced with different and challenging circumstances. Ego oriented athletes are primarily concerned with the outcome of the particular event or contest.

What is interesting is that Olympic champions have come from both orientations and there doesn’t appear to be a difference when the individual is succeeding. The difference will only appear when there is a sense of failure or in the presence of actual failure. Essentially, a low performance is perceived as a threat to the individual’s ego and thus, it is postulated that task oriented people are positively

associated with effort, exertion, persistence, and adherence, while ego oriented people are more associated with the lack of persistence and dropping-out. In some cases ego oriented people will go as far as blaming others or worse, cheating. Furthermore, people with a high ego orientation, reduce their efforts to protect their perceived ability and self-esteem. Consequently, these people attribute their poor performance to a lack of effort rather than a lack of ability. Athletes who choose to use performance enhancing drugs are often ego oriented. They cannot even consider ‘failure’ as an option.

Can goal orientation affect athletes handle uncomfortable situations?

For ego oriented people, a goal of displaying superiority over others while competing is sufficient to allow the person to adhere to the task, despite any feelings of discomfort. The task orientated person may set a personal goal which is powerful enough to mediate the discomfort they experience. When no concrete goal is set, the length of time spent tolerating discomfort may decrease in the ego oriented individual. People who are task oriented may develop alternative goals which usually include personal best or skills improvement, and therefore can tolerate the discomfort longer.

Ego orientation characteristics	Task orientation characteristics
Outcome-focused	Task-focused
Achieve at any cost	Planned process, ethical and moral
Display superiority over others	Display mastery of task
One step analysis	
Reaction to failure	Reaction to failure
Decrease effort/intensity	Redirect and increase effort and intensity
Increase cheating/blaming	Increase focus
Increase in excuses	Ownership of error
Failure = threat to ego	Failure = stepping stone to success

The following questionnaire will help you determine which orientation you are predisposed to. Remember you will have some ego and task orientation but generally people have a tendency to one or the other.

Goal orientation questionnaire

Read each statement below and indicate how much you personally agree with it by circling the appropriate response.

When do you feel most successful at work? In other words, when do you feel a work activity has gone really well for you.

I feel most successful at work when ...

	I feel most successful at work when ...	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
1	I'm the only one who can do the work	SD	D	N	A	SA
2	I learn a new skill and it makes me want to learn more	SD	D	N	A	SA
3	I can do better than my work mates	SD	D	N	A	SA
4	The others can't do as well as me	SD	D	N	A	SA
5	I learn something that is fun to do	SD	D	N	A	SA
6	Other mess up and I don't	SD	D	N	A	SA
7	I learn a new skill by trying hard	SD	D	N	A	SA
8	I work really hard	SD	D	N	A	SA
9	I score the most points with management	SD	D	N	A	SA
10	Something I learn makes me want to try harder and learn more	SD	D	N	A	SA
11	I'm the best at what I do	SD	D	N	A	SA
12	When I learn a skill it just feels right.	SD	D	N	A	SA
13	I do my very best	SD	D	N	A	SA

To score the questionnaire use the following points: SD = 0, D= 1, N=2, A=3, SA=4.

Then add up your score for items 1, 3, 4, 6, 9 and 11 and divide the sum by 6. This is your ego orientation. Now add up items 2, 5, 7, 10, 12, 13 and divide by 7. This is your score on task orientation. In some cases you will find that your ego score is similar to your task score. This suggests that in most cases you will choose which orientation you feel is best for the situation. Unfortunately you will still be exposed to all the common pitfalls of ego orientation when failure is imminent.



The Business Olympian

Of all the chapters in this book, this one transfers most easily to the business world. Let's reflect back to the two types of motivation and examine them in the corporate world. Business men and women who are motivated to avoid failure will display the same characteristics to the athlete with the same motivation. Imagine a sales person who is motivated to avoid failure. They will be driven to selling product in areas which guarantee them success. They will take over other successful routes, or only accept routes which have proven data to support successful sales. On the other hand they will be happy to accept situations where no-one expects them to be successful, so they will volunteer to try selling a product which has no expectation of success. It's safe. They are happy with their position as long as it is meeting their needs. Some have no intention of challenging themselves, and accept the status quo. At the opposite end of the motivation spectrum is the salesman who is motivated to succeed. This person will look at all their opportunities and while they have a higher risk taking propensity, they will be driven to maximise their effort and ultimately profit. They will look for the poor performing areas which could be turned around. The film *In the pursuit of Happiness* starring Will Smith is based on the true life story of Chris Gardner who started off as a medical door-to-door salesman and through a series of misfortunes juggled homelessness, poverty, childcare and other things frustratingly going against him. Ultimately he gains a prestigious position as a trainee stockbroker and ultimately turns his life around. He also ends up a multi-millionaire. His incredibly high motivation to succeed drove

his ability to cope with the significant failures he experienced. While many of us would consider losing a tender as a significant failure, Chris lost his house, his wife and effectively every cent he had, yet he remained steadfast in his pursuit of happiness and ultimately created his own success.

Now imagine an executive who is motivated to avoid failure. They will not put themselves in a position to take chances. At board meetings they will be one who doesn't volunteer to sit on committees that are charged with overcoming situations which are perceived as being difficult. They are unlikely to take on positions in which they are in the public eye and therefore would be 'blamed' for negative results. It is very likely that this individual would take on a CEO role, and if that happens, the results are usually disastrous. The executive who is motivated to succeed will be looking for innovative and new ways of building the business. They are not scared to take on challenging projects and are often called on by others in the business when difficulties appear insurmountable. They are also the first to admit when they have made an error, but will rarely leave it at that. They will be the first person to discuss what options they have to rectify an error or to minimise its impact, or ultimately to ensure it doesn't happen again. They generally do not make the same mistake twice.

The HR Director and the CFO – opposite motivations

Here is an interview I did with a high profile CEO. The situation is one with which I am sure you will be familiar.

Sitting in what would be one of the most inviting offices, the CEO was commenting on the drive of his board. I asked what he thought motivated them. He replied that all were very different and driven by a variety of stimuli. Before he could continue with his explanation, I interrupted him and began discussing the concepts of motivation to succeed and motivation to avoid failure. At the end of my monologue, he sat back in his chair, thought for while and said,

‘You have just perfectly described both my Human Resources Director and my Chief Finance Officer. That would have to be the most succinct way of understanding their behaviours I have ever heard.’

He continued,

‘ My HR director has never met a challenge she didn’t throw herself into. She is driven by achieving what you referred to as success – she calls it her mission in life. Her failures are met with a sense of learning, she usually spends some time evaluating what went wrong and then heads right back out there to have another shot at it. My CFO is the complete opposite. He is very cautious and absolutely hates it when I go into his office to challenge something or query a line in the monthly profit and loss statement.’

He paused for a minute smiled a little and continued,

‘His department is the most conservative department in the business. I can’t remember the last time a sense of innovation made its way out of his office. Don’t get me wrong, this is a billion dollar business, so he is doing a phenomenal job, but I guess using your theory I wonder where we would be if there was a different motivation driving him.’

A question I hear often is whether you can change from one type of motivation to the other. The answer is absolutely yes. In fact, although it is rare, some people can be driven by either type of motivation depending on the situation they find themselves in. In general, most people tend to be driven by motivation to avoid failure. Many societal forces are at work in creating this motivation in people – our schooling system, corporate performance management systems and even the creation of personal relationships. In my experience, to create a ‘motivation to succeed’ attitude, an individual needs to be exposed to situations and mentored by other like-minded individuals who ‘give them permission to fail’. Rod Leaver, global CEO of Lend Lease, lives by the motto ‘Ask me for forgiveness, don’t ask me for permission’. He qualifies this by indicating that he won’t accept an employee asking for forgiveness twice!



Tips from our Olympians

1. Honestly work out what your dominant motivation type is and the orientation which is driving it. By knowing this you can understand how you approach situations and the changes you need to make.
2. Re-read the chapter on objective setting and ensure that you have very

clear objectives. Share them with someone and check that your objectives are task driven.

3. Keep a training diary to remind you of how you handled issues in the past. These may be very useful should you face situations which could be perceived as an ego threat.
4. Ensure that your tasks have an appropriate focus and you are able to narrow your focus and block out any distractions – see Chapter 11 on performing under pressure.
5. Be able to recognise when your ego is getting the better of you.
6. Don't be afraid of taking risks. In fact in some circumstances failure could be the best thing for you. Michael Jordan once commented that not making the junior varsity team inspired him to become the best basketball player in the world.
7. When looking at situations consider the risk, then calculate the risk of not attempting it. Work out the worst-case scenario and work backwards developing contingencies for each step.
8. Talk to someone. Sports and performance psychologists have been helping elite athletes for years. Why not call one?
9. Believe in yourself and see yourself coping with all situations. Imagery can be a useful tool. Which brings us to the next chapter.

Chapter 10

Imagery



I can vividly remember standing in front of the goal posts looking up at them and thinking this is no different from every other time I have kicked a ball at goals. I went through my pre-kick routine which is basically three steps back, breathe, process on the flight of the ball and follow through. The moment I had struck the ball I knew it was good.

John Eales on kicking the winning goal in the 1998 Rugby World Cup competition

WHY WOULD AN ATHLETE USE IMAGERY OR VISUALISATION? What would be the purpose of trying to see something in your mind? Would it actually help them? This chapter will answer all these questions as well as giving some practical tips on how to actually do it.

Most people are able to create a picture in their mind. It may not be crystal clear, it may not even be a proper visual image. It might be more like a feeling that has some sort of visual aspect to it. If you're thinking that you have never seen an image in your mind, think back to when you may have heard a song on the radio that reminded you of one time in your past, or a particular smell that when you walk in the house takes hold of you and takes you back to another time. All these examples are forms of imagery.

Often, although we know we are able to create the image, we struggle to find the right cues to create it when we need it. People have a natural tendency

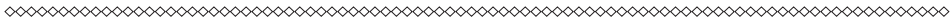
to use imagery in a negative way. It is very easy to find yourself going over and over in your mind some situation where you feel you have failed under pressure. Recall a presentation, workshop or sales pitch where you did not perform to your best. Did you come out of it and berate yourself for your performance? Perhaps you spent several miserable and very unproductive hours reliving the horrible experience. This is negative imagery. Over the years athletes have refined the use of imagery so that its use has altered from a retrospective reliving of errors to a proactive planning for enhanced performances. Sounds interesting, well that it is just scratching the surface of its benefits. Imagery has many forms and can be utilised in any form of business to plan and prepare for future endeavours.

Athletes and imagery

Athletes have been using imagery for as long as it has had a name and I am sure they used it even before they knew what it was called. Athletes use imagery in a number of ways and all have been shown to be useful in ultimately improving performance. Current theories suggest that we can visualise with our senses of sight, hearing, touch and smell. For the purpose of this chapter the word visualise should be interpreted as any one of these. They are all sensory ways in which people learn and experience what we do or would like to do. The impact of our visualisation can be very powerful. The athlete who goes into a competition and visualises a mediocre performance or sees themselves failing, is more likely to reproduce that poor performance. On the other hand, the athlete who visualises themselves performing well will feel themselves executing the task effortlessly. They will hear the inner supportive talk and they will be in a significantly better position to re-create that performance. Studies have shown that people who vividly experience images show substantial changes in brain wave activity, blood flow rate, heart rate, skin temperature and immune response. Something is definitely going on.

Footballer David Beckham has stated that he visualises many aspects of a game while still in the dressing room. He mentally pictures every free kick or penalty he might be called upon to take during the course of the game. Simon Fairweather, the Olympic Archery Gold Medallist, would spend several hours per week visualising the perfect shot, ensuring he could sense

the feel of the shot, the look of the shot and even the sound of the arrow as it left his bow. He became so in tune with his ability that he would often be able to predict where on the target the arrow would land before it actually hit the target. It may be hard to believe but sometimes I would be standing with Simon, holding onto a powerful telescope, and he would accurately tell me where the arrow landed before I could scan the target with the 'scope to find it. I spent four years with the archery program and never got used to that uncanny ability.



Why would athletes use visualisation? In addition to seeing themselves performing a skill in competition, there are a number of other applications.

1. Skill and strategy learning. Imagery can be used to learn a new skill or alter a technique. My wife is a classically trained dancer who now teaches hip hop dance. She recalls moments when she would have to learn several dance steps in a single dance phrase. Her ability to recall all these steps was directly related to her visualisation ability. She would see herself performing the moves in her head over and over before actually trying it on the dance floor.
2. Skill and strategy practice. Visualisation can be used to perfect a new skill or strategy once it has been learned. Once athletes have learnt a skill, visualising it over and over has the effect of cementing the neural pathway and solidifying their ability to perform the skill again.
3. Mental warm up. Just as you warm up your muscles before a game, you also need to warm up your mental skills.
4. Preview. This is handy for the athlete to use just prior to a competition. They can imagine what they will do and how they are going to do it. With the amount of work done on analysing the opposition, most players know what their opponents can do and what their favourite moves are. By using imagery, the athlete can compete with them in their mind before they actually compete with them on the sporting field.
5. Review. After a competition or training session, athletes usually replay

most of the performance in their head again. The research has shown that athletes are incredibly accurate in reflecting back on their previous performances. The ability to review a performance allows you to create a training plan that highlights any errors you may have picked up on.

6. **Stress Management.** Visualising a relaxing scene can generate feelings of relaxation. You can create a place just to go to whenever you are feeling stressed. Athletes will also use imagery to create stressful situations in their minds and then practice relaxing and performing under those conditions. Leading up to a Winter Olympics, I created a DVD for every mogul and snowboard athlete. The DVD contained images of the mogul run and snowboard half pipe, recorded from a camera mounted on the head of one of the athletes. This footage allowed the athletes to visualise their run and get a solid picture of what the competition would look like prior to the start of the Games. The website has the snowboard head camera footage, filmed from the top of Andrew Burton's head.
7. **Get yourself going.** By using vigorous imagery, you can activate yourself – get yourself up and going. On those cold mornings when the rowers have to get up and get on the water, I am sure many of them use a form of imagery to wake their bodies up.

Internal versus external imagery

How do we see pictures in our head? There are two types of imagery athletes use. Internal imagery refers to an athlete's ability to visualise what they themselves would be seeing, hearing, feeling or even smelling as if they were actually performing an action. Shane Heal, an Olympic Basketball athlete, would use internal imagery to visualise what he would experience when shooting free throws. In his mind he could see the ball in front of him and would follow it out of his hands and into the basket. Internal imagery is visualised as if through the athlete's own senses. The athlete themselves does not appear in the image – only what they are doing.

External imagery refers to an image resembling a video tape. Here athletes visualise themselves performing the skill from the point of view of an outside observer. Many athletes would use this form of imagery to review a performance and see what it looks like from the outside. Due to the common use of video, an

athlete's ability to use external imagery is usually stronger than their ability to use internal imagery.

