

Welcome to the Journal of Excellence

Journal of Excellence

The Journal of Excellence
is devoted to nurturing
excellence in
all human endeavors
and all worthy pursuits.



Issue No. 3

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Mission of the Journal of Excellence

Terry Orlick - University of Ottawa

My mission in initiating the birth of The Journal of Excellence was to fill some important gaps in our literature and in our lives that are essential to the pursuit of excellence. The Journal of Excellence is devoted to nurturing excellence in all human endeavors and all worthy pursuits. It is centered on the pursuit of excellence in the working or performing parts of our lives, as well as the non-working parts of our lives. Our aim is to inspire excellence, to present a forum to discuss the positive pursuit of excellence and to provide practical strategies and perspectives for pursuing high-level goals.

The Journal of Excellence is the communication vehicle for the International Society for Mental Training and Excellence (ISMTE), a not for profit organization with the vision of education and training for better people, better performers and a better world.

There is much discussion about the quest for, and value of excellence, for example in education, sport, health, the performing arts, parenting, teaching, coaching, leadership, health care, business and the workplace. There is also much talk about the importance of quality living, quality relationships and the development of a higher level of humanity. This is the first journal, which has **EXCELLENCE** as its sole focus. Providing people with the insights and strategies to be successful in their pursuit of performance excellence and excellence in living is the ultimate mission of the Journal of Excellence.

My vision is a journal that is applied in orientation, relevant in content and wide ranging in application. We are committed to:

- 1) Learning from and sharing the experiences of great performers and great people.
- 2) Developing a more thorough understanding of the mental links to excellence.
- 3) Promoting excellence in performance and excellence in living.
- 4) Initiating positive real world change.

If you have applied research or meaningful insights that are relevant to the pursuit of excellence in any worthy human endeavor, for any age group, we encourage you to submit your material to the Journal of Excellence to be considered for publication.

Introduction to Issue No. 3

In this issue, Tribble and Newburg discuss their latest focus - looking from the surgeon's vantage point at the individual facing surgery, not as a "patient" but as a person with dreams that provide a context for living. They, and the other authors addressing this theme, speak of the need to connect and reconnect with the reasons behind **why** we do things, whether they are challenges that we choose (like skiing solo to the South Pole or sustaining a long-term commitment to excellence in a sporting domain) or challenges we do not willingly choose (like surgery). There are aspects of our lives - goals, dreams or daily joys - that are meaningful and worth living for. Towaij and Orlick in their article on balance in work and nonwork highlight some of those sustaining factors.

Challenges are not overcome, and dreams are not achieved without strategies that help make the dream a reality. Bradbury explores an area of coaching which every athlete is involved in to some extent: self-coaching. Based on responses of elite level athletes, she presents a number of strategies which athletes have used in the absence of formal coaching. Culver and Trudel focus on the coach-athlete interaction with an in-depth look at the communication process as a competitive season unfolds. Their research highlights the influence that others can have on nurturing one's belief, confidence and enjoyment in high level pursuits.

Louise Zitzelsberger, PhD.
Editor

Reflections

Patients as Performers

Curt **Tribble** MD, University of Virginia, Doug **Newburg**, University of Virginia and Jeff **Rouse**, Olympic Champion.

Curt Tribble is a world leader and educator in cardio and thoracic surgery. Doug Newburg is a former basketball player with a PhD in Sport Psychology who applies his skills in working with medical students. Jeff Rouse is a former Olympic gold medallist in swimming. Curt Tribble and Doug Newburg can be contacted through the University of Virginia School of Medicine, Charlottesville, VA USA Email: ctribble@virginia.edu

Abstract

The following article is based on a presentation given by Curt Tribble, Doug Newburg and Jeff Rouse at the 1999 World Congress on Mental Training and Excellence held in Salt Lake City, Utah. They present some very interesting insights on how strategies for performance excellence can be applied to patients who want to make the best of their recovery and their lives. They also serve as a model for how collaboration of people with vastly different backgrounds and different strengths can lead to some significant improvements in performance and life quality.

Tribble: I want to start out by telling you a little bit about the collaboration Doug Newburg and I have had for the past ten years. It's a pretty unusual one. Doug is a sport psychologist by training and I'm a heart surgeon. That would seem like a fairly unlikely pair to hook up for much of anything. What happened is that when I first joined the faculty at the University of Virginia 13 years ago I was asked to take over the educational tours of the department. So in addition to surgery, we also teach. We teach a lot of different types of people. We teach students who are going to be family doctors; we also teach surgical residents - people who are going to do operations. And by the time some of them finish working with us they are 35, 38, 40 years old. So they are pretty far along in a very extensive training process.

When I was asked to take over this pro-

gram I knew a fair amount about surgery myself but I didn't really know much about teaching. And so what I did was, realizing to some degree that there was a deficit there, I went over to our school of education to talk to the people who ran the sport psychology group there. I thought there would be some overlap between what the sport psychologists were learning and teaching, and what we were trying to teach in surgery. To simplify it in a way I said that surgery is perhaps the ultimate athletic event. At that time Doug was a student in the program and he came over, or was sent over - I think against his wishes - to watch us operate at five o'clock in the morning and hook up with our residents and students. Five o'clock wasn't Doug's usual time frame, but he put up with it! Eventually when Doug finished his PhD work about 8 years ago or 9 years ago, we hired him in our department as a full time faculty member. He is the only

member of our department who is not a physician. So it's a fairly unusual situation even now; throughout the country there are not many departments that have teachers like Doug in their group.

What Doug has done, both through his PhD work and since that time, is to continue the research he began as a student, not just with our residents and students and surgeons, but also with many other people outside of our realm - the two realms we are most familiar with - which would be surgery and athletics. And in fact, one of our basic premises was that we thought that the processes that people use to perform, the way people learn to get better, the way people deal with

Newburg: I really wanted to look at performance on a broad base - I didn't think it was just something that you studied in sport or business, you could look across fundamental performance and take it into whatever you do. *What we're going to talk about today is 'patient as performer'.* A lot of what we're talking about for the patient is that their life is kind of humming along and everything's going all right, and then all of a sudden something unexpected happens. And in the world of athletics, in lots of different arenas, things like that happen to people. But specifically for patients, for people that Curt deals with, it obviously gets their attention.

Going back to my own history, what sort of got me into what I do. I played basketball for the University of Virginia from 1979 - 83 and during that time we won more games than any other team in NCAA history. We didn't really win any championships, and I didn't play a lot. First of all, let me give you

stress and failure and preparing for things that were going to happen, were universal - an issue I don't have to sell any of you on. But to some degree we've had to sell some people in our department and perhaps in his own school of education on it. Doug has interviewed literally hundreds of people that are from all walks of life, for example, musicians and business people; he spent time on an air craft carrier talking to people about how they talk their pilots down from flying their jet planes onto the decks of air craft carriers... And during that time Doug has developed sort of a distillation of knowledge that he calls the process of performance. I'd like him to explain some of that to you.

permission to laugh as I tell you this story. Sometimes people think I'm trying to solicit pity but I'm not. I'm far enough removed from the events that I think it's pretty funny. But it really sets up what we're going to talk about today. A lot of what I'm talking about is based on having a dream. And what I mean by that is not winning a championship, or making a lot of money or whatever, but it's how you want to feel about yourself, how you want to live everyday. So when we talk about a dream that's what I'm talking about.

When I left high school and went to the University of Virginia I went thinking I was going to play a lot, and not be an all American or anything, but at least have a productive career. What ended up happening is that my sophomore year I blew out my knee and never really played much again. And I don't know how many of you have seen American basketball but in college basketball when one team gets a big lead over another there's one guy sitting at the end of the

bench and the crowd starts chanting his name to try and get him into the game. Well in Virginia that was what my role was. In my senior year every time we got any kind of lead, and we won a lot of games by twenty points, the crowd would start chanting my name. I'd get in the game, I'd touch the basketball, and even if I was ninety feet away from the basket they'd be yelling for me to shoot. So one year we were playing Duke at Virginia and we were up by about twenty points and you could hear the crowd start chanting my name with about ten minutes to go. I heard a woman sitting behind the bench turn to her husband and say, "Let's start chanting to get Newburg in the game". So I turned and smiled at her. And I saw her husband look up at the scoreboard look back at her and say, "No, we don't have a big enough lead yet". But I got in the game, we won anyway, and the next day I go to the 7-11 store and pick up the Washington Post, a big newspaper in the Washington area. The big headline said, "Virginia Trounces Duke by Twenty" and the very first line in the article said, "*You knew victory was at hand when Virginia coach Derek Hollins put in the human victory cigar, Doug Newburg*".

