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From: Raise the Bar [rtb@raisethebar.co.uk]
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inspiring success beyond expectations

Focus on your strengths & start feeling good again

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It's that time of year again when we receive a performance rating, a review of our contribution in the previous 12 months. Is it just me or are you noticing that the bar on performance has just risen again? As performance expectations increase it is essential that you can raise the bar on your personal performance and scoop the performance rating you deserve. We want to help you to do this by sharing with you some key lessons from the world of sport which you will be able to pick up and apply to your role.

Control the Controllable

As the pressure to perform increases so does the likelihood of failure. Pressurised situations can make individuals lose their head. The ability to keep things in perspective is essential. In situations like this, it often occurs that the environment controls the individual, rather than the individual impacting on the environment. In sport, the saying goes 'control the controllable'.

This approach was really brought to life by the case of Steven Bradbury, Australian speed skater. Steven secured a place in the finals in Salt Lake City as a result of the disqualification of Marc Gagnon. In the semi-final, Bradbury was in last place, well off the pace of the medal favourites. He again qualified for a place in the finals due to the downfall of his fellow competitors. He took control of his performance by recognising that he couldn't control the outcome of the race, instead he focussed on his training, his experience, his mindset and his race.



Click here to watch his performance:
<http://uk.youtube.com/watch?v=lfQMJtiIOGg>

In an interview after winning his gold, he said:
"Obviously I wasn't the fastest skater. I don't think I'll take the medal as the minute-and-a-half of the race I actually won. I'll take it as the last decade of the hard slog I put in."

another skater's blade slice through his leg after a collision and lost four litres of blood. In 2000, he broke his neck in a training accident, and spent the next six weeks in a halo brace.

So how does this apply to us?

Whenever you face a pressurised situation, ask yourself the question, what are the things that you can control? It is important to appreciate at least two things. Firstly, you can control your performance and secondly that you cannot control the outcome. Of course you may perform to the best of your ability and certain circumstances such as luck may get in the way of your desired outcome, but at least you will know that you gave it your best shot.

A famous Ed Moses quotation says it all "ain't no use worrying about things beyond your control 'cos if they are beyond your control ain't no use worrying".

Take a blank piece of paper and list of all the things that have an impact on your end result. Now go through and cross out all of the things that are outside of your control. You have a list now of all of the things that you can be directly accountable for. Rate yourself on a scale of 1:10 for each given controllable and do everything in your power to increase the score so that it is as close to 10 as possible. This will give you the best chance of delivering a world class performance. It really is just a case of getting back to basics.



Strengths versus Weakness Paradox

If you want to gain the greatest increments in performance, be it as a human being or in your business role, you must play to your strengths 90% of the time, whilst focussing on your weaknesses only 10% of the time. Your strengths are the things which make you who you are. These are signatory symbols of you. Be world class at your strengths, whilst recognising your weaknesses.

Many sporting greats adopt this approach – Firstly, David Beckham, regarded by many, as one of the greatest footballers of his time, yet on closer inspection a player with many key weaknesses. He is a player with a gift to be able to place the ball wherever it needs to be, be it in the back of the net following one of his infamous free kicks, or passing to another player to line up a shot at goal.

Click on the link to see this in action and learn how to bend it like Beckham or commentate like an American on Soccer!

<http://uk.youtube.com/watch?v=0N6G8XlyCMM>

On the other hand, it is also said that he is a player that lacks pace on the pitch and is not renowned for his tackling ability. David focussed on his strengths, the things that set him apart from others 90% of the time. It is for this reason he is remembered as a great footballer: How different would his reputation have been if he had focussed on the things he couldn't do so well?

Another good example is the case of Usain 'lightening' Bolt – the current holder of both the World and Olympic record for 100 metres (9.69 seconds) and 200 metres (19.30 seconds). In the world of sprinting it is normal for the athlete to focus on strides per second, this coupled with their stride length is referred to as their cadence. Usain did not have a high number of strides per second and so could have focussed on this as a weakness in his performance. Instead he focussed on his incredible stride length – estimated to be around 2.13 metres or 7 feet. In the 100 metres event his competitors took 44 strides whilst Usain took just 41.

Jonathan who is widely regarded as the best triple jumper of all time did not fit the bill of your typical triple jumper. The typical triple jumper would have been strong and muscle bound, built for power, a notable weakness for the tall and slim Jonathan. He focussed on his key strength of speed, believing that his reaction time off the ground would make the difference to his end performance. He was right, he still holds the world record after his amazing hop, skip and a jump covered 18.29 metres or 60 feet.

How does this apply to you? Are you spending time and energy focussing on the things you could do better or are you, like the sporting elite, making the most of your strengths?

Start today, one of the first things to do is to get a timely reminder from the people you respect as to things that they see as your strengths in the workplace. Ask a cross section, telling them to only focus on the things you do well. Be sure to get them to provide examples of when they have seen the strength in action and capture the feedback on paper so that you can refer to it whenever you need an extra boost of confidence. Play to your strengths and your performance will move from good to great.

Raise the Bar are part of your team. For further advice or guidance on how to raise the bar on performance contact us on +44 (0)151 426 0110 or email us at info@raisethebar.co.uk

Additionally, if there are any subjects you would like us to feature in future ezines then please let us know.

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