A simple test can be used to clarify the difference between internal and external imagery. Close your eyes, and then imagine that you are a clock – that's right, a clock. The big hand is on the 10 and the little hand is on the 3. What side is the big hand on? If you said the left side you are using external imagery, while if you said the right side you are using internal imagery.

Some theory – why does visualisation work?

For everybody, it is different. There are a variety of theories that attempt to explain why visualisation works.

Psychoneuromuscular theory suggests that when we use imagery, our brain sends signals to the relevant muscles that elicit muscle patterns. These patterns are identical to the patterns seen when that action is physically performed, but at a significantly lower level. This suggests that while we are using imagery we are in fact actually rehearsing the movements and therefore creating a reference point for our brain. This reference point comes into play when we are required to perform the skill under pressure and we need to remind ourselves that we can do it.

Symbolic theory suggests that we have pre-programmed motor patterns already stored in our memory. When we visualise, these programs are initiated and then carried out by our muscles, but at a low level. This theory proposes that as we mature and gain more experiences, we are also creating new motor programs. This experiential learning is stored in our sub-conscious and as long as we can recall it when we need it, the memory will be there, as will the enhanced level of self-confidence.

Arousal theory suggests that when visualising, we trick the body into thinking we are going to do the actual activity, and start raising our physical level to a point where it resembles actual performance.

Whatever the theory, the anecdotal evidence from athletes indicates that imagery really works.



The Business Olympian

Siimon Love, creator of Love Advertising and regarded as one of the most successful advertising executives in Australia surprised me when I happened to be sitting in a conference checking my emails while everyone was outside getting morning tea. He was scheduled to address the conference of about 2000 people in about ten minutes. I wasn't paying much attention, until I noticed him walk up to the podium. What happened next impressed me no end and definitely placed him in the category of a Business Olympian. Here was a man who I assumed had presented to thousands of people over his years in the business, rehearsing his performance, mouthing what he was going to say, even including the hand actions that accompanied his speech. He went on to give his presentation to the crowd, never looked down at his notes, and presented effortlessly. Who said Business Olympians can't still benefit from additional support?

While discussing the concept with Siimon, he remembers spending hours imagining himself achieving at the highest possible level – now as a successful entrepreneur he has developed a routine which he sticks to religiously. Here is Siimon Love's daily imagery routine:

Every morning he spends about twenty minutes listening to music – usually from his favourite movies – and ones which have some special meaning.

He follows this with twenty minutes of visualising himself being successful.

He then spends five minutes setting his goals for the day

Part of his imagery process includes a mental picture of what the successful business leader will look like in the future – how they are the different, what are they doing to stay ahead of the rest. Quite visionary!

Siimon maintains, 'that the number one reason why people don't succeed is a lack of vision and daily ritual'. Reflecting on me seeing him rehearse his speech, he told me that this was routine for him and he did it before every single presentation.

In business the need to be well prepared and be able to react to significant events instantaneously is a given, as is the ability to set and review goals which have been developed from the company vision. In business practising interpersonal skills and building confidence is equally important. Business people regularly

undertake visualisation without realising they are doing it. They therefore do not reap the full benefits of the skill. After spending several months completing a study into the effects of stress on lawyers it became very clear to me that lawyers would rehearse their opening and closing speeches regularly. A successful barrister friend of mine would even go as far as video recording himself and then watching the video tape. As a young psychologist I was forced to record all my sessions with my clients to be reviewed by my supervisor at the time. I detested the process at the time, yet now look back on it and realise the powerful effect it had on my ability to self-regulate and recognise important behavioural and cognitive cues my current clients are giving me.

I spent some time with a leading surgeon who would regularly rehearse his operations. He would follow the same process before every operation. He had a set of scalpels in his office and prior to carrying out an operation he would sit at his desk, hold a scalpel in his hand, close his eyes and go through the entire procedure in his head. He commented that this process improved his confidence in the actual surgery and allowed him to free up his cognitive resources to respond to emergencies that sometimes arose. Holding the scalpel improved his visualising by giving him a 'real' stimulus – in this case the visualisation included the sense of touch. The Business Olympian can use imagery in a number of areas. Here are some where I have seen people use their imagery skills.

- Management consultants – preparing for their final debrief of a project.
- Dentists planning a complex tooth filling.
- Teachers getting up in front of twenty misbehaving students – a young student teacher once commented to me that if it were not for this skill they would never have completed their degree and become a teacher.
- Architects in creating a house design – my cousin, a leading kitchen designer in Perth Australia, uses a number of very expensive computer programs to create an image for his clients, but they all start as a picture in his head.
- Preparing for a job interview – visualising the questions you will be asked and how you may go about answering them.

- Providing feedback to an employee, especially if the feedback is negative, and the manager doesn't feel comfortable about the process.
- Finally my favourite, a personal experience of mine. Soon after completing my masters degree, I was required to give a formal presentation to my peers and to be questioned on the work. I gave that presentation at least a hundred times in my room before I walked into the auditorium. By the way – I nailed the presentation.

The most interesting comments I have heard relating to imagery were from a stockbroker who, while he wished he could use his imagery skills to affect the price of oil or gold, could use them to help him regulate his behaviour during the mood swings of the market. He would visualise his trading plan working and would see himself being successful. He referred to this process of saving his sanity by prevent him from doing his mind in. For the student traders out there, he did mention that it took him over a year to perfect the skill. A good point which will be discussed in the next section.



Tips from our Olympians

Practicing imagery

It takes time to develop the skill of visualisation but it is not especially difficult. I have included some 'scripts' you can use to start with. Remember that you can use all your senses while visualising. It's not just about seeing an image. Feel, smell, taste and sound can also be very powerful and should be included where possible. You may be able to associate a particular smell or sound with the image. The more you can use the other senses the more effective your visualisation will be. A young baseball athlete I worked with would see himself pitching the perfect pitch, while at the same time would smell the leather of his glove. Over time the smell of the leather of his glove became synonymous with the feeling of him pitching a perfect pitch. During a game he would stand on the mound and prior to each pitch, he would smell his glove again. The association of the glove smell and the perfect pitch sensation, helped him pitch more consistently.

If you have never used imagery before, then it would be useful to start with a fairly basic visualisation. Below is a script which will be helpful in developing

your imagery skills. To help the process, actually cut a lemon open and notice the smell. Like the surgeon holding the scalpel, having some part of the stimulus with you will help strengthen the image.

Script for ‘experiencing a lemon’

Begin by taking a few minutes to relax, and slow your breathing down.

1. Sit in a comfortable position letting your hands rest on your thighs.
2. Close your eyes, and, using internal imagery – remember that means from your own point of view – imagine holding a lemon in your hand.
3. Imagine the feel of the texture of the lemon.
4. Imagine smelling the sour aroma of the lemon.
5. Imagine looking at the lemon in your hand, its bright yellow colour, in your mind’s eye hold it, run your fingers around it, feel the texture.
6. In your mind, slowly lift the lemon up to your forehead.
7. Visualise running the lemon along your forehead, feeling the bumpiness of the lemon as it moves along your forehead. Slowly move it down your forehead. Feel the lemon moving along your nose, concentrating on the smell of the lemon.
8. Visualise the lemon slowly moving along your lips, feel the texture on your lips.
9. Take a bite into the lemon. Taste it, the sour taste causes you to shiver.
10. When you feel ready, open your eyes and return to reality.

Developing an imagery script

1. See, hear and feel yourself performing the given task.
2. Write down all the things you see, hear and feel.
3. Go through the entire procedure, including arriving at office, what you are wearing, how you prepare for the event.
4. Use vivid detail of the task, include as many variables as you can, such as sounds, colours, smells.

5. As well as using the imagery, you need to make sure that you are relaxed, confident, and in complete control of your mental state. Use as many key words as you can. This will make it easier for you to remember it during your performance when you are concentrating on several tasks.
6. Go through the entire event, seeing, feeling, and hearing yourself at each significant point of the event. Feel yourself moving with slow rhythmical movements, performing the event with strength and endurance.
7. After you finish, write down statements that will remind yourself of your confidence, and mental toughness.
8. If you require a constant reminder of the imagery task, write everything down in a script form. Read it and reread it, checking for any omissions. Then dictate it onto a tape, speaking slowly.
9. Listen to the tape.

Michael Jordan once said:

If I stood at the free throw line and thought about the ten million people watching me on the other side of the cameras lens, I couldn't have made anything. So I mentally tried to put myself in a familiar place. I thought about all those times I shot free throws in practice and went through the same motion, the same technique that I had used a thousand of times. You forget about the outcome. You know you are doing the right things. So you relax and perform.

Chapter 11

Performing under pressure



I will be the first to admit I hated the process he (Gavin) put us through to develop our ability to perform under pressure. But in hindsight having experienced what we did and seen our ability to continue to shoot good arrows allowed me to pull through in matches I would have normally lost and ultimately was part of a puzzle that ended in a bronze medal at the Athens Olympics in 2004.

Tim Cuddihy – bronze medallist

DOES AN OLYMPIAN OR A PROFESSIONAL ATHLETE possess a skill level which is significantly greater than an accomplished state representative athlete? Is there a skill difference between a Brownlow medallist and another AFL player who is a regular performer for a team. The answer I am sure will raise a number of eyebrows and create some debate, but in my mind and after spending nearly a decade with high performing athletes, the answer is quite simply no. Consider this. Mark Viduka, one of Australia's most talented football players (soccer for those who still want to call it that), plays at the highest level possible and has been very successful. Now let's compare his basic skill level to Shaun Ontong, the captain of the under-19 Australia soccer team. Shaun has been a member of the Australian Institute of Sport's soccer program and has honed his skills under the tutelage of head coach Stephen O'Connor.

Skill	Mark Viduka	Shaun Ontong
Kick a ball	√	√
Header a ball	√	√
Stop ball on foot	√	√
Run with the ball	√	√

Not convinced yet? Let's do another one. What about Shane Heal, four-time Olympic Basketballer, NBL and NBA player and 18-year-old Nate Tomlinson from the Emus, Australia's junior men's team. By the way, Nate rates Shane Heal as the player he most looks up to.

Skill	Shane	Nate
Shoot a free throw	√	√
Cross over dribble	√	√
Three-point shot	√	√
Bounce pass	√	√

While I am labouring the point, the comparisons which are being made are on the basic skill level that these athletes should be able to demonstrate. From these two examples I am hoping my point has been made. So what I am trying to say here. The difference between all these professional athletes and the reason why some are considered standouts or superstars, is one simple fact.

They are able to produce these skills consistently under pressure.

That is the key to stardom, learn a skill, practise it until it becomes automatic and then perform that skill consistently under pressure. There are so many examples of athletes who in training are able to run play, shoot free throws at a high percentage, kick with great degrees of accuracy, who then enter the field of competition and fall apart. The pressure gets to them, their nerves take over and often what is produced is an effort which is far lower than they would ever contemplate. If you have ever wondered why your favourite footballer can have a blinder one week and then play like he has two left feet the next, it has nothing to do with a loss in skill level, but simply an inability to perform consistently under pressure.

What stops people performing under pressure?

There are a number of theories floating around which attempt to explain the

problem. One I have yet to see in the text books, but I believe plays a crucial role in understanding why this happens is when frustration becomes a secondary stress. Secondary frustration is best described as being frustrated at being frustrated.

Secondary frustration (stress feeding off stress)

Stress is probably the most debilitating mental issue that anyone can experience. And as the old saying goes, ninety per cent have experienced it and the other ten per cent are lying. Stress in itself is normal and in some instances can be quite useful. Our body utilises the increased heart rate and the production of various hormones to ensure its alertness and readiness to attack. This is the fright, fight or flight stress response. It is not the stress that is most debilitating, the stress we are referring to here is secondary stress. This concept is when we start to stress that we are stressed. In essence we become frustrated at the fact that we are frustrated. The added pressure comes because we are unable to blame the stress on anything particular. The end product is one of a negative downward spiral fuelled by a self-fulfilling prophecy. Imagine the athlete who is experiencing this. Their mindset is now fragmented with some part of it trying to negotiate the original stressor, but now a large proportion of their cognitive ability is being directed to resolve the secondary frustration. There is usually very little left to focus on the job at hand.

The second explanation I have borrowed from D Landers, who in 1980 wrote a book called *Feeling Good*, in which he identifies ten cognitive distortions that people experience. Cognitive distortions is a fancy statement that refers to ‘strange thoughts we have in our heads’. I deliberately highlight the date on this as it indicates that these thoughts were present in the 80s and I am sure you will agree are just as relevant now. Read the definitions in the box and place a tick next to any of the descriptors you have experienced. I have never found anyone who will honestly state that they have never experienced any of these.

Some definitions of ‘cognitive distortions’

All-or-nothing thinking

You see things in black-and-white categories. If your performance falls short of perfect, you see yourself as a total failure.

Overgeneralisation

You see a single negative event as a never-ending pattern of defeat.

Mental filter

You pick out a single negative detail and dwell on it exclusively so that your vision of all reality becomes darkened, like the drop of ink that discolours the entire beaker of water.

Disqualifying the positive

You reject positive experiences by insisting they ‘don’t count’ for some reason or other. In this way you can maintain a negative belief that is contradicted by your everyday experiences.

Jumping to conclusions

You make a negative interpretation even though there are no definite facts that convincingly support your conclusion.

Mind reading

You arbitrarily conclude that someone is reacting negatively to you and you don’t bother to check this out.

The fortune teller error

You anticipate that things will turn out badly, and you feel convinced that your prediction is an already-established fact.

Magnification or ‘catastrophising’

You exaggerate the importance of things that seem to reflect poorly on you, such as your mistakes or someone else’s achievement.

Minimisation

You inappropriately shrink things that seem to reflect well on you until they appear tiny, such as your own desirable qualities or the other fellow’s imperfections. This is also called the ‘binocular trick’.

Emotional reasoning

You assume that your negative emotions necessarily reflect the way things really are: ‘I feel it, therefore it must be true’.

Should statements

You try to motivate yourself with ‘should’ and ‘shouldn’t’ as if you had to be whipped and punished before you could be expected to do anything.

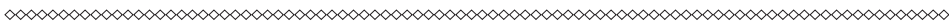
‘Musts’ and ‘oughts’ are also offenders. The emotional consequence is guilt. When you direct ‘should statements’ toward others, you feel anger, frustration, and resentment.

Labelling and mislabelling

This is an extreme form of overgeneralisation. Instead of describing your error, you attach a negative label to yourself. ‘I’m a loser.’ When other people’s behaviour rubs you the wrong way, you attach a negative label to them. ‘He’s an absolute idiot.’ Mislabelling involves describing an event with language that is highly coloured and emotionally loaded.

Personalisation

You see yourself as the cause of some negative external event which in fact you were not primarily responsible for.



