

# **THE SPIRIT OF CHAMPIONS: HOW WORK IS LIKE SPORTS**

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## Desired Outcomes

- A shared belief that how we do what we do matters much more in the workplace than it did before.
- An understanding of the similarities between peak performance in sports and peak performance in the workplace.
- An increased understanding of the importance of self-awareness to performance.
- A desire to reflect on personal performance in the context of this presentation.

## How We Do What We Do

- Seeing a greatly increased emphasis on “values” in the workplace, something being reflected in hiring, promotion and compensation decisions.
- Character: “Who you are in the dark.”
- Professionalism: “How you do what you do when no one is watching.”
- *“It is our choices, Harry, that show what we truly are, far more than our abilities.” Professor Dumbledore to Harry Potter in Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets*
- *“Champions aren’t made in the gyms. Champions are made from something they have deep inside them—a desire, a dream, a vision.” Muhammad Ali*

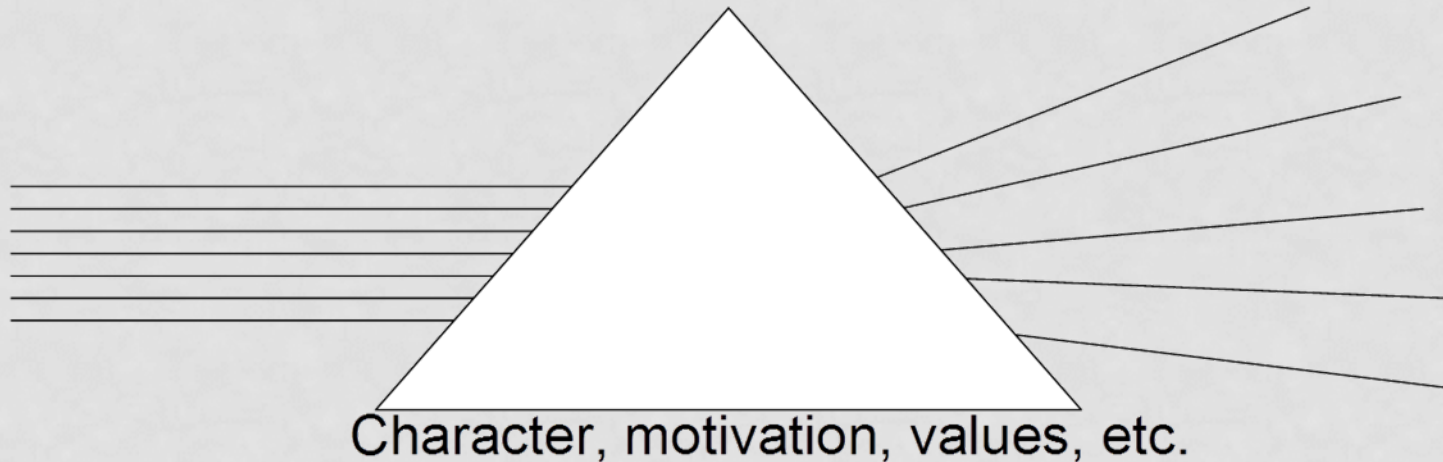
## Sports Is Like Life

- *“The values learned on the playing field-how to set goals, endure, take criticism and risks, become team players, use our beliefs, stay healthy and deal with stress-prepare us for life.” Donna deVarona (Olympic Swimming Gold Medallist, Broadcaster)*
- *“To achieve in sports you first have to have a dream, and then you must act on that dream. The best athletes are those who truly enjoy what they are doing and display a tremendous amount of work ethic. They continue to persevere in spite of setbacks and never lose sight of their ultimate goal.” Dianne Holum (Olympic Speedskating Gold Medallist, Coach)*
- *“You have to love what you’re doing. Smile and enjoy it. If you love it, you’ll have a passion for it. You’ll work hard and you’ll work your way through things.” Wayne Gretzky’s advice to Sidney Crosby*

# Intangibles And Performance Capability

Quantitative Experience  
(What you've done)

Qualitative Experience  
(What you are capable of doing)



Character, motivation, values, etc.

Inner Excellence

Opportunity

<"APC"

"APC"

>"APC"

- "APC"=Actual Performance Capability
- "You cannot outperform your own self-image"-Mind Gym



## How Work Is Like Sports

- Sports performance is a function of physical attributes and intangibles (character, values and motivation).
  - There can be an enormous difference in performance between athletes with very similar physical attributes.
- Major differences in performance from different intangibles.
- *“Champions are willing to do the really boring stuff. Anyone can run the easy yards.” Simon Whitfield (Gold Medal, Canada-Triathlon 2000)*
- *“I hated every minute of training, but I said, ‘Don't quit. Suffer now and live the rest of your life as a champion’.” Muhammad Ali*
- *“The key is not the ‘will to win’-everybody has that. It is the will to prepare to win that is important.” Bobby Knight (Basketball Coach)*