Anyway, the reason that I tell you that story is because three years after that happened I went to the offices of the Washington Post and I ran into the guy who wrote the article. I saw him across the room, and he saw me and came running over to me and said, "Doug, I owe you an apology". I didn't say anything, I just listened to him. He said, "I didn't understand that the guys that sat on the bench had the same dream as the guys who were on the floor. I thought it was enough just to be part of the team, I didn't understand that the dream was not

about what you win or what you get. It's about being part of the action, it's about playing. And I didn't understand that until I went to Indiana University and wrote a book about Bobby Knight and spent a lot of time with the guys on the end of the bench".

That one event really got me thinking about the question: how do people really get what they think they want? For me obviously my dream when I signed my letter of intent to play basketball was not to be coach Hollins' human victory cigar. That really wasn't what I was thinking. But that's where I ended up.

Well, a lot of what we're going to talk about today relative to patients is sort of the same story. They are humming along in life, things are going pretty well - a lot of Curt's patients are older, some of them are kids, you'll see some of the kids that he's worked on - but they're never really prepared to walk through the door of Curt's office. That's something usually unexpected. So the way we talk about it, and the way Curt is going to go at it in a little bit is thinking about just having a dream as a life dream. Again not something that occurs to you, but how you actually want to feel everyday. What we teach is how to get people to take control of that themselves. The nice thing about being human is that we get to define our own ideas. You have ideas internally that you then express externally. Eventually for some people those ideas will become a dream. And what I mean by that is that the idea that they had actually made them feel a certain way and typically we're talking about engaged, fulfilled, that type of thing. So they commit to that feeling and say "I'm going to do everything that I can to make that happen". It's not

having a dream such as a gold medal. It's saying, "I want to feel this way and how do I project that?"

I'm actually not a big believer in models but as I went and talked to different people they all said the same things. There was this circular motion to their lives that they've made happen. It wasn't that it happened by accident. Sometimes they did it naturally, but they all did it very aggressively; they all did it with a sense of purpose. And the purpose was to be themselves. And so whether it's a musician, a surgeon, an athlete, a business person...it's bringing themselves to what they do. And when that happens they engage in what they're doing and they just love it.

The main reason I came up with a model was that I was a fairly unsuccessful basketball player at college. I was with a really good team - we didn't win a lot of championships but we won more games than any other team in NCAA history - but I didn't play a lot and it wasn't any fun. Because I wasn't getting to live my dream. As a basketball player you don't want to practice basketball everyday, you want to play. And you're willing to practice so that you'll get the chance in a game to play. But as a guy who sits on the bench, all you do is practice. And what I realized in talking to people, as I started to do all the research that I did, is that I saw a lot of people go through life practicing. And what the dream is about is you want to play. You want to be engaged. You want to be part of the action. And when I see people, for example, Jeff Rouse, a lot of his stuff happened by accident. He would say, "I wouldn't know if I made the race happen, or if I just happened to be doing

the right thing totally by accident. I wanted to get where I knew that I could make certain things in my life happen that would make me resonate. I know a lot of people who do achieve what they want, who feel the way they want on a daily basis and so I just said, "Well, I'm going to go find out how they do it".

EASY SPEED

Rouse: When I started swimming it was basically just for fun, for something to do, and I liked it enough and was good enough at it that I wanted to do it more and more. When I was six and seven years old I may have been winning races, and that was great and everything, but the reason, and I see most kids start swimming this way, is just to try to get better. When I first started swimming I couldn't make a length of the pool. So my first goal in swimming was just to get to the end of the pool. I think when I was a kid and growing up and getting older, I would look back on races and my best races were the races where I felt the right way and I would say to myself, "That felt really good. I want to feel like that again". Or after a bad race I didn't have easy speed, I didn't feel the right way, I said, "I don't want to feel that again". So I made observations about what I wanted to do, and how I wanted to try and feel again, and that turned into '*easy speed*'. Which is kind of like a harmony with the water, a ballet. And I could swim fast. Basically, I could swim almost top speed with like 80% effort and that's what I trained for. And even now as I sit here, I haven't swum in almost two years, I can feel what that feels like. And when I was good it was because that was what I focused on, rather than winning, or breaking a time or beating somebody. I was a favourite

going into the '92 Olympics.

People started telling me seven years before the '92 Olympics, "Jeff, in order to be successful you have to win an Olympic gold medal. That's the only thing that matters. That's how you're going to have a legacy in the sport. That's how you're going to be remembered. That's how you're going to be successful. World records don't matter. World championships don't matter. Gold medals matter". And through all that I began to believe them. And I started to think, "You know what? The gold medal *is* what I want to do. That's what I want the Olympics to do. I want to win the gold medal and break a world record. And that's it".

The '92 race I lost was absolutely devastating to me; I couldn't understand what had happened. I just remember sitting in the pool and asking myself, "Why?"

Newburg: All of them, no matter how successful they were, hit obstacles. And what they taught me - which was fascinating - was that rather than hitting an obstacle and just going and working harder, they all said, "I had to reconnect with why I do what I do first. And that will give me the energy to do the preparation and then hit obstacles again". And what I see as the difference between real performers versus most people, most people hit an obstacle and they just work harder. They don't work smarter. They lose their energy. And eventually they're stuck between preparation and obstacles. They give up on the dream. Not because they want to, but because they lose sight of it.

Rouse: When I lost in 1992, I lost by six one-hundredths of a second. It was very,

very hard for me because I thought I had failed. I thought it was my fault that things went wrong. And deciding to perform for three more years...it probably took three of those years as a soul searching process to figure out what was important to me, and what I wanted to take into swimming. And through those years, in talking a lot with other people, and talking a lot with myself, I remembered why I started swimming. I remembered that *easy speed* was important to me, that that was more important to me than winning the race, that my family was more important than having a gold medal. And I began to take *myself* to my races. And I started to focus on the way I wanted to feel when I swam. I realized that in the past in my race preparation, in the last ten minutes before my race, I tried to get really serious. I tried to be someone else because I saw everyone else trying to be really serious and get psyched up, psych the competitors out. And that just wasn't me. So what I decided to do at the Olympics as we walked to the ready room to the blocks to swim was that I didn't want to be serious. Normally I'd walk out, I'd have my head down, I'd have my towel over my head and I'd try to be really serious. I'd want all my competitors to see me in that way. What I decided to do instead was walk out of the ready room with my head bare, with my head up, and I wanted to look for my family. I had about forty people there in the stands that were there to watch me swim. So when I walked out of the ready room I looked out on the stands trying to find them and luckily they had this huge banner with my name on it so I could pick them out of the forty thousand people that were there. And the last few minutes before the race in '96 I was totally at peace with myself and

everything around me because I took **me** into the race probably for the first time in my life. I took what was good about me, my family and myself, into that swim. And I was focused on them. And that's something I wanted to focus on, not the outcome of the race, but the way I wanted to feel... *easy speed*. And for the first time in my life I was totally at peace before a huge race. And I remember the last thing I thought before the gun went off was, "I'm going to try and imagine myself at practice".

I don't remember anything from the race. I don't remember the gun going off. I don't remember the first lap. I don't remember the turn, none of the second lap. I don't remember seeing any of my competitors.

The only part of the race that I remember was the last five metres when what happened was I came underneath the backstroke flag to signal five metres left in the race, which is about three strokes, and I remember thinking to myself that I would be finished the race.

The race happened because I made it happen and I think I can do that from here on out. I think anything I do from here on out - and I may never find a special talent like I had in swimming - but I think I can take that with me into anything that I do.