I assume you have ticked a couple of these boxes. The theory posits that while attempting to perform a skill under pressure, one or more of these thoughts clog up our cognitive resources and we are unable to perform the action, behaviour or skill we were attempting to. Additionally, the longer we are in a state of stress, regardless of our skill level, we will become victims to these thoughts and believe them as if they were true.

The final explanation for people failing to perform under pressure is a lack of experiential training. Many young people entering the workforce have not been trained to perform consistently under pressure. Few work places effectively induct new employees. This creates a situation where the individual is required to learn their job, while they are actually doing it. People who are not provided with systematic experiential training, will not develop the skills needed to adapt to pressure situations. In a study I completed several years ago, examining the effects of stress on lawyers, it became quite apparent that these solicitors were not receiving training before going into court. They commented on the culture of ‘learning while under fire’ suggesting they were simply expected to be able to perform under pressure. They further commented that only the strongest would survive. They did not indicate whether the strongest were also the best.

What all these explanations suggest is that the ability to perform under pressure

is a mental strength and fortunately one that can be developed and trained. Leading up to the 2000 Sydney Olympics I developed a program for the archery team, which was conveniently called ‘distraction training’. The emphasis in the program was to create an experiential training environment, which would simulate what the athletes would experience during the Olympic Games. After a thorough ‘distraction’ analysis we identified what we believed would be the main sources of stress and pressure and systematically went about developing training regimes aimed at dealing with these.

Here is the basic analysis and the training we implemented.

Stress	Experiential training
Friends and family watching	Funded a trip to Homebush to shoot in the stadium with only family and friends in the stands
Crowd noise	Recorded real crowd noise from previous Olympics and world championships, played it through loud speakers while training. Invited several primary schools to the training venue and asked them to make as much noise as possible while they were training.
Wet and windy weather conditions	Made them shoot in front of large industrial fans with the sprinkler system on.
Bad night's sleep the night before	Kept them up for twenty-four hours and then made them shoot a full competition. The reason for the full twenty-four hours was to create an environment in which the athletes could see what would happen if they had no sleep. All six Olympic athletes shot within five per cent of their personal bests, with one athlete setting an unofficial world record. The point which was highlighted to the athletes was that if they were able to perform at the highest possible level with no sleep, then having broken sleep was not going to significantly affect them. A copy of an article written by Travis Crawley and published in <i>Inside Sport</i> on this form of training can be found on the Business Olympian website.

Hopefully this gives an idea of how we were able to re-create some of the experiences they would be subject to. The feedback from the athletes was one of 'hating the process but loving the outcome' of the training. For those interested, we won a gold medal in Sydney and then a bronze in Athens. From my perspective, the experiential training allowed the athletes to negotiate both secondary stress and the cognitive distortions which presented during competition. By being challenged in an experiential setting the athletes were able to experience the results of performing under pressure and try alternatives until they found a process that worked best for them.



The Business Olympian

In the late 1980s we were staring down the barrel of financial destruction. We had huge debts. It's amazing when that happens and you're close to losing everything. You go back to taking control and you don't worry about what people say anymore, because it's about survival.

Les Schirato – CEO Cantarella Group, who supply every third cup of fresh coffee drunk at home

Performing under pressure is another one of those concepts which I believe is easily transferred to the corporate environment. For the most part the work we do at our desk when no one is watching and which has no tangible outcome attached, generally falls into the easy basket and the majority of people will not struggle in that environment. The challenge starts when we move into a competitive environment. Competition can occur internally as well as externally. Internally we may be competing with other employees for promotions or particular projects, while externally, we may be pitching for a project, or having to give a final presentation to the executive on the project we have just completed.

Let's look at some specific examples I have come across over the years. The first story in the box describes how a problem with internally generated stress was overcome. The second story relates to me suffering from an incident of externally generated stress. I am sure the stories will have close equivalents in most companies.

Success in dealing with internally generated pressures

While sitting in the boardroom of a very large prestigious company I was presented with a graduate who I had earlier ascertained had joined the company with impeccable qualifications. He had graduated first in his class, and was scouted by a number of other firms before signing on the dotted line here. Six months into his graduate year, his performance was not only below his own expectations and his manager's, but below what would be considered par for all the other graduates. There was no real reason for this, no other external factors were in play, he just could not produce the results when the whistle blew. After several discussions with this young man, it became apparent that while he felt he was well trained in the theory of his job, he was unable to perform effectively when the pressure was on. It was well known in this industry that only the strong survive and the internal competitiveness was staggering. He was not only trying to do his best, but was also trying to ensure that others didn't do better and that he was able to shine on all occasions. The pressure continued to build and his secondary stress became insurmountable. In addition he felt like he could not get advice from his manager or other senior people on how to negotiate this hurdle. This is a classic case of someone who has not had any experiential training and who therefore lacks the self-confidence to perform in a pressure situation. We started out by conducting the same analysis the archers did and simultaneously created a program which would enable him to practise delivering in the environments which scared him. Six months later, he had turned his career around and was back to his best.

What about from an external perspective? Most companies who deal with the public or other businesses have an environment where employees are required to perform under pressure. Trying to sell your product or solution is often hard enough, but added to that is the additional pressure of having to perform. Most consulting companies will usually have a number of presentations which they would give during a project. Each one of those presentations would require the individual to stand in front of the client and talk to the data. This in itself is

often not difficult but many people will find this task hard enough – imagine the compounding stress when the information is not as you expected or doesn't line up with the initial proposal.

Winning projects is another good example. You, your company and your product or solution are on show and you have no control over the response of the audience. All the preparation in the world may still not prepare you for what to expect. I can recall a red letter day in my consulting career. The story is told in the box.



A bit of preparation and some luck save the day – serious external pressure

At the tender age of twenty-nine I found myself in the boardroom of a law firm. I was proposing a Business Olympian program and at the head of the table was the managing partner. To be fair it wasn't his idea me being there and so he hadn't been paying too much attention to my initial presentation. About ten minutes into the proposal he put his hand up and uttered the phrase,

'So sonny, how are you really going to help me? How am I going to be an athlete?'

For a split second absolute fear shot through my body – how I responded to this was going to make or break this proposal. Fortunately I had planned for this type of question, given that my proposal was so different to the usual that the audience had experienced. I hadn't planned the tone in which it would be delivered though. My response to the managing partner went something like this.

'Think of your senior partners as a basketball team. You are like the point guard, you bring the ball up the court, you set the plays, you direct the pace and ensure everyone is doing their job.'

I noted a head nod as someone in the audience began to get the picture.

'Your shooting guard – I pointed at his second-in-charge – likes to stand outside the three-point line and let loose. Your 2 IC needs to back you up and he signs all the contracts and ensures the business is flowing. Moving on, your small forward is the guy who can take the outside shot but will also go in and take it to the big boys.'

Practice with an experiential mindset

As described earlier in regard to the archers' training plan, have a think about the situations you are required to perform in. Make a list and ensure you have practised each situation. Some good examples include using a video camera to record yourself giving a presentation, then watch it again and critically evaluate your performance. Another useful tip is to get other people in to run them through your proposal or presentation, have them play the critic and ask them not to hold back on the questions. A golfer I worked with would always practise hitting out of the rough – it gave him the confidence to take on the big shots, knowing he could always get himself out of trouble.

How do you recover from tough situations?

Deliberately place yourself in hard situations and work on strategies to get out of them. Much like the golfer who needs to practise hitting shots out of the rough, so does the Business Olympian need to practise responding to tough situations.

Creating the ideal performance state

Creating an ideal performance state is a big help in performing under pressure. Remember from Chapter 1 that the ideal performance state is made up of both a physical and psychological component.

Visual and verbal feedback

Probably the scariest of all the options, but I can assure you once you get over the fear of seeing yourself on TV and hearing yourself speak, this feedback will be vital in understanding your reactions and will enhance your ability to develop a strategy to move forward.

The key to performing under pressure is information. The more information you have the greater will be your ability to perform under pressure. Experience will also be a great ally. All experiences whether they are good or bad will be beneficial to your overall development. Just remember if the experience is negative – use the information and create a positive result from it.

Chapter 12

Managing talent to develop mental toughness



Regardless of the score, or the current position you might find yourself in, the players have to have the confidence in the systems that have been set in place. And if they follow the plan they will get to where they need to be. It's no different in business. There are many times when you may find yourself behind the eight ball, or it appears as if you are losing an account. The tendency would be to deviate from the plan, in some cases this may be necessary, but in many cases you need to stick to what you have planned and have the confidence it will bring home the rewards.

John Boulton – High Performance Manager of Soccer Australia
and former director of the Australian Institute of Sport

Mentally tough athletes

MENTAL TOUGHNESS. IF ONLY IT WAS AS SIMPLE AS GIVING an individual a book on mental toughness, telling them to read it and then put it into practice with some repetition training. Unfortunately the concept of mental toughness is not so simple. We have all seen examples of mental toughness, Shane Heal taking on Charles Barkley at the Atlanta Olympics, Kieran Perkins winning the 1500 m after qualifying in last place, or Jonny Wilkinson kicking a drop kick to win the 2003 Rugby World Cup. These examples are easy to see on TV and replay over and over again. But even asking these people how they did it usually elicits the response, 'I'm not sure, I just knew I could do it'. In a sense, mental toughness is as much about believing in your skill set as it is in having the

skill set in the first place. There are numerous examples of people who are blessed with incredible skills but fail to live up to their potential. While the research is not absolute, my years of experience lead me to one undeniable conclusion. For an individual to be mentally tough and cope in all situations, they need to have experienced those situations and practised operating in those environments. This suggests that mental toughness can in some way be developed.

This section will look at a number of concepts which I believe mental toughness is made up of, or skills which mentally tough athletes possess. Read it with an open mind and consider the points from your own perspective.

‘Dark alley’ effect

Consider the following scenario. You are walking through a particularly ‘dodgy’ area to return to your vehicle. You have two options – take the longer route on a well-lit road with other people walking around, or a shortcut down a dark alley. The chances are you will stay on the main road and not risk the uncertainty of the dark alley. This seems to make sense. Why would we risk something when we can quite easily take a little more time and be safe? This approach applies perfectly in most sporting and business situations. When we are presented with two options – one being the dark alley and the other being the safe approach – we are likely to take the safe approach. Why would we take the dark alley, what situations need to be present for us to take the risk and head down that dark alley?

What if a number of large police officers were to turn up, all carrying 1000 watt halogen lights – shining them down this alley. I guarantee you the fear of walking down this alley will be removed. Your challenge now is to find your dark alleys and then develop strategies which enable you to light up the road and get from point A to point B much quicker. For about two years I spent some time with a water skier. He was an up-and-coming athlete who showed significant promise. Barefooting requires the athlete to perform a number of tricks in a fifteen second run. The first run is usually started in the forward facing position while the second run is usually started facing backwards. The tricks a barefooter may perform include 180-degree spins and 360-degree spins. These tricks can be performed with both feet on the water or for the more advanced on one foot. The harder the trick the more points the individual scores. So back to my athlete, while he was talented, he was scared about performing any spin tricks which started from the

back position. The challenge here is to perform a trick while looking down into the water and not having a true sense of where you are. Generally all a barefooter who is skiing backward can see is a wall of spray coming off their feet. This was his dark alley. He needed to trust his ability and overcome his fear. There was no issue in completing the trick as he was able to perform the trick starting in the forward position – he just didn’t have the conviction in the reverse.

Spend some time identifying and writing down your dark alleys, then keep reading for some tips on how to illuminate them and make them safe for you.

Developing an ‘elite resume’

Developing an elite resume is a fairly simple process. Have a look at your current CV. If it is like most resumes I have seen in the past, it will have a list of your qualifications, a list of jobs you have held and maybe some accomplishments at each of those jobs. It probably ends there. Now is your chance to indulge in creating an elite resume. This is for your eyes only. It is important that you know its content and believe in it. Remember that if you do not believe in yourself then how will anyone else?

Common sense into common practice

Why would this be a heading in this section? Well it’s a simple answer. Mentally tough athletes are able to put common sense into common practice, especially under pressure. This on the surface appears to be logical, but how many times have you watched your favourite athlete make a silly mistake at a crucial time in the game.



While at a world championship archery event, I was watching a highly ranked archer shooting up against a rookie. Archery competitions are sudden death. If you lose your first match you’re out of the competition, there are no second chances. So back to the experienced archer, who at the end of the second end (six arrows shot with six arrows to go) was three points down. The rookie had pulled off several shots which most coaches would have deemed to have been lucky to hit the target, but instead had landed in the ten ring. With no pressure on him, the rookie went into the next end with supreme confidence. The more experienced archer unfortunately became more and

more frustrated about the situation, and while common sense would have suggested he stayed with his game plan and just shot in his normal way, he panicked and tried something different. The rookie won the match and went on to lose in the second round, while the experienced archer was sitting in the stands for the rest of the tournament. On the other side of the coin, Simon Fairweather who went into the 2000 Olympics ranked somewhere in the top fifty, was able to beat the best in the world and take out the gold medal, by maintaining a simple and effective motto – ‘Stick to the process and keep it simple’. I remember speaking to him after he won his medal and asking him when he knew he had won it. The answer was exactly as I had expected, ‘I knew I had it won about half a second after releasing my last arrow.’ He had maintained his focus all the way through the competition and prevented all irrelevant stimuli, including his opponent’s score, from entering his mind. Talk about putting common sense into common practice. Talk about mental toughness!

Common sense in the business world is often a fantastic oxymoron. There are numerous examples where it is obvious that common sense has not prevailed. An old theory but one which I still use today is the acronym KISS – keep it simple stupid. Being mentally tough in the corporate environment is a process of staying cool under pressure, holding your position in the face of adversity, and sticking to your game plan. All of which will go straight out the window, if you begin to over-analyse the situation, and attempt to re-engineer the it. Peter Bush, CEO of MacDonald’s commented that when he took over the helm there were several people who continually took shots at MacDonald’s, and not just ones across the bow, but ones straight at the propeller. His approach required him to set a game plan, and stick to it. He recalls a momentous occasion when one of his biggest critics actually made a positive comment– ‘it [the brand] only took four years but it was worth waiting for’.

Taking risks

We often hear people saying, ‘Why don’t you just take a risk and go for it’. Risk taking is something we do on an ongoing basis but the level of risk is highly dependent on your personality and to some degree what is at stake. A soldier

may interpret the risk of running into an open courtyard in a warzone as far more of a risk than going in to ask the boss for a raise. However the reality of the situation is that people will interpret risk based on their own personality and the world they are living in. Psychologically the effect of asking for that pay rise may have a similar effect as running into that open space. Risk from an athlete's perspective is directly related to the individual's level of motivation and their goal orientation. The individual who is task-focused and motivated to succeed will be more likely take risks, but the risk will usually be well planned out, with all the evidence gathered, processed and calculated. In the mind of this athlete their action will not be seen as a risk, but more of an educated decision based on significant evidence. Why else would first time paratroopers willingly jump out of a perfectly good aeroplane with some silk or nylon attached to themselves? Similarly, risk in the corporate world will be directly proportional to the potential outcome. We all recognise that the higher the risk the greater the reward. So how do some Business Olympians continually operate in a state of high risk and not end up in the foetal position.