## The Power Of Pride-Elite Athletes

- *“Great champions have an enormous sense of pride. The people who excel are those who are driven to show the world and prove to themselves just how good they are.” Nancy Lopez (LPGA Golfer)*
- *“Those who truly have the spirit of champions are never wholly happy with an easy win. Half the satisfaction stems from knowing that it was the time and the effort you invested that led to your high achievement.” Nicole Haislett (Olympic Medallist-Swimming)*
- *“All of us get knocked down, but it’s resiliency that really matters. All of us do well when things are going well, but the thing that distinguishes athletes is the ability to do well in times of great stress, urgency and pressure.” Roger Staubach (NFL QB)*
- *“You have to expect things of yourself before you can do them.” Michael Jordan*

## The Power Of Pride-Elite Athletes

- *“An athlete is a normal person with the gift of an undying passion to be the best and achieve greatness.” Amanda Ring*
- *“Strive to be the best you can be...focus, watch, listen and learn...Try never to be satisfied with ‘good enough’...and above all, love what you do-share that passion with others, and always stay humble...” Robby Naish (Professional Windsurfer)*
- *“Being the best that you can be is possible only if your desire to be a champion is greater than your fear of failure.” Sammy Lee (Soccer Player)*
- Mind Gym-Gary Mack and David Casstevens-A sports psychology book with the theme: “we cannot outperform our own self-image”.



## Elite Athletes And “APC”

- The essence of being an elite athlete is recognition and realization of actual performance capability (“APC”).
- An elite athlete is not afraid to acknowledge to self:
  - “These are the things that I do well.”
  - “These are the things that I don’t do as well as I need to, and this is what I am going to do about them.”
- An elite athlete has the gift of being “ruthlessly objective”.
- An elite athlete “wants the ball”-not content as an observer.
  - They typically have a special passion for the game.
    - They don’t settle for being “OK”.
- An elite athlete also fully understands and embraces his/her role on the team.

## The Importance Of Self-Awareness

- How many of us can look at ourselves in a totally objective manner and say:
  - “These are the things that I do well.”
  - “These are the things that I need to work on, and this is what I will do about them.”
- Most of us sell ourselves short in describing our capability, as we cannot or will not describe in precise terms what we do well.
  - Tendency to paint with a roller, rather than an artist’s brush.
    - Outer edge-typically actual performance capability (APC).
    - Painting the area to the left of APC understates capability.
- Most of us perceive a discussion of development opportunities as inherently negative, and are reluctant to examine them.
  - A focus on what isn’t, not an examination of opportunity.
    - Natural reaction if framed as “weaknesses”.

## Looking In The Mirror

- Being able to look at yourself and know what you do well does not show a lack of humility.
- Being able to look at yourself and know what you need to work on is not a sign of weakness, but the ultimate sign of strength.
  - An enormous difference between “I can’t do this, and I can’t do this yet.”
  - The power of self-accountability.
- Each should be a celebration of who we are as a person.
  - We are both who we are and who we can become.
- Danger in comparing oneself to others, though.
  - Potentially destructive to self or team dynamic.
  - But good to move closer to APC by assessing gaps, motivating yourself to improve and building action plans.

## So What?

- An historic tendency in our workplace to consider performance in the context of tangible skills and experience and to underestimate drastically the importance of intangibles to performance.
  - But this has changed significantly in recent years.
- If an employer has to make a tradeoff, does it trade off intangibles for experience or experience for intangibles?
  - Which one is easier to build? Which one positions it for organizational success?
- How many of us truly understand the full package of our skills?
- More importantly, how many of us have actually tried to understand them?

## Summary

- Peak performance is a function of both tangible skills (knowledge, experience) and intangible skills (character, values and motivation).
- Given a choice between trading off knowledge/experience and intangible skills, employers will increasingly trade off knowledge and experience for intangible skills where feasible.
- We can teach “stuff”, but we can’t teach motivation.
- An employer wants an employee who performs because they want to, not because they have to.
  - “Wanting the ball” versus being an observer is ultimately a choice.
- *“The best and fastest way to learn a sport is to watch and imitate a champion.” Jean-Claude Killy (Olympic Skier)*



## Parting Thoughts

- *“Sports remain a great metaphor for life’s more difficult lessons. It was through athletics that many of us first came to understand that fear can be tamed; that on a team the whole is more than the sum of its parts; and that the ability to be heroic lies, to a surprising degree, within.” Susan Casey*
- *“In our lives we will encounter many challenges, and tomorrow we face one together. How we accept the challenge and attack the challenge head on is only about us-no one can touch that. If we win or lose on this weekend, it will not make a difference in our lives. But why we play and how we play will make a difference in our lives forever.” Beth Anders (US National Field Hockey Coach)*
- *“The best inspiration is not to outdo others, but to outdo ourselves.”  
Anonymous*

## Appendix-The “Game” As Your Legacy

- *“Love the game. Love the game for the pure joy of accomplishment. Love the game for everything it can teach you about yourself. Love the game for the feeling of belonging to a group endeavoring to do its best. Love the game for being involved in a team whose members can't wait to see you do your best. Love the game for the challenge of working harder than you ever have at something and then harder than that. Love the game because it takes all team members to give it life. Love the game because at its best, the game tradition will include your contributions. Love the game because you belong to a long line of fine athletes who have loved it. It is now your legacy. Love the game so much that you will pass on your love of the game to another athlete who has seen your dedication, your work, your challenges, your triumphs...and then that athlete will, because of you, love the game.” Anonymous*