Newburg: I'm sure some of you are wondering why when you came here to learn about patients as performers that we are showing you something about an Olympic gold medal. The truth is when I work with somebody or Curt deals with a patient, to us there is no difference. They're just a body bringing themselves to what they do. The reason we wanted

to show you the video is so that you'd have an idea of the process. What we're first going to do now is we're going to walk through how we do that, how we use it with our students, or Curt with his patients.

Tribble: What I want to talk about is to continue to set the stage, and for those of you who were in Ottawa in 1995, we talked some about how we use these principles for the training of our residents, for our surgeons, and to some degree, for our students. The title of that talk was "Mental Strategies in Surgery: How We Teach Them". Last year we were lucky enough to be invited to come to Victoria for a coaching conference. We talked there about extrapolation - about the science of mental strategies in surgery, but also the art of medicine as we taught it or tried to teach it to our prodigies. And so as we have said today, what we'd like to do is talk to you a little bit about the application of some of these principles to the patient himself - the patient as a performer. And what we have found is that a lot of our patients come and they think as Lewis Grizzard did when he had his heart surgery - "They Tore my Heart Out and Stomped that Sucker Flat". And to continue to set the stage I want to show you a brief movie clip of how a lot of doctors, we think in our experience, and even I must admit perhaps even I myself, talk to patients. And we want to tell you how we think that's wrong and we want to propose a way of doing it differently. Here is a clip from the movie *Phenomenon*, which John Travolta starred in as a patient who had a brain tumour. The neurosurgeon - luckily it wasn't a heart surgeon - the neurosurgeon has come to talk to him and really doesn't understand the patient

as a person, the patient as an integral part of this process. He's talking to John Travolta as though John is a disease, a problem, an object.

I want to set the stage a little further with a quotation from a book. I bet a lot of you are familiar with this book by Larry Dossey called *Healing Words*. And let me just read a short section from it: "Best known negative mind-body event has to be voodoo." I don't know how many of you are familiar with voodoo. I come from a state here in the United States where it is practiced fairly widely. And I know some people who are practitioners of that, believe it or not.

The most dramatic examples are commonplace in current medical practice, such as the deplorable habit of physicians which is called hanging crepe. The name of this custom is derived from the custom of hanging black crepe at funerals". When a doctor hangs crepe he paints the very worst picture for the patient. If things turn out the way he predicts then the doctor is wise and is a prophet. If things turn out better, than the doctor is a hero and either way the doctor wins. The ethics of this predacious custom are questionable. Like voodoo victims, patients can live out their dire predictions, sometimes to the extent of dying.

And I think that this is a very common approach to a consultation. Basically, tell them all the worst things that can happen and leave it at that. Carl Hammerschlog who wrote *The Theft of a Spirit* is a physician who was working with the American Indians, Native Americans, out in the southwestern States or perhaps in Arizona. One of our residents who we had talked to about

this is an American Indian and he gave me this book and he said, "I hear you talking about this sort of thing, I would like you to read this book. It's been very meaningful to me". And I'd like to read a short section that Carl Hammerschlog wrote at the beginning of the book, explaining why he wrote the book.

I learned a lot at University. I got plenty of degrees, thought I knew a lot and I kept learning the things that really mattered over and over again until I knew them in my unconscious mind. I knew them in my blood and in my dreams, in that place beyond thought. I was reasonably well trained in the science of medicine. But that didn't make me a healer. It was through stories, those of my patients, my teachers, that I became a healer.

So what we want our prodigies to become are healers. And what we're trying to talk to them about is how not to be like the doctor in the movie *Phenomenon*. This is a slide showing one of my patients and I'll tell you his story but I want to tell you first about what has become for me a typical encounter with a patient.

I saw this man's films of his heart, the arteries, they were very bad. This is a fairly young guy actually, taught over at the education school at UVA. Some of you might even run into him, I think he goes cycling around here and there. The guy's name is John Bunch. He didn't teach sport psychology; he taught in some other field in the school of education. Mr. Bunch came to me, had his films in hand, and had very bad hardening of the arteries. Not just so that he needed an operation, but he had something worse which was that the

arteries were pretty diseased even beyond the worst areas, which meant that we would need to do a bypass but they would not be into good arteries. And that's sort of a bad situation for us. And I told him that, and he knew that. And in talking to my patients, what I have learned in applying these principles that we're talking about, is that if all I'm talking about is the obstacle, if all I'm talking about are what the bad things are, if all I'm talking about is the way things might turn out for the worst, I really believe that that leaves them with a negative feeling. I don't give them any energy. I don't give them any power really to overcome what they're going to face and they think like Lewis Grizzard, they think only of the mechanical, anatomical, mechanistic aspect of what we're getting ready to do. And they think literally, "You're gonna tear my heart out, stomp that sucker flat". And that is not what we do. We don't tear people's hearts out. We don't even take them out of their body, at least not to do regular heart surgery. It's a very precise, I would say fairly gentle craft. But they don't know that and to discuss what we do in the operating room is not really of much value to them.

I ask all my patients, "Why are you here? Why are you in my office?" And they say, "Well something's wrong with me, something's wrong with my heart, something that you need to fix. I want you to fix my heart." And I say, "No that's not why you're here really". To make them understand and answer the question correctly I say, "What do you want to do when you're well again? I want you to tell me, what you want to do when you're well again?" No one's asked them that question at that point. They've been to their primary doctor,

they've been to their internist, they've been to the cardiologist, they've been to the people who do the catheterization, been to a lot of doctors and many, many other health care providers and everybody's talked about what's wrong with them. And what I'm asking them is - what's right with them. "What's right about you? What do you want to do when you're well again? Cause we're going to get you well, most likely." I mean I'm not unrealistic about it, I tell them. And John Bunch knew that his odds weren't quite as good as some of our patients. But I said, "It's like the old saying that old folks have, you look at your feet and you fall. You look at the horizon and you get there." You need to have a horizon to look at. I said, "What do you like to do?" And you can't imagine some of the interesting stories that I've heard, and I'll tell you another one to go along with this one. But what John Bunch said to me was, "I want to ride my bicycle. I ride my bike to work everyday. And I want to ride my bicycle again. And when I ride my bicycle, I'll know I've recovered, I'll know I'm back there. I'll know that I am well." I said, "OK, my assignment for you is today, tonight, when you go home, tomorrow, in my office, I want you to think about that before you go to sleep tonight and I want you to think about that every night before you go to sleep and I want you to think about it in the operating room, and I want you to focus on what you want to do when you're well again". And he said, "OK", he would accept that part of the bargain. And I knew good and well that there's a balance. You have to go back and forth, back and forth. You can't focus on one positive thing like that. Of course he's going to be afraid. Of course he's going to be thinking about the operation. Of course he's

going to be thinking about what we're going to do, how he's going to feel. But he understood, and every single person I have ever had that discussion with, without fail, will be sitting in that room and they'll be hunched over like this, they don't realize. They'll be almost folded up like this, they're leaning over, their arms are crossed. But when you talk to them about what they want to live for, you can just almost see them straighten up and relax and understand what we're talking about. And understand not only that they have a new assignment, but understand that I understand them as a person. That I want to know where they want to be and I'm going to help them get there, and what we're going to do is a brief part, a brief interlude of their lives. And that luckily it's not like the early days of heart surgery when it was very heroic, a lot of people did die, I mean they had to really focus on that part, now most people do well.

Anyway, the truth was in John Bunch's case, things for him did not go well. We had a very hard time with him. I had to re-operate on him twice and it was a tough go of it and we almost lost him several times, a very unusual happening for us. But in the end we prevailed, he and I, and our team. And he did survive the operation, and he did get better. And it hadn't been long before he walked into my office. I hadn't seen him in a couple months and he said "Hey, I got something for you". He looked great. His cheeks were red, and clearly he'd been out in the sun, looking robust and he had a big poster on my desk and he said, "I did it. Here I am, riding my bike to school. I didn't just bring you a photo, I brought you a poster". It was on cardboard too. And I hung it up in my

office had this slide made of it. And you know he's not a very official looking bike rider, is he? He doesn't look like these folks who are out there in slick gear. And he doesn't even look like the racers. But he looks alive doesn't he? He looks alive. And he told me that was a big part of what helped him get through a very tough time.