A lawyer I spent significant time with commented to me that the beauty of his job was that he never knew what would happen from day to day. As a criminal lawyer he had the fate of another human being in his hands every day and at times he would take what he called 'calculated risks'. The interesting point he made was that the calculated risks became 'riskier' with experience. A first-year graduate would never take the approach he did and he would never encourage his associates to follow his path. He had developed a unique approach to coping with the risky situation he was placing his clients in. Fortunately he was persistent and worked tenaciously in developing his strategies and would follow them religiously. The mental toughness this required was incredible. You couldn't ask for more.

Overtraining and burnout

While this chapter is focusing on mental toughness, overtraining and burnout are usually factors which work directly against mental toughness. Also, sometimes an attitude or approach that is mistakenly thought of as mental toughness can lead to burnout, which can have devastating effect on the athlete and their ability to compete. Mental toughness does not mean doggedly persisting when things are going wrong.

While attending a conference many years ago, I vividly remember a physiologist standing up and with absolute disgust admitting that psychological factors were better at predicting burnout than physiological factors. We have all heard of the athletes who suffer from ‘overtraining’. The condition of chronic fatigue is usually associated with overtraining at some stage. Overtraining is a condition in which the body has been pushed to its limit and it starts to shut down. While the psychological symptoms can be seen early on unfortunately they are usually ignored. The first symptom which tells athletes that they have overtrained and are heading to a state of burnout, is an inability to recover from training sessions. When speaking to these athletes they will usually recall a sense of lethargy and a flat attitude several days before. The flat attitude and lack of appreciation of many aspects of life are sure signs that burnout is on the way. While working with a professional basketball team, I spent a number of years working with an incredible athlete who by no fault of their own ended up with chronic fatigue syndrome and subsequently missed two full seasons and part of a third season working their way back to their old self. The hardest part of this story to accept is that this athlete was the most diligent trainer I have ever had the privilege of working with. Always doing the right thing, and yet this awful condition still hit them and hit them hard. On reflection the only symptom they recalled ignoring was the flat mood state. In another instance, a young up-and-coming Olympian was planning their assault on the Sydney Olympics. It was to be their first Olympics and a goal they had been working on for over four years. This athlete had deferred their last year of high school, had not been on a date in three years, religiously maintained their training program, saw the physio every week just to keep their body tuned. Unfortunately, their desire to be successful at the Olympics overshadowed a small niggling injury, which with a four-week break would have sorted itself out. The injury continued to worsen, and while the pain was manageable the athlete continued to train, secretly hoping that it would mend itself. Apparently it had done so in the past. As a young athlete they were scared to mention this injury to anyone. They perceived it to be a sign of weakness and in their mind would have led to their removal from the Olympic team (this would never have been the case). Six weeks prior to the opening ceremony they broke down at training, and after several scans and appointments with two surgeons, their Olympic dream was over. The hardest conversation I ever had to have with an athlete started with, ‘If only you had told someone earlier ...’

So how does overtraining and burnout relate to mental toughness? The elite athlete is able to push through pain and display characteristics of being tough, but they have become attuned to their bodies and can recognise the difference between good and bad pain.

The signs and symptoms of overtraining and burnout are quite easy to recognise. They include:

- Powerlessness
- Frustration
- Hopelessness
- Being trapped
- Emotional exhaustion
- Failure
- Detachment
- Despair
- Isolation
- Cynicism
- Irritability
- Apathy

An important point to consider here is to not confuse burnout with stress. They are two very different concepts and will respond to different solutions. Here is a table which briefly distinguishes between stress and burnout.

Table 1 Stress versus Burnout

Stress	Burnout
Characterised by over engagement	Characterised by disengagement
Emotions are over reactive	Emotions are blunted
Produces urgency and hyperactivity	Produces helplessness and hopelessness
Loss of energy	Loss of motivation, ideals, and hope
Leads to anxiety disorders	Leads to detachment and depression
Primary damage is physical	Primary damage is emotional
May kill you prematurely	May make life seem not worth living

Preventing job burnout

The most effective way to head off job burnout is to quit doing what you’re doing and do something else, whether that means changing jobs or changing careers.

But if that isn't an option for you, there are still things you can do to improve your situation, or at least your state of mind.

1. **Clarify your job description.** Ask your supervisor for an updated description of your job duties and responsibilities. You may then be able to point out that some of the things you're expected to do are not part of your job description and gain a little leverage by showing that you've been putting in work over and above the requirements of your job.
2. **Request a transfer.** If your workplace is large enough, you might be able to escape a toxic environment by transferring to another department. Talk to your supervisor or court a request from another supervisor.
3. **Ask for new duties.** If you've been doing exactly the same work for a long time, ask to try something new – a different grade level, a different sales territory, a different machine.
4. **Take time off.** If burnout seems inevitable, take a complete break from work. Go on vacation, use up your sick days, ask for a temporary leave-of-absence – anything to remove yourself from the situation. Use the time away to recharge your batteries and get a fresh perspective.

Here are some additional steps you can take to try and cultivate more positive relationships in your life. Mentally tough athletes will have all aspects of their lives in order so they can effectively remain on top of their games.

- **Nurture your closest relationships.** Your family will provide the greatest strength to you in your weakest moments. These relationships can help restore energy and alleviate some of the psychological effects of burnout, such as feelings of being underappreciated..
- **Ensure you maintain social associations outside your work environment.**
- **Recognise you have interests outside work,** concentrate on connecting with a community or a group which will allow you to express yourself at a different level.
- **Improve your communication skills.** Burnout involves feelings that fester and grow, so be sure to vent your emotions in a productive manner.

Chapter 13

How to be an effective manager



Coaching is as much about the art of it as it is the science, a great coach is not just someone who has completed the coaching training modules, it's someone who has the knowledge, but also has the self-insight to be able to apply and transfer their knowledge to individuals who may not think and react like they do.

Mark Barnard, Olympic volleyball coach and now assistant coach at the University of Oregon.

THIS CHAPTER LOOKS AT THE ART OF COACHING IN SPORT and applies it to the art of management in the business world. The roles of the coach in sport and the manager in business are based on very similar principles.

There are three types of coaches in the sporting world – the inexperienced coach, the developmental coach and the elite coach. The type of coach refers to the athletes they are working with and not their own ability. Interestingly, the only thing these coaches have in common is that they each have the title ‘coach’. This chapter will look at the approaches these coaches take and the lessons you can transfer into your business environment. The skills required for the different types of coach are quite distinct. But the theory behind how you set tasks for your team remains the same and can be captured with the following acronym:

CPQQRT – Context, purpose, quality, quantity, resources, and time

For those who are interested it would be worthwhile reading *Executive Leadership: a practical guide to managing complexity* by Elliot Jaques for more information. There are many theories of leadership around, but in my opinion it is the theory in this book that makes the most sense and is most easily transferred from the sporting to the corporate world.

Context refers to setting the scene for the work that needs to be completed

Purpose is the meaning of the task – why you are doing it

Quality refers to the level of quality – such as a draft proposal or a full proposal – that is required from the project

Quantity is simply the boundaries or the scope of the project

Resources is what is needed to complete the task

Time means when the task needs to be completed or how much total time is available.

By using this acronym you will ensure that the instructions you give to your staff will be clear and complete, and your staff will be clear about what is expected of them.

The coach of inexperienced athletes

We have all been here, agreeing to work with people who have little or no experience. These athletes are usually full of enthusiasm but unfortunately do not know how to channel this nor do they actually know what to do with it. ‘Chickens without heads’ is one of the phrases I often hear when these athletes are described by their coaches. Don’t be confused and misinterpret inexperienced with untalented. These athletes are often very talented but have been big fish in a small pond. They have now moved into a very large pond. Many still think they are big fish but this is usually sorted out very quickly. The following is a simple model I have developed which helps explain the difference between the types of athletes these coaches are dealing with.

Table 2 Characteristics of athletes at different levels

	Inexperienced athletes	Developmental athletes	Elite athletes
Discipline type	Professional fear	Participation	Self determination
Coachability	Coach driven	Individual contribution and participation	Individual driven
Culture	Learning	Exploring	Seeking

Discipline refers primarily to how the individual behaves and how they react to discipline. The inexperienced athlete will display a form of professional fear. That is, they will behave in a disciplined way due to the fear of being removed from the team or disciplined by the coaching staff. In most cases they will only be interested in their own behaviour and not usually participate in the discipline of others in the team. ‘Coachability’ – I realise it’s not a word, but it makes sense – refers to how easy it is for the coach to drive the behaviour of the athlete. The inexperienced athlete requires the coach to drive their behaviour, the coach is responsible for all aspects of the training session, all aspects of the game plan and how they will approach competitions. Most inexperienced athletes will defer to the coach for all decision making. And finally the culture of the team is usually one of learning, in which the athlete is seeking to learn from all interactions. Coaches of the inexperienced need to understand the limitations of their athletes and work within their limits. As you can imagine, this stage is often difficult for a coach as the athlete may display a high level of talent but not possess the maturity to allow it to flourish.

The developmental coach

During the several years I spent at the Australian Institute of Sport, I was fortunate enough to be able to observe in action some of the best developmental coaches Australia has to offer. The athletes these coaches work with display a discipline of participation, in which they will not take over the discipline of the team, but will start to play a role in developing it and will attempt to keep their fellow athletes in line. Their ‘coachability’ has developed to the point of athlete contribution and participation. This is usually shown by their ability to start interacting with the coach and by starting to participate in the delivery of the training. They may even

start minor self-directed training. Finally the culture within the team becomes one of exploring. By exploring, these athletes will start to hypothesise how they want their team to develop and the environment they want to learn in.

A good example of a developmental coach is Mark Barnard who ran the Australian women's volleyball program after spending several years as the assistant coach. Being an assistant is the training ground for these coaches. During this time, the assistant has the opportunity to learn from the head coach and can practise running the show, but not have the accountability or responsibility for the outcome. This removes the pressure from the assistant coach and allows them to concentrate on learning from the head coach and developing their own style.

Mark Barnard –working with developmental athletes in action

When Mark took over the Australian women's volleyball program he inherited a team of young athletes. Many of the senior team had retired after the Sydney Olympics, so here was an opportunity to develop a team and a program from scratch. But with opportunity comes challenge – in this case the challenge of preparing athletes who have had no experience on the world stage for international competition. Sounds quite similar to those managers who have young teams. So where do you start? Coaching young athletes requires patience, understanding, and parent-like enthusiasm, especially when failure is such a big part of the learning curve. Young athletes tend to be motivated to avoid failure. Mark's approach at this early stage was vital to their overall development. Setting the scene or providing a context for these athletes was vital. Giving the bigger picture allowed the athletes to put many hard hours of gruelling work into context and psychologically allowed them to tolerate a higher level of pain than if they didn't have the context. Much of my research into pain tolerance indicated that the psychological attributes of the will to win and determination to succeed were very important factors. The mistake some coaches make is they assume that the athlete doesn't need to know why they are doing something – they should just accept that 'the coach knows best'. Mark would ensure that every session he ran included a goal setting process which the athletes were required to have input into. This goal was re-assessed at the end of the training session, and the team would then set goals for the next training session. With the help of the support team he has

assembled around him, he was able to provide each athlete with a scientific way of measuring the quality and quantity of the tasks and skills he required of them. Slow motion video replays proved to be incredibly useful in providing these athletes with feedback that enabled them to grow. Additionally, on the board in the corner of his office was the overall team goals – players would see this every time they entered the office. Having the bigger picture on display really did set the professional tone around the gym.

The elite coach

To an onlooker it may appear that the elite coach has the easier job, but in reality it is actually significantly harder and presents challenges which are not easily met by simply reading a coaching book. Elite athletes possess a self-determined level of discipline. Not only will they dictate their own level of discipline, but they will demand a similar level from their peers. From a coachability perspective these athletes are very self-driven, and will often be quite demanding on the coaching staff to deliver to their particular needs. These athletes will often train as hard by themselves as they do in the team environment. In some cases it is the job of the coach to stop them from training. Finally, the culture they develop is one of seeking. They will seek new and alternative ways of generating a culture, they will be prepared to develop new ways. Coaches of elite athletes have a variety of challenges, but none is more challenging than having to provide guidance to a number of elite professionals who in some cases earn more than they do. And are often more talented.



The Business Olympian

Managing inexperienced staff

In the corporate world, the person who manages inexperienced staff faces the same issues as the coach of inexperienced athletes. They have a team of employees who may be quite raw. In some cases they are well qualified people who are just moving into the real world. They have bright ideas and are usually very motivated, but need guidance in order to realise their full potential. I suspect if you ask them why they come to work on time, they will usually answer, 'Because my boss says I have to and I don't want to get into trouble.' The majority of

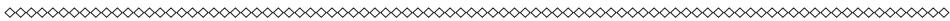
managers I speak to who have this role will tend to defer to the old adage of, 'I have to tell them what to do or nothing will get done.' While having lunch with Andrew Williams, the general manager of Link Recruiting, it dawned on me that in some situations a manager is required to set the environment and in some cases set many of the rules in order to create a harmonious workplace. The challenge with this approach, as Andrew pointed out is that you need to be very clear in your direction and not leave anything to the interpretation of your staff. You also need to be careful that you don't set up different rules for different people. There is an argument that this approach will stifle the individual and prevent them from developing their own motivation and sense of responsibility. My experience tells me that this doesn't happen. Remember that once the rules have been set you need to let your staff start to own the rules and allow them to see the benefit of them. As you start to get buy in from your staff, you will notice them move from being inexperienced to elite 'athletes'.

Coaching and mentoring is crucial in the early stages of a person's career. The first question you need to ask yourself is who will provide the coaching. In most instances I would recommend the immediate manager provide coaching, but in some cases another senior member of the team may be as suitable. The only thing to remember is that coaching is not just having a cup of coffee with the individual and then never doing it again. The coaching needs to be structured. You need to ensure you have objectives set in place and have a methodology in place to measure the person's improvement. Remember the two acronyms – SMART and CPQQRT.

Goals need to be SMART – specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and within a time frame.

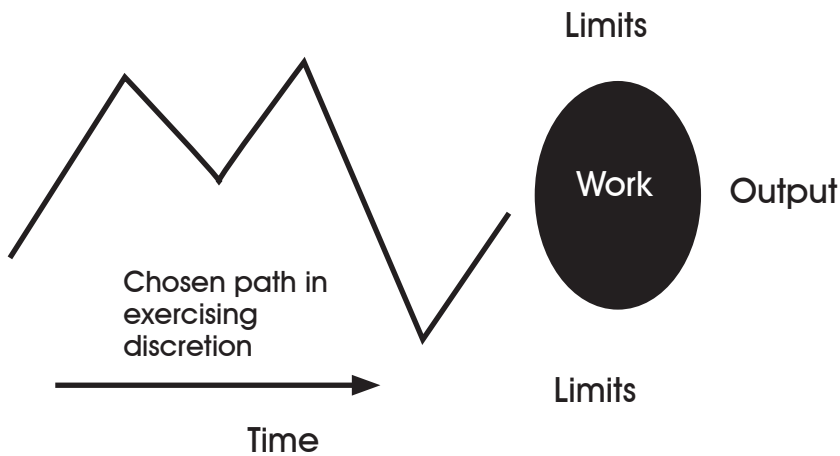
Instructions need to include CPQQRT – context, purpose, quality, quantity, resources and time. I have been coaching executives for many years and while many of you will be nodding and saying 'Yes I do that, it's common sense', I would argue that you will forget to do it more often than you will remember. The reason for this is that many actions we assume to be common sense fail to become common practice.

to have an R-rating. The situation needed to be handled very carefully as much was at stake. Sadly, his manager decided not to rock the boat and shelved John's report. Soon after this I was invited in to meet with John and his manager. Apparently another problem had arisen in which several other team members who had received poor 360-degree evaluations and subsequently had not received the remuneration increases they expected, had stormed into their manager's office en masse demanding an explanation. Word had got around that John had received a rather large bonus in spite of his poor evaluation. As you can imagine the manager had created an untenable position for himself and really had nowhere to go. The unfortunate end to this story is that the manager resigned and several members of the team moved into other areas of the business. John ultimately left, as his manager had been tacitly protecting him behind the scenes and could not survive without him.



The story in the box nicely highlights the difficulty in managing 'experts'. The manager in this scenario had chosen, not consciously, to use the inexperienced model to manage his team, and in doing so had 'shot himself in the foot'. At this level it is vital for the manager to recognise the expertise of the people in the room and work within their strengths, while still providing overall guidance. Phil Jackson (former coach of the Chicago Bulls basketball team and Michael Jordan), once allegedly commented to his players during a time-out, that in crunch time, 'just give the ball to Michael and create the opportunity to win'. Whether or not he actually said this is irrelevant, but the point of the statement is valid. He provided some overall instruction as to what his desired outcome was, but allowed his team to act out his instructions in any way they wanted to.

The figure on the opposite page suggests that the manager sets the desired work outcomes and the limits (the boundaries of their task) that the person needs need to work within. It is then left to the individual to take responsibility for how they do their job. The manager only serves to provide guidance along the way and ensure that the individual works within the parameters that have been set. This acknowledges that the individual has sufficient skill and experience to work on their own. When setting the work outcomes and the limits, the manager must remember to use the CPQQRT acronym.

Figure 2 The roles of an 'expert' and their manager

Tips from Olympic Coaches

Steps of coaching

Ideas on how to coach – first and subsequent sessions

There are several steps to setting up a coaching session. As a manager you need to ensure you are prepared for the session, even though you may be unsure as to the issues that may arise. As an employee you need to prepare for the session by having an open mind and preparing some ideas on possible outcomes to be achieved.

The steps involved in a basic coaching session are:

1. Establish rapport and set out expectations of the session. Define your role and the boundaries that should be understood.
2. Identify any issues and assess the employee's current level of performance. The teamwork model explained at the end of this chapter can be useful. Start setting some goals for the session.
3. Create and agree on a developmental plan. Ensure that the individual has genuinely contributed to the plan and feels they have some ownership of it.

4. Identify all potential barriers and hurdles to overcome.
5. Allow time for the individual to implement the plan.
6. Evaluate, follow up, ensure things are on track and reassess goals as necessary.

Stages of coaching

People can have a range of responses when undergoing mentoring or coaching, whether they be at the inexperienced, developing or elite level. These responses often go through a predictable series of stages. Each stage requires a slightly different approach. The different stages and some approaches you may like to take are given below.

Table 3 opposite summarises the characteristics of each coaching stage and Figure 3 below shows how performance changes as the individual progresses through each stage. You will notice that there is a dip in performance coming after the denial stage. People in denial generally still perform, but when they move into the resistance phase they often pull back from work as a protection mechanism and with that comes a drop in performance. The good news is that once this stage has been negotiated it's plain sailing to better performances.

Figure 3 How performance changes during progress through the coaching stages

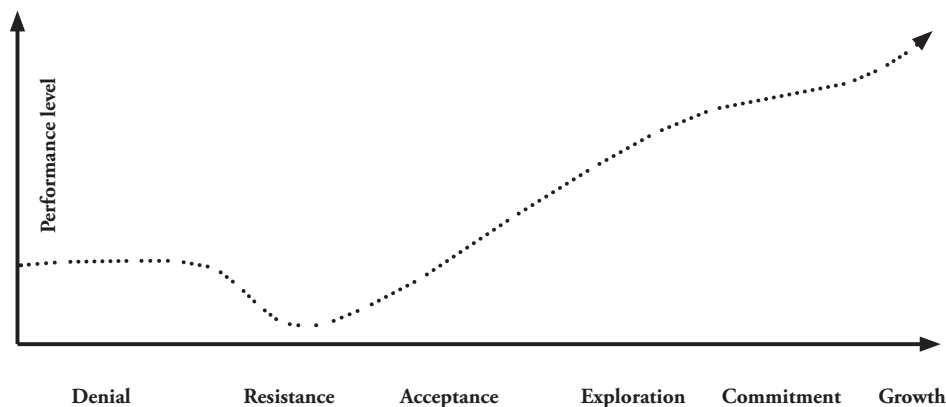


Table 3 Characteristics of the stages of coaching

DENIAL	RESISTANCE	ACCEPTANCE	EXPLORATION	COMMITMENT	GROWTH
<i>Unconscious incompetence</i>	<i>Conscious incompetence</i>	<i>Conscious incompetence</i>	<i>Conscious competence</i>	<i>Unconscious competence</i>	<i>Controlled competence</i>
Characteristics	Characteristics	Characteristics	Characteristics	Characteristics	Characteristics
Doesn't care	Withdrawn	Open	Interested in information	Requests constructive feedback	Seeks feedback from alternative sources
Passive	Aggressive	Listens with intent	Leap of faith	Energised	Trusts own ideas
Guarded	Sarcastic	Anxious	Increase awareness	Confident	Tries alternative ideas
Explains feedback away	Difficult to talk to	Frustrated	Open to ideas	Insightful	Re-visits earlier ideas
	Disagrees with feedback	Confused	Questions	Owns decisions	Evaluates self
	Hostile	Concerned			
Coaching is	Coaching is	Coaching is	Coaching is	Coaching is	Coaching is
Directing	Understanding	Supporting	Encouraging	Facilitating	Mentoring
Strategy	Strategy	Strategy	Strategy	Strategy	Strategy
Tell	Instruct and show	Validate concerns	Review / reinforce	Stretch	Challenge
Inform	Validate concerns	Counsel	Set medium- to long-term goals	Push limits	Sounding board
Ask questions	Listen	Short-term goals	Highlight process	Offer advice	Play devil's advocate
Support	Observe behaviour	Manage symptoms	Validate process	Share ideas	Feedback when required
Constant feedback	Constant feedback	Constant feedback	Strategies for hurdles	Explore new options	
			Constant feedback	Constant feedback	

Denial stage

Often referred to as the 'unconscious incompetence'. Where people don't realise that they aren't coping. They will not seek feedback, they explain it away when confronted with it, and appear not to care. They will show the characteristics of being very cautious, passive and guarded.

Denial Coaching

Unfortunately the only approach in this instance is to be directive, which usually goes against the general rule of thumb. However you still need to be very clear in your task assignment and use of CPQQRT. The provision of feedback is essential even if it is initially refused. Evidence is your best weapon here.

Resistance stage

Individuals in this stage are usually characterised by a degree of hostility and anger. They may also be withdrawn and display a lack of interest. People will disagree with the feedback given and will not usually seek clarification.

Resistance coaching

Coaching during this phase can be quite challenging, and it becomes more challenging as the role you play is more instructional than collaborative. It is in the delivery where the difference comes. Instructing and showing someone something can be accomplished in an empowering manner if the coach refers back to the person's current skills and highlights the natural pathway they need to follow for this action to become 'the norm'. Observing the individual in their environment is a very useful use of your time as it allows for real reflection on behaviour. By using experiential learning, that is, learning from experience, the individual will naturally find their path to a level of comfort whereby acceptance is the natural next step.

Acceptance stage

During the acceptance stage, people are willing to listen to information and work with new information. They may become anxious due to an impending change and this may show in several ways. Guilt and confusion are often the most likely personality traits which present. People may become worried about the likely outcomes, but have passed the point of resistance.

Acceptance coaching

Due to the 'touchy' environment some people feel, coaching during this phase is characterised by a sense of predicting the future and massaging the bumps along the way. As a leader you should attempt to predict some of the experiences which may occur and help the individual prepare for them. Setting specific short-term

goals is essential as is ongoing feedback. Be careful of overly critical feedback as the job here is to maintain the motivation to move forward.

Exploration stage

Here is when the fun starts. The individual is well on the way to adopting the new behaviour and they are starting to take control of their actions. There is a tendency to take risks, but with guidance they are usually well calculated risks. They are very much aware of their internal and external environment and will respond to them accordingly. In addition they are very open to ideas and will show very few signs of resistance.

Exploration Coaching

Ensuring the individual stays on task is vital. While your job is not to tell them how to work, you are in a position to help define the limits in which they work. It may be an idea to widen those limits if possible, to ensure their motivation continues. Constant reviewing of goals is essential and it is time to start implementing longer term goals. They are likely to test their levels of control so be aware of some unusual behaviour. Often your job is to serve as a sounding board to solve immediate problems. Remember the use of silence can be very powerful. By not making immediate comments you create a space which your employee will most likely feel the need to fill. It is actually quite difficult to remain silent when you think you have the answer, but try it. You may be surprised by the insight your employee may display given the extra time.

Commitment stage

People in the commitment stage will appear to be at ease with the change that is occurring and will be right into implementing and testing out new ideas. They will be very open to feedback and will start to seek it from other sources. Their level of confidence will be high as will their perception of ownership of the change process.

Commitment coaching

The focus here is to start stretching the individual, increase the challenges and get them setting higher goals for themselves. There is scope here to include others in the process, to promote the sharing of ideas and allow the person to bounce

ideas off others. It is still important to give feedback, but it should be snippets of insight rather than full-blown evaluations. Leaving the individual with a question rather than an answer is the goal.

Growth stage

During the growth stage, the individual will seek to extend their comfort zone, and will be more trusting in their own ideas and intuition. Guidance and encouragement around this time is essential as at times the individual may feel unsafe in the path forward. The individual is at a point where they can now reflect on earlier stages and actions and can apply this knowledge to new situations. They will be self-evaluating and somewhat more critical of their overall state of affairs.

Growth coaching

Your role here is more that of a sounding board and avenue for advice when required. You can play a ‘devil’s advocate’ role and challenge ideas to enable deeper critical thinking. Feedback is more in the way of a challenge than a report.

Creating an effective teamwork model

If our Olympians have managed to develop a concept well, it is the development of teamwork. Coaches of all three levels of athletes will be attempting to create a sense of teamwork. Table 4 provides a description of a teamwork model which explores and expands on the roles of managers and team members

Table 4 Accountability of leaders and members in an effective team

Leader accountability	Steps within a project to be completed	Member accountability
Explains	Provision of context and purpose	Understands and clarifies
Identifies	Critical issues of the project	Contributes
Seeks and listens	Type of Contributions	Listens & provides
Makes	Decision making process	Acknowledges & supports

Assigns	Task assignment	Clarifies
Monitors	Task execution	Concentrates & cooperates
Provides	Coaching	Accepts
Provides feedback	Review	Demands review

The standout component of the model is how it highlights the accountability (that is, what each member of the team will need to account for at the end of the project) of both the leader and the team member. In most situations, managers recognise their accountability but it is the team members' accountability which needs to be developed.

At each step of the way there are accountabilities which all members should be aware of. In the first instance it is the responsibility of the manager to explain the teamwork model and create an environment in which it can operate. Being open and clear about what is expected of all people in the team is the first step to having the model accepted. Managers are required to set the context and purpose of the project – this ensures that everyone is on the same page. Employees are required ensure they understand it and seek clarification where required. The manager is required to identify the main critical issues, while the members are required to contribute their perspective of the issues. The next point is interesting as when it comes to contribution, the manager should be seeking contribution from their team, with members feeling comfortable to provide suggestions without fear of being put down. Once all the issues are on the table, the manager should now be in a position to make a decision, with all members in agreement. Time to assign tasks, and while this is completed by the manager, the team members should still ensure they have clarified all the tasks they have been given. The next three stages are closely related and help provide the total quality management all companies are seeking. Managers need to monitor the performance of their team while providing coaching when required. Team members need to focus on the job and accept coaching when provided. Finally a 'debrief' is required and both leaders and member will play a vital role.

Chapter 14

Mistakes made during competition



I have missed more than 9000 shots in my career

I have lost almost 300 games

Twenty-six times I have been trusted to take the game-winning shot and missed

I have failed over and over and over again

And that is why I succeed

Michael Jordan on failing – at the time of publication it could be found at <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=45mMioJ5szc>>.

The Athlete

‘**M**ISTAKES MAKETH THE MAN’ – OR SO THE SAYING GOES. We all hate the word, it’s so often synonymous with failure. In fact mistakes are the reason why we have gold medallists and world champions. Mistakes are also the reason why we have penicillin, and the light bulb. Imagine where we would be if every person who ever experienced a mistake just gave up there and then on the spot. Would we have $E=MC^2$? Probably not.

Are all mistakes the same? Definitely not. Athletes recognise that there are different types of mistakes and many will also be aware of which ones they are prone to and which ones they have strategies to deal with. In fact if you were to sit down with any Olympian and ask them what their weaknesses are they would be able

to rattle them off in a list, but what they will also be able to do is talk you through the strategies they have to protect themselves from the effects of the weaknesses. The more successful the athlete the better they are at recognising the symptoms, and preventing mistakes from happening. Needless to say mistakes occur and the rest of this chapter will explore the types of mistakes, the characteristics that are associated with the mistake and then some strategies on how to minimise their effect or remove it completely.

The increment mistake

This mistake gets its name due to the incremental build up of smaller mistakes throughout the competition. The mistakes are usually quite small and on their own would not normally be recognised. Subconsciously the athlete is keeping tabs on all of these mistakes and then suddenly ‘the bottom falls out’. Remember every behaviour now will affect our behaviour in the future and the small mistakes will incrementally add up.