I want to tell you another story about a guy named Gary Dealy. Gary is a manual labourer of some sort. I don't know exactly what kind, all I know is he's some type of construction guy. He's a fairly young guy actually and sort of had early onset of atherosclerosis disease. And he was talking about the details of the operation...he knew a little bit about mechanical things and he wanted me to talk to him on that level because that's the way he was used to people talking. And we did, we had that conversation and then I asked him, "Gary, what do you want to do when you're well again?" He said, "Well, I don't know exactly". I said, "Well, I want you to have something that you want to do. Maybe something you've dreamed of doing all your life". And once again, almost everybody has an answer for this within a few seconds, he said, "You know I have a motorcycle and my son has a motorcycle. We've been talking about taking a trip back to where my family is from, back up to the mountains of West Virginia". He said, "I want to make that trip. And I can't do it now, they won't let me ride with my heart medication". He said, "I really thought I would probably never be able to make that trip". I said, "We're going to get you there. That's going to be our goal. That's what I want you to think about, that's what I want you to dream about and when you do it, I want to see

the pictures”.

So after he was well I got a little envelope in the mail which had a couple of pictures of him and his son on their motorcycles. He did make that trip. He did go to their old home place and basically he told me that was a big part, in his mind, of helping him get through the operation. I mean we might have gotten him through it anyway, I mean I'm not saying we wouldn't. It's not like this made the difference between his living and dying. But he was able to approach it with some degree of control, some degree of control of his thoughts, control of his emotions, and understanding that we respected that in him, and thought that was a very important part of what was going to go on. He, as a patient, was a performer. He, as a patient, was a very important part of our team. So when it's going to be us in the operating room that there were things that he had to do, that we were counting on him to do, that we were depending on him to do. We wanted to help him get that focus so that he could do it.

I want to run a movie next about the story of another patient. This has no sound to it; I'll tell you a story about what it's about. This story is about a lung transplant. It's only the second one we've ever done of its type at the University of Virginia; it's only the forty-seventh one done in the United States ever. We took two lobes, parts of lungs, out of two men and put them into a little girl who was dying because her lungs were failing. And there are a lot of stories in this, including the stories of the donors who must be the ultimate heroes - they're not even relatives of this girl. They just volunteered to give part of

their lungs to this little girl to help her survive, two different people. We've done one other operation like this ourselves. It's the only operation I've ever been involved in where you could actually kill three people with one operation. Anyway the story I want to tell you is the story of this little girl whose name is Christina Gordan and her mother. As you can imagine with a sick little girl about seven they were cutting down the lobes because the lobes we took out were too big. We measured it and saw they weren't going to fit in this little girl so we had to cut them down even further. When Christina and her mom came to us, they were sort of like almost a unit, almost one patient, as you can imagine. This little girl had congenital heart disease. Not only did we have to fix and transplant the lungs, we had to fix the hole in her heart at the same time - a pretty complicated operation. They came to us in fear. They came to us in trepidation. They came to us in desperation to some degree. And when we talked to them we didn't talk to them about the mechanical issues, they didn't want to know that. We talked about technical issues, they wanted to know that of course. But we did not want them to dwell on that. We knew they had fear and we said, “Basically we want to address this with you...” in the way that I'm talking about today. And actually we did this operation last October which is after we were in Victoria. I remember, a lot of you who were in Victoria, Canada for the Mental Training Summit may remember, one of the Canadian Olympic rowers, Silken Laumann, told us that she had fear. Everyone asked her, “How do you have fear? How do you deal with your fear?” And what Silken said was, “I balance that with my desire. I overcome

that fear. I don't try to say I'm not afraid, I don't try to say I don't have fear, I balance that with my desire".

And so we talked to Christina and her mom, and any of you who have dealt with little kids who have things like cystic fibrosis, kids that have been in the medical realm all their lives, they are very articulate. They're very mature in the way they can talk and interact with you. And we were able to talk with her more like an older girl, not like your typical seven year old. And we got Christina and her mom thinking about basically what she wanted to do when she was well again and how she could use that to balance her fear of the operation, this huge operation. And they were even afraid, these people, Christina and her mom were even afraid for the donors. I mean part of their fear was even for other people. And rightly so. But we talked about how they could balance that fear with a dream, with the desire, with the idea that she would go on and live her life and be able to live and grow.

And in that way I think they were able to face the operation with a peace, and a calm, and a determination, and an energy even that I really don't think they would have had otherwise. And Lord knows if we're doing this kind of operation we can't leave anything, not a single detail including, or especially including, the patients' and the families' emotions about that.

Description of the slides of the operation

This is the heart beating inside here. This is the first lung, we've already put this in, this is the right lung and the left

lung is now in. I believe if our timing is any good they'll ventilate the lungs in a minute and show how the new lung is filling up. Here we go, you can see it's beginning to take air into both of the lungs, see how it's filling up there? Can you see that? It's really, really remarkable, I must say. You know even though I'm sort of in this field I really feel that when we do things like this I'm awed by it every time we're able to actually do it. And here's a picture of Christina in the hometown newspaper, probably could have taken a few more photos, get everybody in the picture smiling and happy. But she's doing well, and she's become a little kid again, and the two donors are doing fine. Anyway, you can actually imagine how they feel, they feel absolutely fantastic and part of the newspaper article is about their reaction being able to help Christina in the way that they did.

Newburg: I think one of the things that we'd like you to leave with in us talking about all this, is that a lot of this happened by accident. I'd like to say that we came up with this stuff on purpose and we started working with patients and students and all that. That's not the way it happened. You know one of the things that's sort of my job, other than watching movies and stuff Curt wants me to use in presentations, is to observe the way Curt and some of the other people in our department interact and how to help them live what they're teaching the students and the patients. And again I think that for anyone in the health or the service industry, whatever it is or however you want to describe it, I think it's really important that you live the stuff that you teach. And it's my honest opinion that you can't teach it if you don't live it, if you don't have some

understanding of how it actually plays out.

One of the things that happened in talking to Curt about putting this talk together is that this isn't just about the patient getting energy or living the dream or whatever. One of the things that I'm sort of lucky to be able to do is listen to all the stories of people like Curt who get something back from what they do. And so my job is to help figure out how to help him perfect that. Curt is one of my best friends and I think that the things that you're probably aware of in listening to him talk, is that he really cares about people. And one of the things that we do in medical school is we ask all the students when they first start surgical rotation, is we ask them to stand up in front of everybody and tell us why they want to be a doctor. Ninety percent of them say it's because they want to connect with people. First two years in medical school they don't connect with people and so they sort of forget how to do it, they forget why they came, they forget what they told us about wanting to help people. One of the things that we do with the patients, with the students, with really whoever I work with, is what we really try to do is make this a form of interaction that there's energy going both ways...if you're not getting something out of it, then you really don't have something to give away.

One of the people that I've worked with is an athlete who also happens to be one of Curt's nurses. And she started doing triathlons about a year ago actually and in the past year she's gotten to the point where she went from not doing it all to being really good, just in a year. And working 12 hour shifts at the hospital and training three, four, five hours a day.

You can imagine it would start to get to her. Well one day that Curt and I started to talk about working with the patients, she was in on that conversation and she started doing this with her patients too. One of the first things she said is when you ask them, "Why are you here? What is it that when you're better you're going to go do?" they light up. And one thing she ended up doing was taking that information, that experience, into her triathlons as a way to relax. When she would get really tense, really uptight about getting ready to compete, she'd think about how she had connected with a patient.

From our perspective, I don't care if you're working with an athlete, a business person, whatever it is, but the whole point is to actively figure out what you want to feel every day, figure out how you get it, figure out what takes it away, and figure out how to get it back. And that's the model we teach. This a quote from a book that Curt gave to me about three or four years ago. I think that it really sums up how we view working with people, and how we go about doing what we do. I'd like to read that to you.