The tired or decrement mistake

The tired mistake is fairly self-explanatory. As we begin to tire, our ability to focus on the task diminishes and our cognitive abilities start to drop off. We have all seen the athlete who makes that silly mistake right at the end of a tournament or competition. From the athlete’s perspective it is the most frustrating mistake as they often report they are fully conscious of the fact that they are making the mistake. They just can’t do anything about it.

Energised mistake

The energised mistake is often the hardest for most athletes to swallow. It is the mistake that follows a successful performance. The bowler in cricket who bowls a wide on the ball after taking a wicket. The basketball athlete who, when standing on the line with two free throws left, no time on the clock, sinks the first basket only to tank the winning one. The body is pumping with adrenalin after the earlier success and simply doesn’t know how to perform the task in this state.

Primacy and ‘recency’ mistakes

Primacy mistakes occur when we have been given a significant amount of information and through the process of trying to remember all the information

we forget the first bits. ‘Recency’ mistakes refer to forgetting the last pieces of information we are given. The effect of these mistakes are both magnified by pressure. Basketball athletes are forced to listen to their coach give large amounts of information to them during a time out. Time outs in basketball last for either twenty seconds or one minute depending on the type which is called. Regardless, neither is a large amount of time. The athlete, who is usually quite tired at the time, is then called into the time out where the coach tries to fix all the problems they have seen from the sideline. Forgetting the first piece of information or the last is very common.

Pressure mistakes

This is fairly self-explanatory. These mistakes are the direct effect of large amounts of pressure being placed on the individual. Fatigue can play a role, but the conditions for a pressure mistake to occur are usually characterised by high levels of tension in various parts of the body. The most common is felt in the neck and shoulders – a sensation of uncomfortable stress in the body. This is often seen or described as an inappropriate amount of physical and mental energy. The mistake itself is usually an error in timing or judgement as the pressure starts to affect the cognitive ability of the athlete.

Emotional mistakes

Of the cognitive distortions discussed in Chapter 11 that people experience, one of the most common is emotional reasoning – ‘I feel it so it must be true’. When athletes begin to emotionally reason with themselves, they often become angry and mistakes are more likely to occur. It is not uncommon for you to see your favourite athlete swearing at themselves for being ‘so stupid’. The mistakes are often looked upon as careless.

Nervous mistakes

The nervous mistake comes directly from your own sub-conscious, in contrast to the pressure mistake where others are placing the pressure on you to perform. We all get nervous and the effects of nervousness create a wonderful set of conditions for us to make mistakes, almost all of which never occur in training.

Here is a table which summarises the types of mistakes, their characteristics and how they affect athletes. Unlike the other chapters where I went through the

sports ideas and described how the concept migrated into your business world, this time I am leaving that up to you. The summary table leaves the last column intentionally blank for you to complete. Read about each of the types of mistakes again and try to think how you have responded in those situations. Jot down the specific mistake you have made and then head to the final section of this chapter where I have listed some strategies you can use to mitigate those mistakes. Remember that the mistake has probably been occurring for some time and the remedy may either look to simply or too difficult. Either way it is the process you put in place that is important and the trust you have in your own ability to overcome those mistakes.

Table 5 Mistakes

Type	Characteristics	Examples of effect on an athlete	Effect on you as a Business Olympian
Increment	Creeps up on you over a period of time. Don't realise the error is occurring as you have lost your focus.	Ignores the small mistakes and does attempt to rectify the issues until too late	
Energised	Unexpectedly energised performance	The athlete gets caught up in the excitement and loses focus	
Tired or decrement	Expect some loss of performance, early in the competition	Starts off all guns firing and then as they tire, the mistakes begin	

Type	Characteristics	Examples of effect on an athlete	Effect on you as a Business Olympian
Primacy and 'recency'	Last thing learned is the first thing forgotten First thing learned is first thing forgotten	Coming out of the half-time huddle and forgetting a part of what the coach just told you	
Pressure	Too high levels of tension Uncomfortable stress Feeling 'pressured' Errors of judgement or timing Inappropriate mental or physical energy levels Getting too excited	First round of the Olympic games, the athlete who basically has to perform a skill they have trained four years for, simply cracks due to the pressure. Putting the four-foot putt to win the PGA. The individual starts to think too much about the putt and ends up not performing the skill as they would have intended.	

Type	Characteristics	Examples of effect on an athlete	Effect on you as a Business Olympian
Emotional	Being rattled by other mistakes Being 'on the run' from the opposition Losing your temper	When athletes become focused on the emotion they focus on smaller errors which have occurred in the past	
Nervous	'Butterflies' in the stomach Sweaty palms Tension headaches Worried thoughts – 'I am going to fail'	The nerves cause a loss of focus and ultimate inability to perform May focus on the wrong aspect of the performance which leads to the error	



Tips from our Olympians

Here are some suggestions for avoiding each type of mistake in a business situation.

Type of mistake	Business training remedies	Your personal application
Increment	Better self-management Consistent effort over time – pace your self Place yourself in more competitive environments	

Type of mistake	Business training remedies	Your personal application
Energised	Use cue words to remain focused	
Tired or decrement	Analyse a previous performance and make necessary alterations	
Primacy and 'recency'	Learn new skills over and beyond those you need at your current level of performance.	
Pressure	Practice relaxation techniques Improve breathing control Centring exercises Focus on tasks Know the energy needs of your sport See the section on relaxing and centring Chapter 14	
Emotional	Develop behavioural options Make better choices Practice under a range of circumstances	
Nervous	Improve tension management by visualising successful performances in a variety of circumstances. Compete more often	

Chapter 15

Adrenaline to Zen and everything in between



Basketball is important to me, but so is my family. In fact I don't make a decision in business or in sport without examining the potential impact on my family.

Shane Heal – Olympic basketballer

WAS PLANNING ON PENNING AN ENTIRE CHAPTER on how to ensure a reasonable balance between work and the rest of your life. But honestly, after speaking on this topic for many years I have come up with one undeniable fact – the appropriate balance is different for everyone! We all place different expectations on ourselves, we are all at different stages of our life and quite frankly I think we all know what we need to do and it's just a matter of developing the conviction to do it.

Understanding own boundaries. This may sound simple but the actual process is more difficult than one would imagine. The need to understand one's own insights is so important yet not often done. How do we gain insight? Easy question but difficult to answer as it requires you to challenge yourself at a level that you have never done before. The next step is to work out how you could inadvertently end up sabotaging yourself. This concept is discussed in greater detail in Chapter 4 on setting objectives, but as a reminder, we all tend to set up ways in which we prevent ourselves from achieving what we set out to do. The best tip I can give about gaining some balance is to include a friend in the process. Whether they be a partner or work colleague you will be surprised how more committed you will be to achieving something when working on it with someone.

An A to Z for life

So I propose an A to Z examination of your life. I have provided a snippet of mine and I encourage you to take a blank sheet of paper, go find a mountain, well OK, find a coffee shop and complete your own list. Remember this list applies to my life – your A to Z will be unique to you.

A for Adrenalin

Once a year do something that seriously increases your adrenalin. Or just write a book, trust me your adrenalin will rush.

B for Breathing

Take a moment to catch your breath. Have your screensaver say ‘breathe’, you would be surprised how many times it works.

C for Cholesterol

Bite the bullet and get it checked.

D for Diet

No way, eat healthy, include pizza once a week.

E for Exercise

Weekly if not daily, get off bus one stop before

F for Family and friends

Make sure you give time to the people who are important in your life – not just your workmates.

G for Goals

Reassess your goals and ensure you’re on the right pathway.

H for Happiness

What truly makes you happy? Money is not everything, but granted it helps.

I for Interests

That is, interests outside work.

J for Jazz

Sit down and really listen to some music.

K for Kiss your kids and partner

Studies have shown that a good passionate kiss with your partner will add years to your life. And those with kids will know the joy they bring you.

L for Laugh

There is always a lighter side of life

M for Me time

Set aside some time for you to achieve a personal goal – mine was to finish this book – it only took seven years!

N for Need

What do I really need in life as opposed to what do I want.

O for Opportunities

That may present themselves.

P for Parameters

Prioritise the important aspects of your life.

Q for Quebec

No idea but always wanted to say it, those air traffic controllers have all the fun words. OK – maybe go visit the Queen. Need to go travelling again and take the family with me.

R for Robust

Can I handle the small setbacks in life

S for Sex

Obvious but nevertheless important.

T for Tenacity

When required, try something new.

U for Underwear

Have you changed them lately and if not leave work and go home.

V for Vegetables

Eat them with kids, if they have to you may as well too. Thanks Jordyn and Cody.

W for Water

I seriously need to drink more water during the day, substitute one cup of coffee.

X for Xmas

Who did you spend Christmas with? Extended family is also important.

Y for Youth

Do something that makes you feel young again.

Z for Zen

Recognise there are other components to our life that don't always get the same attention: might be time to dig into your spiritual side.

Relaxation and centring and how to train yourself to relax

Athletes use relaxation techniques to teach themselves how to switch off both physically and mentally. Most Business Olympians usually report not feeling very physically exhausted, but very often feeling mentally exhausted. The conundrum with mental exhaustion is that the effect on the body is often the opposite of what we would like to see happen. Our brains stay switched on and we can't seem to switch them off. Here are some scripts on how to relax. If you would prefer to have someone help you relax, head to the website and you can download a pre-recorded script which can be put onto your MP3 player or burnt to a CD. All you need to do then is press play and listen to the instructions. Centring is a simple process which allows you to refocus your attention by clearing your mind of all intrusive thoughts.

Basic breathing

Close your eyes and get into a comfortable position. Once settled start to breathe deeply. Feel your diaphragm rise and fall with each slow deep breath. Start trying to regulate your breathing by breathing in for a count of 4 ... then holding for a count of 4 ... exhale for a count of 4 ... and then pause for 4 before inhaling again. It goes like this – in ... 2 ... 3 ... 4 ... hold ... 2 ... 3 ... 4 ... exhale ... 2 ... 3 ... 4. and pause ... 2 ... 3 ... 4. Repeat this breathing pattern for a few more breaths.

You should now have achieved a deep, slow breathing pattern. You should still be able to feel your diaphragm move up and down as you inhale and exhale. On the next few breaths start to say to yourself ‘tension out’ as you exhale. Now say to yourself ‘peace and calmness in’ as you inhale so that you are breathing peace and calmness in and tension out. As you continue to breath deeply and slowly try to feel the tension leaving and being replaced by peace and calmness.

Continue with this breathing for as long as it is comfortable. When you are feeling relaxed and ready to leave this exercise, take a couple more deep breaths and then open your eyes ... become acquainted with your surroundings for a few seconds before moving and then when you feel ready, stretch to feel energised.

Relaxation scripts

Make yourself as comfortable as possible. Close your eyes and become aware of which parts of your body are feeling tense and which parts are relaxed.

Now take a few deep breaths, taking the air in through your nose, holding it momentarily and then slowly exhaling through your nose ... and with each exhale, you will find yourself relaxing more and more deeply, more and more completely.

Take the air in and let the air out. Allowing yourself to relax ... relax ... relax ...

In a few moments, I am going to describe a very vivid scene in which you will picture yourself walking along a beach. I want you to imagine this scene as though you are there experiencing not only the sights, but the sounds, smells, tastes, and touches.

It is a bright summer day. It is late in the day. You decide to go for a walk along the beach. The sun is radiating warmth and comfort as it shines boldly. The sky is crystal clear without a cloud in sight. The grains of sand beneath your feet shine from the sunlight and warm the soles of your feet. The sound of the waves beating against the shore echoes in the air.

You feel the warm, light breeze brush against your face as you walk onward. Far off in the distance, you can hear the cries of sea gulls ... you watch them glide through the sky, swoop down into the sea, and then fly off once again.

As you walk further along the shore, you decide to rest. You sit down on a mound of pure-white sand and gaze out at the sea, staring intently at the rhythmic, methodical motion of the waves rolling into shore.

Each wave breaks against the coast ... rises slowly upward along the beach, leaving an aura of white foam, and then slowly retreats back out to sea, only to be replaced by another wave that crashes against the shore ... works its way up the beach ... then slowly retreats back out to sea.

With each motion of the wave as it glides in and as it glides out, you find yourself feeling more and more relaxed, more and more calm ... more and more serene.

The waves are gliding in ... and the waves are gliding out ... You feel more and more calm ... Continue to watch the waves glide in ... and out.

Now, as you stare off into the distance, you see that the sun is beginning to sink into the horizon. The sun is sinking down and you feel more and more relaxed as you see its movement going down ... down ... down.

The sky is turning brilliant colours of red ... orange ... yellow ... green ... blue ... and purple ... As the sun sets, sinking down ... down ... down ... into the horizon, you feel very relaxed and soothed. You watch the sun as it sinks down ... down ... down...

The beating of the waves, the smell and taste of the sea, the salt, the cries of the gulls, the warmth against your body – all these sights, sounds, and smells leave you feeling very soothed, very calm, very serene.

Pause

In a few moments, I will count from one to three. When I reach the count of three, your eyes will open and you will feel completely refreshed and totally relaxed.

1 ... 2 ... 3?]

Repeat the above instruction until everyone is alert.

Progressive muscle relaxation

Sit or lie down in a comfortable position and try to put yourself in a relaxed state. Close your eyes and take a long, slow, deep breath through your nose, inhaling as much air as you can. Then exhale slowly and completely, feeling the tension leaving your body as you exhale. Take another deep breath and let the day's tensions and problems drain out of you with the exhalation.

Relax as much as possible and listen to what I say. Remember not to strain to relax. Just let it happen. During the session, try not to move any more than necessary to stay comfortable. Particularly, try not to move muscles that have already been relaxed.

As we progress through each of sixteen muscle groups, you will first tense the muscle group for approximately five to seven seconds and then relax for thirty to forty seconds. Do not start the tensing until I say 'Now'. Continue to tense until I say 'OK'. The word OK cues you to immediately let go of all the tension.

Begin with tensing the muscles in the dominant hand and lower arm by making a tight fist now. Feel the tension in the hand over the knuckles, and up into the lower arm...OK, relax by simply letting go of the tension. Notice the difference between tension and relaxation ... (pause 20 seconds) ... make another fist now ... OK, relax. Just let the relaxation happen; don't put out any effort ... (pause 20 seconds) ...

Next tense the muscles of the dominant biceps and push your elbow down against the floor or back of the chair. Tense now. Feel the tension in the biceps without involving the muscles in the lower arm and hand ... OK, release the tension all at once, just let it happen ... notice the difference between tension and letting go into relaxation ...