See this is my opinion. We all start out knowing a little magic. We are born with whirlwinds, forest fires, and comets inside of us. We are born able to sing to birds and read the clouds, and see our destiny in grains of sand. But then we get the magic educated right out of our souls. We get it church'd out, spanked out, washed out and combed out. We get put on the straight and narrow and told to be responsible. Told to act our age. Told to grow up for god's sake. And you know why we were told that? Because the people doing the telling were afraid

of our youth, of our wildness. And because the magic we knew made them shamed and sad in what they'd allowed to wither in themselves. After you go so far away from it though, you can't really get it back. You can have seconds of it, just seconds of knowing and remembering. When people get weepy in movies it's because in that dark theatre the old form of magic gets touched just briefly. Then they come out into the harsh sun of logic and reason and it dries up and they are left feeling a little heart sad but not really knowing why. When a song serves a memory, when loads of dust turning in a shaft of light take your attention from the world, when you listen to a train passing on a track at night in the distance and wonder where it might be going, you've stepped beyond who you are and where you are for the briefest of instants. You've stepped into that magic realm. That's what I believe. The truth of life is that every year we get farther away from the essence of what it is. We get shouldered with burdens, some of them good, some of them not so good. Things happen to us, loved ones die, people get in wrecks

and get crippled, people lose their way for one reason or another, it's not hard to do in this world of crazy mayhem. Life itself does it's best to take that memory map away from us. You don't know what's happening until one day you feel like you've lost something and you're not quite sure what it is.

So what our job is, what Curt does with his patients, what I try to do with the people that I work with is try and protect that magic, make it an active process. When we talk to performers, it's finding out what's right about them and teaching them how to hold onto it at the absolute most dark moment. If you can imagine for Curt's patients, the things they're going through are much more difficult because they're life and death...but our experience applies to a lot of different individuals. Our message in all of this is to find out how you want to feel everyday, experience that magic that everybody has, be able to make it happen the way you want it, hold onto it during the toughest obstacles, and then get it back when you lose it.

Excelling in Speed

Gustav **Weder**, Switzerland

Gustav Weder is a former double Olympic gold medallist in bobsled. He was an outstanding bobsled pilot and developed his mental skills to a very high level during that pursuit. Gustav can be reached at Stadeliweg 29, 9404 Rorschacherberg, Switzerland
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Abstract

Gustav Weder, former bobsled pilot and double Olympic gold medallist in bobsled shares his experience and insights on what it takes to reach the highest level in the speed sport of Olympic bobsled. He presents many practical suggestions related to mental readiness and focusing that can help anyone who wants to embark on the road to performance excellence. He believes that the most difficult challenge he faced was how to continue to win after your first or second or third win. He provides some excellent insights on how to accomplish this goal.

Bobsled was my life for 15 years and I think I tried to do the things that would optimize my performance at a pretty advanced level. I will try to share some thoughts that could help some others who are on the road to excellence. First we have to define just what excellence is. The first thing is that to become great in sport is to realize there is a long, long way to go to get to the top; I will talk about my way of getting to the top. There is also a second topic that is very important. When athletes go to the Olympics, only one can win. The competitive situation there, where it really counts, is highly demanding. We prepare athletes to go there and to excel, but they can be excellent and finish 4th. I think that we have to keep that in mind: how we prepare people to perform when it counts and to keep winning in perspective. And the third point is that when you win once, that's fine; you're happy, and you've achieved what you really wanted to achieve. Then you usu-

ally want to go on, and win again. The challenge to win a second time, a third time, and so on is really much bigger than winning the first time. And so finally I would also like to share some thoughts about how to remain at the top.

Initially, becoming great in sport, was not my way of looking at things. I started out at 21 years old to become a bobsledder. I did a lot of athletic training before that. At 21 years old, many athletes' athletic careers are over, but it was then that I began bobsledding. Before that I was a track and field athlete and a gymnast. So I had 15 years of preparation before beginning bobsledding.

I was always looking at the physical side of things. I trained hard, very hard, and I became better. So I was really prepared perfectly, physically, for my first time at the Olympics in 1988 in Calgary. We had the best starting time. My brakeman was the number one brake man in Swit-

zerland. He was a huge guy, not only huge; he was very fast in sprinting too. We had been in top shape physically. We had top training results, and we were the favorites there. Yet I think I can say there we didn't perform up to our potential. We finished fourth, and we knew that was really an average performance that we had. That event made me think a lot. Up until then, from 1982 to 1988 I was always focusing on the physical things, training hard, sprinting very fast, pushing hard with the sled, driving down, trying to analyze all those physical things. But then I realized that's not enough to win when it counts. After that experience I started to go in another direction. For the next four years, from 1989 to 1992, I tried to work more mentally, to learn the mental skills necessary to be ready for the second Olympics. Because I knew that to perform at the Olympics on the highest level, and to succeed there, it's a mental game.

The year from 1988 to 1989, we came first at the World Championships in the four man bobsled by changing only a few little things. In 1990 we were at the top. We finished second in 1991 twice. We were the favorites for 1992 and that was not the best feeling; I knew that feeling from 1988 in Calgary. We were the favourites coming to Albertville and knew that the whole country was expecting us to win a gold medal. Before arriving there we had been very good in training. We had been prepared well. But imagine the first run...we are going down that first run on the track, having worked hard for ten years now from 1982 to 1992, and after the first run we came to the finish, looked at the board and saw our time and ranking. We were in ninth place after the first heat, and I

thought, "Shit!" The same shit as in Calgary - four years for nothing. But I thought that for only four or five minutes and then I became angry, and my brakeman got mad too. He pushed me and said, "Hey, c'mon, c'mon, that's only the first heat and the track here is difficult. The weather conditions can change, and we just have to keep this in perspective. It was only twenty-nine hundredths of a difference." And in these twenty-nine hundredths of a second there had been eight sleds all very close together. So we just got into our minds and said, "Ok we have to change something", but I will talk about this later.

From 1992 to 1994 it was a totally different game again. In 1992 we won the gold medal, and we knew we would have another chance to win again in two years time. Now we knew we had the mental game more or less under control and we cultivated that. However, there were so many demands that came up after winning the Olympic gold medal! Athletes who win a gold medal at the Olympics are asked to travel all over the country to fulfill the needs of others and this can cause them to lose contact with their personal needs. So we had to learn how to handle and master those demands. There was another game as well which I call the holistic game. This was the mental game of trying to figure out what all the components of performing at such a high level are, how related to each other they are, and what influences each component. What is it really?

I have certain things that I find are most important for me. And the first thing is just knowing or finding out what is important. A female skier, when asked why she was so good, said simply, "I think I did what was important, and I fo-

cused everything on what was important and I just did nothing else.” But it’s very complex, you have to always be looking a little bit ahead, a little bit in front, just trying to keep up with all the new things coming up so that you’re not left behind while some other guy is detecting the new things. Also you have to make and set priorities, and prepare for every possible scenario. You need to prepare for what could happen because performance in a high speed sport includes danger and fear. To perform on a high level you have to prepare for a lot of scenarios. Possibly no scenario that you prepared for will happen. But at least you have the chance that something you prepared will be useful in the situation you’re in. And it’s also important to watch the whole situation, constantly evaluating what is happening with the whole team. After competition it’s important to analyze what was good, what was bad, and then to focus on the good, and erase the bad. Next, it is helpful to go over the competition with the whole team, the coaches, with the mechanics, with the specialists on material and so on. This involves an intensive search to find all the limiting factors and to erase the things that did not have an effect on performance. Remember too, at the end, just knowing all this is not good enough. I mean, you can know everything in the world but you have to put it together. You have to do it. That’s the next step. It’s being in two worlds. It’s always analyzing and on the other hand it’s doing, and testing yourself. It is an analytical, intellectual approach. But to keep the motivation required over 10 or 12 or 15 years, to pursue something like that, I think that needs more, more than analyzing and trying to figure out what works. One needs heart or ambition, something that directs.

I didn’t have a dream to become an Olympian. I actually never had this dream when I was a kid. I just focused on having the perfect movement, or doing something very well. It didn’t matter if it was in track and field or if it was in gymnastics. I just tried to do it as well as I could. And if you do that, you will sometimes get a good ranking. You might find yourself somewhere in the first, second, third position, and if you do that all the time it directs you very much. So for me, it was just keeping this sequence of a dream in mind, always doing the best I could. When I was in Calgary the first time, that changed a little bit. I had this Olympic taste, you know - just being there and knowing that the rest of the world was coming there. It’s a nice atmosphere but it’s competition too. Afterwards I knew I wanted to go again. I wanted to erase the faults I had made in 1988 in Calgary. I wanted to do a good job, a real good job at the next Olympics. Then I had this dream more clearly.

You know, as an athlete you have to train hard, and I was doing a lot of weight lifting because normally I am a thin person. I grew bigger a little bit by doing a lot of weight lifting. I had to really work hard to put some weight on, by doing squats in front of the mirror. I was always seeing myself, in the summer, imagining myself at the start of Lillehammer, watching myself there, and saying, ‘I know why I’m doing these things and I’m doing two times more than anyone else’, or ‘I’m doing two more than I did yesterday’. I could only do that, I think, with these pictures in mind - feeding myself with what I wanted to do. Feeding the unconscious, telling myself why I am suffering so hard doing squats in front of the mirror

and trying to bring that drive into my performance. This leads to a very strong identification with what you're doing, always working with these images in mind. This also enhances your belief in all the opportunities for yourself and the coaches. You are self-directed. You are going for it and you are not accepting any limits, you are just doing it. As a result the commitment level becomes very high. I mean you can analyze and have a great ambition, but then you have to implement something, you have to do something.

That means you have to have a long-term plan. All people who train seriously know about periodization in physical training; I use periodization not only physically, but also mentally. We try to do a lot of loading physically. In the valleys between the physical peaks, I use a lot of mental techniques, especially relaxation, self-hypnosis, just to recover more quickly from the high loading. The loading goes on for two weeks, and then there is nearly a one week break. Watching videos, doing deep relaxation, doing self-hypnosis, just to recover your body more quickly, to be ready for the next time when you go for an increased loading. So that's the beginning of the training in summer, in April and May, and closer to the Olympics or a major competition, the physical loading goes down a lot. In the seasons where there are lots of competitions, there is nearly no loading physically, but what there is is of very high quality. If you do something, you do it fully, plus there is a lot of mental training every day. The mental loading goes up, especially before major competitions, where a lot of mental training is necessary. A good plan is not enough, as you know, you have to do it in daily work. You have to

train, you have to bring it into your body, and you have to bring it into a team. I believe that it is training that really brings you to where you want to go.

Our team was very successful between the years 1989 and 1992; every year we won at least one or two medals at the World Championships. It's not easy to keep motivated to begin serious training again in April when you have just won a gold medal in February. But you know if you don't do it, your competitors will because they saw the standards you set in February. You will be copied over and over. All the race videotapes are available to the competitors. They will copy your team, your movements, your behavior, and they will be there one year later, a copy of you. If you are the same as you have been the year before, you are also on the same level as these competitors. So you have to advance every year a little bit, not too much, but a little bit so that it's enough to remain at the top. So one needs to believe in constant training, in the willingness to progress, even if you're successful. This requires tremendous focus. It requires all the methodological training I mentioned before on this plan. This means living the plan or living this dream.

So this is an overview of all the things we did over the years. The learning process from 1991 to 1994 centers in on the special issue that I want to address now: performing when it really counts. We know a lot about performing when it counts from the literature, from the experiences of all these excellent competitors and performers. There are a lot of routines, daily routines, especially on the day when you prepare for your competition and a lot of visualization,

focusing training, thought control that trains us to perform when it counts. Because a speed sport like bobsledding is so dangerous, I think visualization is very important. The short term plan, one or two weeks before an event, or a one day plan before an event is also very important in order to have an inner vision that's as clear as possible. I tried not only to visually see but also experience each situation, the feelings, the visual insights, in order to combine it into an inner world that is close to or nearly the same as what I wanted to experience in the future. That experience is actually being somewhere in the future, just in your head. I prepared for a one minute race that is dangerous and very fast. It is very helpful to prepare that in your head as perfectly as you can because when you're driving very fast you have no time to react to something. You see something, it's gone, poof...no chance to act. You see something, make a little mistake, and poof, it's gone. So you have to be able to act freely. You have to know what you want to do and by visualizing, or just pre-experiencing every situation that you can possibly experience beforehand helps you to compete when it counts. And that means to perfect this inner tape and to live it again and again and again. There have been situations in the years before 1990 when I did that so intensely that I couldn't shut off this tape. That was a bad experience. In the evening before the World Championships in Switzerland in St. Moritz, I practiced my visualization of the track so intensely, that I could not sleep because of it until 3 o'clock in the morning. And this mental tape had a dramatic effect on my health because I lost 5 kilograms in bodyweight and was just totally wasted. These mental runs had been so perfect,

these runs had been so intense, but no mistake, I was totally wasted. I had to control this later. I learned to shut it out, to reduce the intensity and use it in an appropriate way. And what this leads to is becoming one with what you do, just becoming one with the track, one with the line. That way there is nothing unfamiliar when you come to the track; it's just there and you don't think about it. You go in and it's there in your head anyway.

We are trying to prepare for the future, like Chris Hatfield the astronaut talks about - needing to train over and over and over again for one and a half years in order to go up in space for a week. And training for any possible situation allows you to at least be sure that you have one solution for every situation. Not the perfect one perhaps, but a good one. That is only possible if you do a lot of preparation for different scenarios. So that was important for me, one or two days before, having this inner tape perfectly ready. Then half a day before or in the morning before competition, it was really important for me just to be totally relaxed, like a slow moving snake. At the beginning of my career or when I started to do that, my coaches and teammates were a little bit negative or were surprised that I was so relaxed sometimes. They thought, "He can't be good today". But the opposite happened. I was slow moving the whole day in order to save energy for when it really counts. And when it comes to the point one second before going, it is turning on, only for one minute, and it is turning on at the finish. So it's being really relaxed and doing only what is necessary. It's being lazy trying to save energy because you did all you could do beforehand, in the summer, in the prepa-

ration, in your preparing of the inner tape. That was important for me, I think, just to be very relaxed.

When I was going for that feeling, when I was trying to feel the ice, be part of the sled, be part of the track, that was only possible when I had fun driving. When I walked up the track very slowly in the morning before the competition, I couldn't talk to anyone. I just had to feel the ice. I had to make contact with the ice. I had to be the ice. I had to be the sled. I would just try to get the feel for what was appropriate for that day, because every day is different. But it also had to be fun. The same description had been made by Vreni Schnieder. She has won three Olympic Golds: two Golds in Calgary and one gold in 1994 in Lillehammer; two in slalom and one in giant slalom. And she said in Lillehammer that she had stood at the top of the hill before the second heat and had to go out in the woods, had to take the snow, had to say to herself, "Hey, I'm going skiing today, I want to have fun". And she said, "I was there at the start imagining my home track, that I'm home in Switzerland and I'm doing what I've always done". And she just took off all the brakes. No more brakes – 'just go for it, and have fun because it's there'. She told herself she could do it, but not vigorously - just let it happen, it's fun. And that means to synchronize with nature.

Purmin Zurbriggen, the downhill skier was the same type of athlete. When I asked him, "Tell me, what was the most important thing that you have to have before the race?" He said, "You know in downhill skiing, there's always fear combined with fun. What I had to do was go find some deep snow, and to go

down like hell and then go up to the start and just do it". So being synchronized with nature is one thing that is important for athletes to do just shortly before they race, to remind themselves of that feeling of what they really can do, because that's what they expect of themselves - being one with the snow, being one with the track. And that takes a lot of trust, a lot of trust in yourself, in the your preparation.

It also means clearing your mind of all things that do not matter too much. Things like political things in sport organization, like sponsorships, you have to let go, and be really relaxed and clear. For me concentration or focussing is not something vigorous. It's the opposite. It's being relaxed so things happen automatically, being calm enough that your mind is able to be highly focussed. So then it's there without trying or saying, 'Hey I have to be concentrating'. That's not possible, was not possible for me. Controlling your emotional level is critical in a speed sport that involves technical skill, that takes highly skilled movements. If the emotions are too high, and you're too attached to what is going on, it's a total different perception to when you are totally relaxed and that makes it sometimes difficult. So the emotional level always has to be the same - the same level in training as in competition. And having the appropriate emotional arousal level is probably one of the most challenging things for athletes in disciplines like this or shooting or downhill skiing.