With your non-dominant hand, make a tight fist now. Feel the tension in your hand and lower arm, but keep the upper arm relaxed ... OK, relax by simply draining all of the tension out ... tense again now ... OK, relax and feel the difference between tension and relaxation ... also notice the different feeling for each new muscle group ... push the elbow down and tighten the non-dominant biceps now ... OK relax, just release the tension ... tense again now ... OK, notice the decrease in tension, drain it all out, and enjoy the feelings of relaxation ... notice the sensations you have in the muscles of both arms and hands ... perhaps there is a sort of flow of relaxation ... perhaps a feeling of warmth and even heaviness in these muscles ... notice and enjoy this feeling of relaxation ...

Turn your attention to the muscles in your face. We will tense and relax the face by progressing through three muscle groups. Tense the muscles in your forehead by raising your eyebrows now ... feel the tension in your forehead and scalp ... OK, relax. Enjoy the spreading sensation of relaxation ... frown again now ... OK relax, release all the tension ... your forehead should feel smooth like glass ...

Next shut your eyes very tightly and at the same time wrinkle your nose. Tense now ... feel the tension in the upper part of the cheeks and through the eyes ... OK, relax ... tense again now ... OK release all of the tension ...

Next pull the corners of your mouth back and clench your teeth, but not so hard that your teeth hurt. Tense now. You should feel tension all through the lower part of your face and jaw. OK Relax ... tense again now ... OK relax and feel the tension draining out of your face ...

Next tense the muscles of the neck by trying to pull your chin downward and upward at the same time, thus contracting the muscles in the front and back part of the neck together. Tense now ... OK relax ... drain all the tension from the muscles in the neck ... see if you can get you neck and face to feel completely relaxed ... tense your neck again now ... feel the discomfort ... OK relax ... drain all the tension out ... Remember relaxation is simply the absence of tension ...

Take a deep breath and hold it while raising your shoulders upward and pulling your shoulder blades back. Tense now ... feel significant tension in the chest, the shoulders and the upper back ... OK relax ... drain all the tension out ... hold your breath and raise your shoulders up and back now ... OK exhale and drain

all the tension out ... let your shoulders drop completely ... enjoy the spreading sensation of relaxation ...

Next tighten your abdomen as though you expect a punch while simultaneously squeezing your buttocks together. Tense now ... you should feel a good deal of tightness and tension in the stomach and buttocks ... OK release the tension, gradually letting it all drain out ... just let it happen ... tense again now ... OK relax ... feel the sensation of relaxation spreading into those muscles ...

Turn your attention to your right leg. Tighten the muscles in your right thigh by simultaneously contracting all the muscles of your thigh. Tense now. Try to localise the tension only to your thigh ... note the sensation ... OK relax ... contrast the tension and relaxation sensations ... remember relaxation is merely the absence of tension ... it takes no effort at all except merely releasing the tension ... tighten the thigh again now ... OK release the tension ... just passively let it drain out ... enjoy the feeling of relaxation ...

Next flex your ankle as though you are trying to touch your toes to your shin. Tense now. You should be feeling tension all through your calf, ankle and foot ... contrast this tension with when you tensed your thigh ... OK, relax ... simply release the tension ... let go of any remaining tension ... tense again now ... OK slowly release all the tension ...

Tense the muscles of the right foot by either pointing your toes or curling your toes tightly. Tense now. Particularly note the sensation of tension in your arch and ball of the foot ... OK relax ... as all the tension drains out feel the spreading sensation of relaxation ... and perhaps warmth, heaviness or even tingling ... all of these sensations are normal ... tense again now ... OK slowly release all the tension ... let your foot, ankle and calf feel very relaxed ...

We will go through the same sequence with the left leg. Tighten the muscles in your left thigh by simultaneously contracting all the muscles of your thigh. Tense now. Try to localise the tension only to your thigh ... note the sensation ... OK relax ... contrast the tension and relaxation sensations ... remember relaxation is merely the absence of tension ... it takes no effort at all except merely releasing the tension ... tighten the thigh again now....OK release the tension ... just passively let it drain out ... enjoy the feeling of relaxation ...

Next flex your ankle as though you are trying to touch your toes to your shin. Tense now. You should be feeling tension all through your calf, ankle and foot ... contrast this tension with when you tensed your thigh ... OK, relax ... simply release the tension ... let go of any remaining tension ... tense again now ... OK slowly release all the tension ...

Tense the muscles of the left foot by either pointing your toes or curling your toes tightly. Tense now. Particularly note the sensation of tension in your arch and ball of the foot ...OK relax ... as all the tension drains out feel the spreading sensation of relaxation ... and perhaps warmth, heaviness or even tingling ... all of these sensations are normal ...tense again now ... OK slowly release all the tension ... let your foot, ankle and calf feel very relaxed ... both your left and right legs should feel very relaxed ...if you feel any tension anywhere in your legs, simply release it ...

Relax all the muscles in your body ... let them all go limp. You should be breathing slowly and deeply ...let all last traces of tension drain out of your body ... scan your body for any places that might still feel tension ... wherever you feel tension, do an additional tense and relax ... you may notice a sensation of heaviness and warmth throughout your body as though you are sinking deeper and deeper into the floor, bed or chair ... or you may feel as light as air, as though you are floating on a cloud ... whatever feelings you have go with them ... enjoy the sensation of relaxation ...

Before opening your eyes, take several deep breaths and feel the energy and alertness flowing back into your body ... stretch your arms and legs if you wish ... open your eyes when you are ready.

Centring

Centring is a process by which you can clear your mind in a short period of time and refocus on the task at hand. Many people when they realise they have lost their focus will naturally stop and take a deep breath and try to refocus. Here is the extended, more formal version of that process.

Stand with your feet shoulder-width apart. Or you may wish to sit with your feet apart and your knees bent to about ninety degrees.

- Consciously relax your neck, shoulders, and arm muscles.
- Smile slightly to reduce tension in your jaw.
- Focus on the movement of your abdominal muscles.
- Take a slow, deep breath using your diaphragm.
- There should be minimal movement in your chest and no movement in your shoulders.
- Find a nonsense focus point, it could be anything, such as a piece of paper on the ground, or a spot on the wall.
- Stare at your focus point until everything around it becomes a blur.

Once you have fully focused on this point, close your eyes and use a cue word to refocus your thoughts on the task at hand. Your cue word should relate back to the task you are trying to focus on.

While writing this book, I was continually interrupted by phone calls and other irrelevant distractions. I found myself losing my focus on my return to the computer. To combat this I printed a copy of my goal to complete this book and glued it to the desk – my cue phrase, was ‘stay in the moment’. By replaying this in my head I could return to whichever chapter I was writing and I stopped worrying about all the time I was using up by attending to other matters.

Centring can be completed in as little as five seconds once you have mastered the technique. As with all skills you need to practice it often, why not trying to centre every time you hear the phone ring, stop at a red traffic light or hear the bell at school. The focus here is to train your mind to be able to switch from whatever you are doing and refocus onto the job at hand.



The Business Olympian

While it would appear to be obvious that to gain the best out of yourself at work, a sense of balance in your life is required. Many business men and women who I speak to comment that something has to give for them to be successful. At the core of that comment I must protest – I honestly believe that you can create a sense of balance in your life if you see the value in it. I know it's an old statement

but one that I still believe holds a great degree of truth – no one on their death bed, said, ‘I wish I had spent more time at the office’. Most successful Business Olympians have found a way to create this balance and in the true essence of this book, you would not be a Business Olympian if you didn’t have some degree of balance.

At the beginning of this chapter I suggested creating an ‘A to Z for life’. Head back to that list now and see where the gaps are in your life – set yourself a goal to fill those gaps over the next couple of months.

Chapter 16

Developing your career– who has packed your parachute?



It's all about creating a goal, being very clear what that goal is and then ensuring you surround yourself with the right people and the best technology, to enable you to systematically achieve it. The AIS and sports commission prides itself in helping create the process that allows our athletes to stand on those podiums representing their hard work and their country.

Mark Peters CEO Sports Commission.

IT IS THE ULTIMATE MOMENT IN AN ATHLETE'S CAREER, walking up to a podium, stepping up onto the gold medal spot and hearing the national anthem being played while they hold onto their gold medal. What we see is the athlete smiling, often crying, what we can't see is what went on in the background, how much training was done and just as importantly, who supported them.

It is a concept I refer to as, 'Who packed your parachute?' You might jump out of the plane, and pull the cord and the 'chute opens, so you think you've done all the work, but who actually packed your parachute? Do you consider that when you jump out of a plane and the parachute opens up and you float gently to the ground, that you ought to consider the person who sat stitching the parachute together, and the person who did all the cords, made sure they were all the correct tension, and so on.

The sporting world has developed a unique approach to supporting their athletes in developing their careers. Instead of looking at the athlete as a whole they have recognised that for the athlete to be complete there were several aspects of their make up which needed to be attended to. No one part being more important than the other. This concept has led to the development of a whole branch of sport science and medicine which has many departments. Each department serves a particular purpose and supports the athletes in negotiating various hurdles which may present themselves.

When looking at how the sporting system supports its athletes' development, it is important to recognise that the athlete is the central and most important aspect of the mix. Without them, well simply every one is useless.. A brief thought – the basketballer who signs a hundred million dollar contract, immediately thanks their coach, parents, team-mates, gym coach and so on. However, what about the contractor who spent hours nailing the wooden floor into the ground and bolted the ring to its mounts in the roof, or attached the stadium lights? The list goes on, but I think the point is made. There are many aspects of talent management, which for all intents and purposes goes unnoticed. While we won't be discussing them any further, next time you achieve one of your goals, have a long hard think of all the people who helped, and not just the obvious ones.

Within any good sporting team, there is a hardworking support team, usually out of the eye of the media or the regular fan base. They are often referred to as the sport science or sport medicine professionals. These men and women provide the support that allows the athlete to develop their full potential and maintain it over a period of time. As an athlete grows older some departments become more important as time progresses.

For a sports training organisation to succeed the following departments are going to be essential. We will then look at the business equivalents.

Sport psychology

The sport psychologist role varies dramatically from athlete to athlete. A female winter athlete has said that she owed her victory to her sport psychologist who she had consulted daily leading up to the games. Many professional sporting teams in Australia have a sport psychologist as a member of the squad.

There are five distinct aspects to sport psychology and each has a direct equivalent in the corporate world.

1. Psychological skills training – this is probably the area of sport psychology which the general public is most familiar with. Psychological skills training primarily educates the athlete in ways to cope with the demands of being an elite athlete.
2. Group dynamics – the emphasis here is on the development of the group and how the group works within the parameters set by the coach and the demands of the sport.
3. Life skills – developing a set of life skills which would be beneficial at work and in their real world.
4. Critical interventions – by providing support when an athlete hits a major obstacle which they can't get around by themselves.
5. Complex distraction training – this is the most intense and involved aspect. It is here where the individual learns to cope with whatever uncertainties may lie ahead while maintaining their performance under pressure.

Strength and conditioning

Being physically strong is a requirement of most athletes. The strength gained from training not only allows the athlete to have greater endurance or greater speed but also allows them to cope better with overtraining and burnout.

Athlete career and education

This department focuses on developing the athlete's career, ensuring they have some alternatives in place and the training to enable them to move forward. Planning for your next move is essential, it's very rare that things just fall into your lap.

Physiologist

Internally the body makes decisions that are often out of our control, but there are some areas in which we are able to make some suggestions and in some cases have absolute control over.

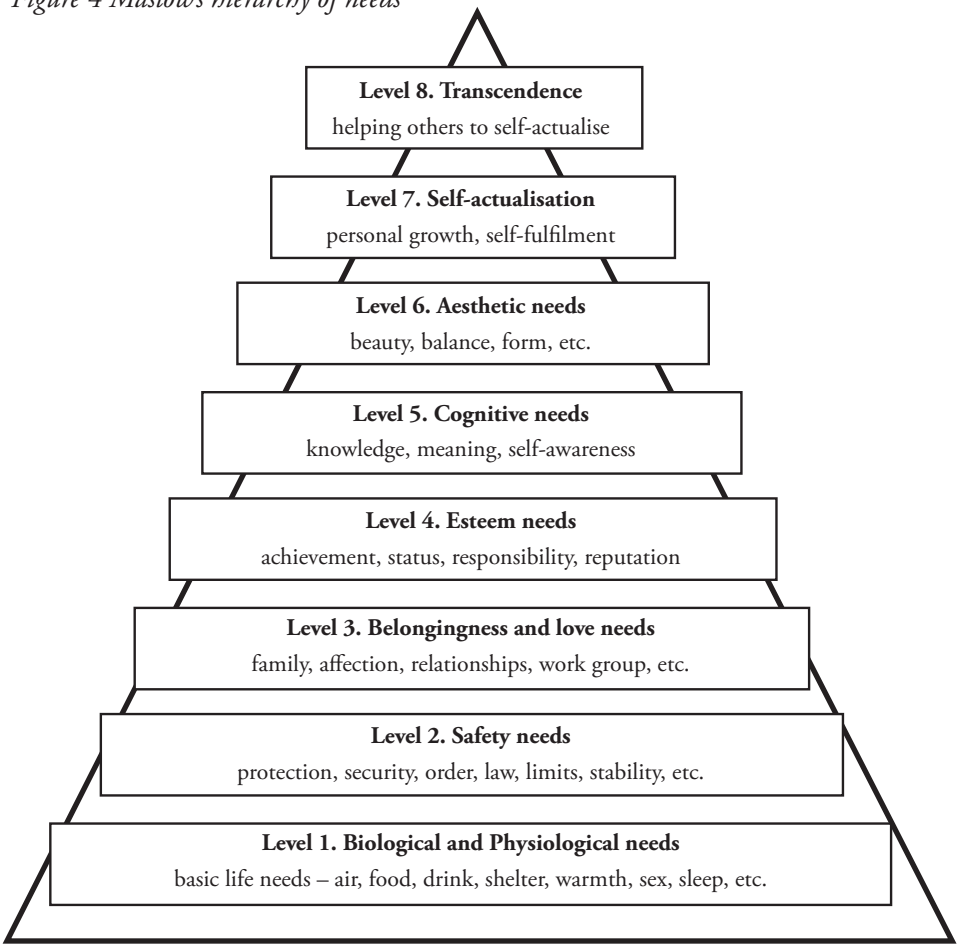
Bio-mechanist

Biomechanics is the study of body movement and serves to provide athletes with feedback on their behaviours.

Which department is most important?

How do we best understand which area will be most beneficial to us? From my perspective the process should follow a ‘needs versus wants’ model. Many years ago, Abraham Maslow, an American psychologist, defined his needs-based model, suggesting that the basic level of needs, should be met before we can move onto the next level.

Figure 4 Maslow’s hierarchy of needs



Maslow created the original five-level ‘hierarchy of needs’ model. The 5th level was originally referred to as ‘self-actualising’. Later on other theorists have expanded the definition of self-actualisation and attempted to prioritise the levels. The additional three layers in the diagram below appear to simply be a more in-depth explanation of self-actualisation. In the current day and age the additional information is useful since, as a society, we are becoming more aware of our self-actualising needs.

Maslow said that needs must be satisfied in the given order. Aims and drive always shift to next higher order needs. Levels 1 to 4 are deficiency motivators; Level 5, and by implication 6 to 8, are growth motivators. The thwarting of needs is usually a cause of stress, and is particularly so at Level 4.

At each of the levels a different type of support would be required and the experienced Olympian will seek out the best person to provide that.



The Business Olympian

What this chapter is attempting to illustrate is that for many of you out there, the concept of ‘who is packing your parachute’ – or who is supporting you, albeit perhaps in an unseen way – may have never entered your mind. And I challenge you to think about and see how many names you would put on your list. Furthermore, it is important to remember that what we need and what we want are often two separate things. In most cases you will only have to look inside your own organisation to see how much additional support they do actually provide. All you need to do is ask.

It is obvious that the human beings in the corporate world have the same hierarchy of needs as in the sporting world, so there ought to be equivalent ‘departments’ in the corporate world to those needed by a decent sports training organisation.

In a simple comparison let’s look at the sporting departments and see how they translate into the current corporate environment.

Sport	Corporate
Coach	Manager
Sport psychology	HR team some companies will have an Employee Assistance Program organisational psychologists.
Strength and conditioning	Does your company support you to join a gym or actually have one on site?
Athlete career and education	Combination of your manager and the HR team and training arm
Physiologist	Your OHS and other wellbeing policies
Bio-mechanist	Your performance management process

The table is fairly self-explanatory, with your manager taking on many of the duties of a coach. The HR team will usually have two functions. They are primarily the providers of emotional support and will be available to direct you appropriately. Additionally they also have the training and development responsibilities of the organisation. Nowadays, many companies will actively support you maintaining a degree of fitness – if they don't you may want to suggest it. Physiology is best interpreted as the mechanisms by which the company supports your wellbeing and this will include flexibility arrangements through to OH and S polices. And finally the biomechanics department which is designed to examine your performance and provide you with objective feedback should be best represented by the performance management system your company has in place. Reflecting back on the objective setting chapter, should your company not have one in place, you should still be able to re-create your own version.

The next step requires you recognise the different skills your company has in its employ, and then look to find out how they can best help you in achieving your goals. Like the Olympian you don't need to utilise everyone who is around you just because they are there. Reflecting on Maslow's model of needs, the following examples should help to shed some light.

You can't motivate someone to achieve their sales target (Level 4) when they're having problems with their marriage (Level 3).

You can't expect someone to work as a team member (Level 3) when they're having their house re-possessed (Level 2).

Will executive coaching (Level 7) be useful for someone who is trying to break into a new environment and prove themselves (Level 4)?

What level are you operating at, recognising that your family and home life make up the first two or three levels. Having an understanding of your own needs and wants will allow you to accept new challenges and have the mindset to dedicate every ounce of effort you have into meeting them.

Let me leave with this last thought. That list you made earlier of who has 'packed your parachute'. Go and thank them.

Conclusion



HERE WE ARE AT THE FINAL CHAPTER OF WHAT I HOPE has been an insightful look into the world of sport and how you may take a couple of concepts and apply them in your world.

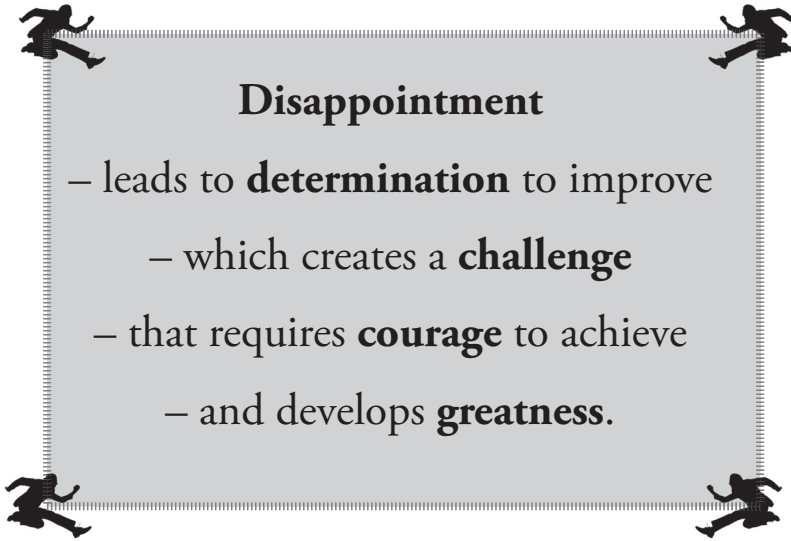
While I have argued that sport is a great metaphor for critically examining your ability to perform to your full potential, the key ingredient in any development is YOU. I made a point very early in the preamble, that this book was not designed to tell you ‘what to do’ but more to provide you with some stimulating concepts you could consider, while making some changes or developing some new skills. A psychologist who is a close friend of mine commented to me on several occasion that when you feel like you are not in control of your emotions and thoughts, there will always be a motivation to get you back on track. You just have to look for it. There are four types of people when it comes to changing behaviours, which is really what this book is about. Which type are you?

1. A person who ‘Knows that they know’. Often these people will not change as they believe they already know everything. You probably know someone like this and the best this book can do for them would be to serve as a great door stop.
2. A person who ‘Doesn’t know that they know’. These individuals are usually struggling with something and are blind to that fact that they have some skills which could be utilised in the situation – this book should be quite

enlightening to these folk as it may trigger some additional thoughts and highlight some paths for them to follow.

3. A person who 'Doesn't know that they don't know'. Similar characteristics to type number 1, but they don't even realise what they are missing out on. If this is you, then chances are someone bought this book for you and if you made it this far then I am confident you are on the right pathway.
4. A person who 'Knows they don't know'. These individuals are constantly seeking new information. If this is you, you would have read each chapter twice and probably emailed me already seeking further clarification. Keep challenging yourself!

Regardless of the type of person you are, making changes to your life and learning new skills can be one of the most difficult tasks you will do, but it will also be the most rewarding. Many athletes will spend countless hours perfecting the smallest skill and once they have perfected it they will simply turn around and try and improve on that. They also have the luxury of having a troupe of people surrounding them to ensure they stay on the right path. In most circumstances the Business Olympian is trying to create this world on their own, or at best with a small support group. So keep hanging in there, it gets easier as the days go by and the 'pain' of learning something new starts to dissipate. In the beginning of the book I asked you to go for a run to try and simulate the exertion an athlete experiences. It's time to go for another run and then another and another. Eventually it gets easier and so will your ability to develop the skills you need to create that ideal performance state and stand proudly on the podium to receive **your** 'gold medal'.



Appendix

Learning styles questionnaire



THIS IS THE QUESTIONNAIRE REFERRED TO IN CHAPTER 3. It allows you to analyse your learning styles.

Remember, there were eight styles, grouped into four pairs. Each pair represents opposite ends of a continuum of styles. These were the:

- | | |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Active – reflective continuum | Visual – verbal continuum |
| Sensing – intuitive continuum | Sequential – global continuum |

Choose either ‘a’ or ‘b’ for each question, and mark it on the response sheet at the end of the questions. If both ‘a’ and ‘b’ seem to apply, then choose the one that applies most often.

1. I understand a process better after I
 - (a) try it out
 - (b) think it through
2. I would rather be considered
 - (a) a realistic (practical) employee
 - (b) an innovative (creative) employee
3. When I think about what I did in my work yesterday, I am most likely to get

- (a) a picture
 - (b) words
4. At school I tended to
 - (a) understand details of a subject but was fuzzy about its overall structure
 - (b) understand the overall structure but was fuzzy about details
 5. When I am learning a new skill, it helps me to
 - (a) talk about it
 - (b) think about it
 6. If I were a teacher, I would rather teach a course
 - (a) that deals with facts and real life situations
 - (b) that deals with ideas and theories
 7. I prefer to get new information or feedback from my manager in
 - (a) pictures, diagrams, graphs, or concept maps
 - (b) written words or verbal information
 8. When learning a new strategy, once I understand
 - (a) all the parts, I understand the whole thing
 - (b) the whole thing, I see how the parts fit
 9. In a team session working on difficult issues, I am more likely to
 - (a) jump in and contribute ideas
 - (b) sit back and listen
 10. I find it easier
 - (a) to learn facts (e.g., specific dates in history)
 - (b) to learn concepts or theories (e.g. themes in a novel)
 11. In a book with lots of pictures and charts, I am likely to
 - (a) look over the pictures and charts carefully
 - (b) focus on the written text
 12. When I solve maths problems
 - (a) I usually work my way to the solutions one step at a time
 - (b) I often just see the solutions but then have to struggle to figure out the steps to get to them

13. When I first came to the office
 - (a) I generally got to know many of the other employees
 - (b) I generally got to know very few of the other employees
14. In reading non-fiction, I prefer
 - (a) something that teaches me new facts or tells me how to do something
 - (b) something that gives me new ideas to think about
15. I like managers
 - (a) who explain using diagrams
 - (b) who give detailed verbal explanations only
16. When I'm analysing a story or a novel
 - (a) I think of the incidents and try to put them together to figure out the themes
 - (b) I just know what the themes are, and then I have to go back and find relevant incidents to show them
17. When I encounter a problem in my work, I am more likely to
 - (a) start working on the solution immediately
 - (b) try to fully understand the problem first
18. As an employee, I prefer the idea of
 - (a) certainty
 - (b) theory
19. In work, I remember best
 - (a) what I see
 - (b) what I hear
20. It is more important to me that a manager
 - (a) lays out the skill in clear sequential steps
 - (b) gives me an overall picture and relates the skill to other parts of the work
21. I prefer to study or work
 - (a) in a group
 - (b) alone

22. My colleagues are more likely to consider me as
 - (a) careful about the details of my work's performance
 - (b) creative about how to perform in my work
23. When I get directions to a new place, I prefer
 - (a) a map
 - (b) written instructions
24. I learn
 - (a) at a fairly regular pace. If I think hard, I'll get it.
 - (b) in fits and starts. I'll be totally confused and then suddenly it all 'clicks'.
25. When learning a new skill for my work, I would rather first
 - (a) try things out
 - (b) think about how I'm going to do it
26. When I am reading for enjoyment, I like writers to
 - (a) clearly say what they mean
 - (b) say things in creative, interesting ways
27. When my manager gives me feedback with a diagram or sketch, I am most likely to remember
 - (a) the picture
 - (b) what the manager said about it
28. When thinking about a performance strategy or tactic, I am more likely to
 - (a) focus on details and miss the big picture
 - (b) try to understand the big picture before getting into the details
29. I more easily remember
 - (a) something I have done
 - (b) something I have thought a lot about
30. When I have to perform a skill, I prefer to
 - (a) master one way of doing it
 - (b) come up with new ways of doing it

31. When my manager is giving me feedback or talking through particular statistics, I prefer
 - (a) charts or graphs
 - (b) text summarising the results
32. When writing a paper, I am more likely to
 - (a) work on (think about or write) the beginning of the paper and progress forward
 - (b) work on (think about or write) different parts of the paper and then order them
33. When I have to work on a team or group project, I first want to
 - (a) have 'group brainstorming' where everyone contributes ideas
 - (b) brainstorm individually and then come together as a group to compare ideas
34. I consider it higher praise to call a colleague
 - (a) sensible
 - (b) imaginative
35. When I first meet new colleagues, I am more likely to remember
 - (a) what they looked like
 - (b) what they said about themselves
36. When I am learning a new subject, I prefer to
 - (a) stay focused on that subject, learning as much about it as I can
 - (b) try to make connections between that subject and related subjects
37. My colleagues are more likely to consider me as
 - (a) outgoing
 - (b) reserved
38. I prefer managerial styles that emphasise
 - (a) concrete material (facts, data)
 - (b) abstract material (concepts, theories)
39. For entertainment, I would rather
 - (a) watch television
 - (b) read a book

- 40. Some managers start their meetings with an outline of what they will cover. Such outlines are
 - (a) somewhat helpful to me
 - (b) very helpful to me
- 41. The idea of doing a school project in groups, with one grade for the entire group
 - (a) appeals to me
 - (b) does not appeal to me
- 42. When I am doing long calculations,
 - (a) I tend to repeat all my steps and check my work carefully
 - (b) I find checking my work tiresome and have to force myself to do it
- 43. I tend to picture places I have been
 - (a) easily and fairly accurately
 - (b) with difficulty and without much detail
- 44. When solving team problems in a group, I would be more likely to
 - (a) think of the steps in the solution process
 - (b) think of possible consequences or applications of the solution in a wide range of areas

Adapted from Soloman, B A and Felder, R M, (1991), *Index of Learning Styles*.

Learning style profile

Answer by placing an 'a' or 'b' in the box under the number of the question.

1	5	9	13	17	21	25	29	33	37	41		Active a =	Reflective b =
2	6	10	14	18	22	26	30	34	38	42		Sensing a =	Intuitive b =
3	7	11	15	19	23	27	31	35	39	43		Visual a =	Verbal b =
4	8	12	16	20	24	28	32	36	40	44		Sequential a =	Global b =

Calculate the total score in the following way.

Active responses =
Reflective responses =
Sensing responses =
Intuitive responses =
Visual responses =
Verbal responses =
Sequential responses =
Global responses =

For each of the response pairs, calculate the difference between the scores and note which response has the larger score.

For example, for the Active – reflective scale, if you had 4 'a' responses and 7 'b' responses, the difference between 4 and 7 is 3. You had more 'b' responses, which corresponds with the reflective end of the scale. Thus your score is 3 Reflective. If you had 7 'a' responses and 4 'b' responses, your score would be 3 Active.

About the author



GAVIN FREEMAN IS A FULLY REGISTERED PSYCHOLOGIST with over ten years’ experience in both the sporting and corporate world. He has held positions such as Corporate Senior Psychologist, Director of Human Resources and Organisational Development and Director of Learning and Development – positions specialising in developing excellence in high performing, elite business men and women. Gavin was the team psychologist for the Australian Winter Olympic team in Turin 2006 and the Australian team at the 2000 Sydney Paralympic Games. He was also Team Psychologist for the Olympic Archery Team in the Sydney 2000 Games. At the professional sporting level he has worked with a variety of athletes from the best leagues around the world, including the NBA, WNBA, and PGA. He was the psychologist for one of the teams at the 2003 Rugby World Cup. Gavin consults to CEOs, managers and elite coaches, delivering a variety of experiential workshops, executive coaching, team building and keynote addresses. He holds a Bachelor of Science, and Bachelor of Psychology from the University of Western Australia and a Master of Psychology from the University of Southern Queensland. His MBA is from Deakin University in Victoria. Gavin lives in Melbourne with his wife and two young children.

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