What I always did was to only trust in my own rituals. For me it was just being relaxed and aware, doing only what was necessary, nothing else, trusting in the here and now, just only that moment

counts. It was remaining flexible. What impressed me was what Purmin Zurbriggen told me when I asked him to tell me about his preparation for going down. The downhill skiers do not seem to have as an intense inner tape that I tried to develop for the track. The downhill skiers have to stay flexible. He said, “You know, I just prepare a few points where I have to go through, the most important points of the track down. But when there was a straightaway you see the tracks from the previous skiers shining in the sun. He said, “You know, you just take one, and you feel it’s fast so you stay there. If you feel it’s not fast, you just immediately change to another track, not going for a totally fixed plan, but staying a little bit flexible”. He was at such a high level that he just could do that. He just selected the lines by his feeling, just knowing which felt good and fast, and staying there.

In my sport it’s important to let the mistakes you made in the past go. That sounds very easy when we talk about it. But it is essential in a speed sport. If you have one thought about a mistake, 50 meters are past, and you lose concentration because you are hanging in the past. It is important to shut out the past and try to be aware of only the near future. Be in the present and a little in the future. Another athlete created the expression, “Harmony with perfection.” This means just trying to be in harmony with everything and letting it happen. As I mentioned before, not concentrating as hard as you can, not trying to push, just allowing it to happen.

I have one more point about remaining at the top. If you have won once, like in 1992 at the Olympics when we won the gold medal, there were suddenly so

many other demands that have nothing to do with sports that sometimes you lose perspective on everything such as what you really like to do. There are so many demands from sponsors and so on that you need to direct yourself in another direction. You have to be a manager of yourself and a very hard one. And what I think is most important is just reminding yourself of what is your real love in the sport. And there I agree totally what Terry explained to us about keeping the love, and keeping the passion, even if a lot of other additional demands are coming up from outside, from other people. And that means for me to really think about what real success and satisfaction means for me in sport.

Increased external demands - it’s just a question of managing them. If you are successful, the sponsors want to have a piece of you, and all of them want to have pieces. They don’t care about you; they care about their campaigns, because that’s what they expected and you have to give that because you’re living from the sponsorship money. And the other thing is that you become a public person overnight. Not only sponsors, but the entire public wants to have a piece of you. Then there are your fans and family - your close relationships are also focussing on your success. And your past successes can become your present identity and this creates future expectations. I mean it’s logical if you win once, you want to have the feeling again. For me, managing myself meant learning to say, ‘Hey I would like to but I can’t because of my training’, because of not wanting to waste all the energy. Recovery time is very important after a big event. And to keep in touch with reality, just remaining who you want to be. So

keep your own love. Stay what you are and balance all the needs that you have with the external demands. Decide to control only what you can control. And like with a speed sport, there are so many things happening that you have to select what is important for you and control what you can. Be yourself and stay what you are.

For me, real success and satisfaction are important issues. For me it was always to explore my potential, not necessarily going for gold medals. Then I was able to increase my confidence in my potential a little bit. The ultimate goal is always to expand these potentials and to build a philosophy of how to get there, how to make it possible to repeat successes. And that means to evaluate your successes, not failures because you have to know why you're successful, not why you failed. A lot of people evaluate failures. That's normal; that's easy. But much more time should be invested in evaluating why you have been successful. And for me that meant when things happened the way I wanted them to happen, I felt very satisfied. I identified with the goal, with the way to reach the goal. That meant being open to ongoing learning, and adapting to real new challenges.

One of the most important things is constant learning and avoiding over confi-

dence. I saw a lot of competitors win medals at the Olympics who did not win again because of this. They felt, "Hey, I'm good". They could not step back and say, "Why have I been successful?" You have to remain what you are and stay humble. Every situation is special and the next time you compete you have to not rely on your past success. That means storing all the successful feelings and creating an environment where it's possible to repeat this, but at the end to be self-responsible.

The last thing I want to mention is staying what you are, always going back to that love and passion and developing that personality. Decide to have fun - that is the only thing that is important in these situations. Follow the dream and live the sport, not only do it but live it. And by doing that you become authentic. I wanted to do bobsledding and I wanted to do it my way. That became a very important part of myself, just finding out who I really am, and what I really wanted to do. To sum up, that means that it's a really long term development; it's ongoing learning. It's becoming in part, unique, by freeing yourself to perform, and shutting out all the external demands, and loving what you do when it counts. It means developing a philosophy to get there. That's the goal.

Applications

Coach-Athlete Communication Within an Elite Alpine Ski Team

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to gain a better understanding of the communication process between coaches and athletes in their natural setting. Using semi-structured interviews, non-participant observation and journals, data were collected from six female members of a junior national ski team, aged 17 to 19 years old, and their two male coaches. The first interviews, conducted just before the beginning of the competitive season, established that both coaches and athletes believed in open, two-way communication. Subsequent observation during the competitive season revealed that despite this consensus the coaches and athletes had trouble at times interacting according to this philosophy. In an effort to deepen understanding concerning the communication process it was decided to analyze some of these communication problems, with the use of a model of communication proposed for coaching. The results indicate that many factors influence communication, some due to the context and others related to the individuals' past experiences. Specific issues regarding the effect of silence and the differences in communication between good times and bad times are discussed, as well as certain general themes such as the importance of a positive approach, enjoyment, and communication about psychological concerns. Practical suggestions for the education of coaches and implications for sport psychology consultants are presented.

Introduction

“It takes two to speak the truth... one to speak and another to hear”.

H.D.Thoreau (Nakamura, 1996, p. 103)

Defined as the “transmission and the exchange of information conveying meaning between two or more people” (Fuoss & Troppmann, 1981, p. 115-116), communication is acknowledged as a critical piece in the puzzle that is the art and science of coaching; perhaps even the most important element (Spink, 1991).

Coaches need good communication skills in order to give technical and tactical instructions, manage their teams, interact with parents and administrators, and provide psychological support to their athletes. A study of expert coaches (Bloom, 1996) found that the ability to communicate effectively was one of their distinguishing characteristics: “Learning when to communicate with players is an intangible art, a skill that separates the competent coach from the great one. It

takes years to learn to distinguish the best communication style for each player” (p. 165).

Two main approaches have been used to collect data on the coach-athlete communication process during sport events: Systematic observation and interviews. A number of studies, beginning with Tharp and Gallimore’s (1976) observation of celebrated basketball coach John Wooden, analyzed coaching behaviors and found evidence of “instructional”, and “praise” and “scold” behaviors. This approach led to the development of various systematic observation tools, such as, the ASUOI (Lacy & Darst, 1984), the CAFIAS (Cheffers & Mancini, 1989), the CBAS (Smith, Smoll, & Hunt, 1977), and more recently the COSG (Trudel, Côté, & Bernard, 1996).

In their review of studies on coaches’ behaviors, Trudel & Gilbert (1995) retrieved 111 related documents (master’s theses, doctoral theses, congress proceedings, and articles in refereed journals). Of the twenty-eight articles published in refereed journals; 16 focused on coaches’ behaviors during training, 5 looked at coaches’ behaviors during competition, and the remaining analyzed coaches’ behaviors both in training and competing contexts.

A summary of the communication during training sessions can be found in Trudel and Côté’s (1994) article. Using a story, they portrayed how an average young athlete might describe his or her interactions with the coach during a training session. They estimated that the player listened to instructions 6% of the time, was observed by the coach

11% of the session, and received feedback about 4% of the time. For competitions, such a communication pattern is more difficult to determine since coaches’ behaviors vary considerably from sport to sport. In skiing the coach is situated in one place, viewing only a section of the athlete’s run, whereas in ice hockey, for example, the coach is present for the whole game. In a study of youth ice hockey coaches, Trudel, Côté, and Bernard (1996) found that over 50% of the game time coaches were involved in “observation” without communicating, while only 11% of the time was spent on “instructional” behaviors. The researchers also found that these coaches seemed to act as a one-person show, attempting to control all the action, without listening.

The second approach used to study the communication process has been to ask coaches and athletes what makes an effective coach, through retrospective methods such as interviews and questionnaires (e.g., Côté, Salmela, Trudel, Baria, & Russell, 1995; Partington & Orlick, 1987; Salmela, 1996). Using interviews with expert basketball coaches Bloom, Schinke and Salmela (1997) traced how the coaches changed their communication styles as they developed through their coaching careers from club coaches to international elite coaches. The coaches were found to move from a more autocratic style with younger athletes to a two-way communication style with elite international athletes. Based on a combination of questionnaires and interviews of 1984 Olympians, Orlick and Partington (1986), concluded “that almost all of the athletes who performed to potential at the Olympic

Games had a very close personal bond with their coaches. They worked out programs, problems and strategies together” (p. 4).

In order for effective communication to occur, there has to be congruence between the message sent and that which is perceived by the receiver. However, Anshel (1990), and Horne and Carron (1985) reported differences between the perceptions of coaches and athletes of each other’s communication. Laker (1993) found in physical education classes that the differences might be greater with messages regarding social and affective issues as opposed to those pertaining to the technical or tactical component of sport. In addition, athletes’ perceptions of coaches’ instructions and behaviors might vary because each participant carries a different set of baggage, that is, knowledge, self-efficacy and other beliefs, into the experience. Therefore, descriptive studies on the coach-athlete communication process, according to the age and level of the athletes, will be instrumental to our understanding of this process.

In sum, the literature on the communication process in sport seems limited to the observation of coaches during training sessions or competitions and to interviews with coaches and athletes about effective coaches’ communication skills. In order to develop a better understanding of the coach-athlete communication process, studies in the natural setting that investigate both perspectives (coach and athletes) are needed.

A Model of Effective Communication

In their book on effective coaching,

Fuoss and Troppmann (1981) presented a model for effective communication (see Figure 1). Since this model will be used to analyze the coach-athlete communication process in this study, the different components of the model are presented and explained.

Communicators: sender and receiver.

Both the sender and the receiver are communicators in an effective communication process, therefore, both are involved in encoding and decoding messages. Effective communication can be hindered by different types of interference during the decoding phase. This potential interference may have internal (cognitive or emotional) or external (environmental) sources relative to the decoder (Spink, 1991). Thus due to the dyadic nature of communication, the coach’s and the athlete’s characteristics both play an important role in the process.

Message. Three important elements must be considered regarding the actual product of the encoder: The code used to represent the message, the content of the message, and the treatment of the message. For example, a ski coach treats a message in a particular way by selecting the language of communication, how technical the content will be, and what tone of delivery to use.

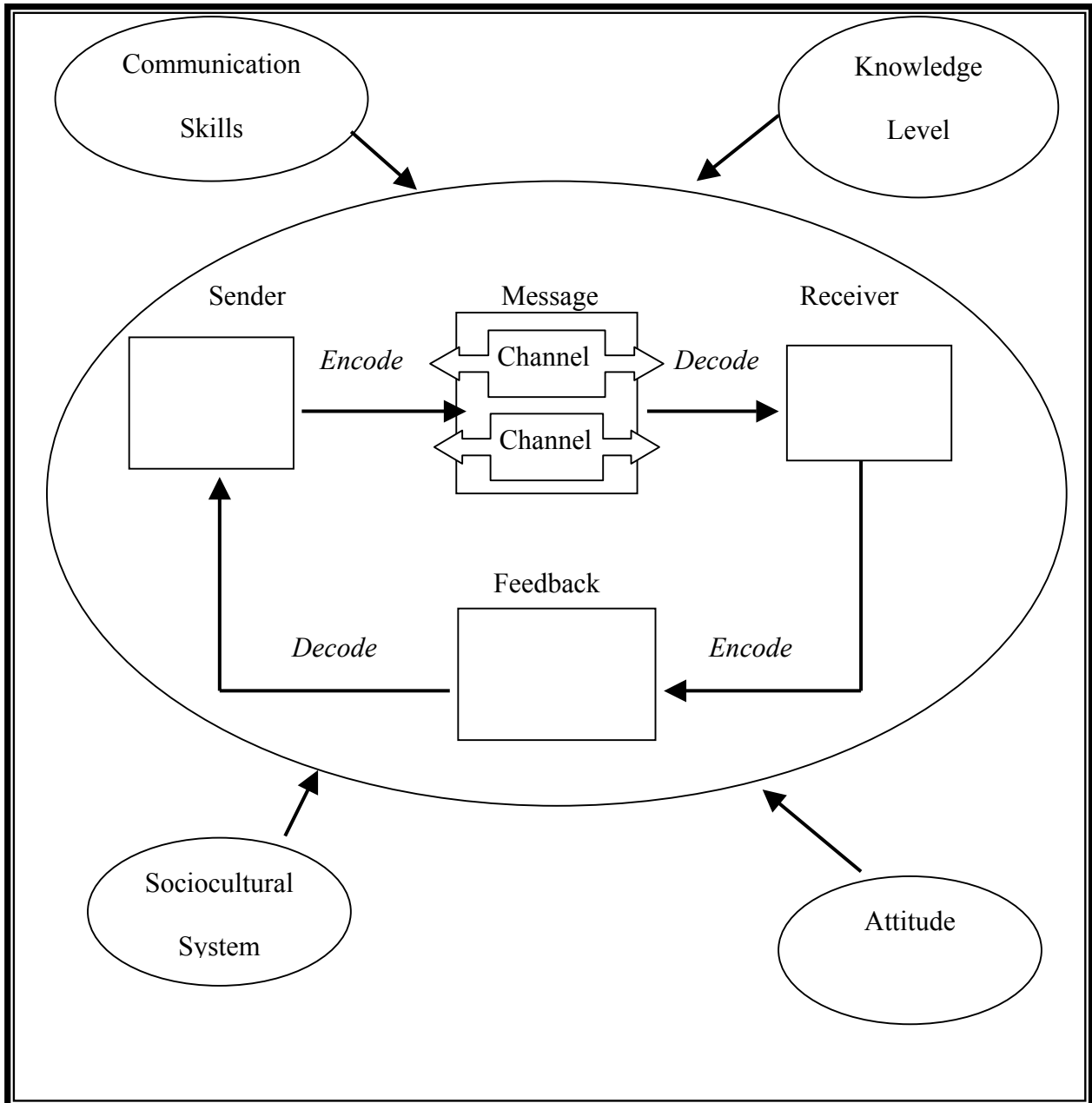
Channel. The channel used to transmit the message is the mode of encoding and decoding messages employing one or more of the five senses.

Feedback. The reaction of the receiver is the feedback, and this feedback provides the check of effective communication. An athlete that looks

blankly at a coach after the coach has corrected the athlete sends feedback to the coach. The message has not been

understood and should be delivered a second time, using another strategy.

Figure 1: Model of the Two-Way Circular Communication Process (Adapted from Fuoss & Troppmann, 1981).



There are four factors within the communicator, whether sending or receiving, which can influence effective communication: (a) communication skills; (b) knowledge level of the subject matter and the other person; (c) attitude towards oneself, the other individual in the dyad, and the subject matter; and (d) the relative positions of the communicators within the sociocultural system.

The purpose of this research was to better understand the communication process between the coaches and athletes of an elite ski team by exploring the roles played by the participants, and analyzing various communication problems. The analysis of certain issues using the Fuoss and Troppmann model offered the possibility of understanding why problems arise, and how they could be resolved.

Methods

Considering the nature of the research problem, which was the desire to study coach-athlete communication in action during the competitive season, a case study using qualitative methods was deemed appropriate. Authors such as Smith (1988), and Wilcox and Trudel (1998) have outlined the advantages of using this research design in applied sport psychology.

The Researcher

Since the researcher is the research instrument in qualitative inquiry, it is appropriate to provide some information concerning the personal experiences I bring into the research process. Traditionally this experience has been treated as bias, the effects of which were undesirable. More recently, the place of researcher subjectivity has been debated

and several authors have argued that this “experiential data” (Strauss, 1987) should not be ignored. In the field of sport psychology, Martens (1987) lamented the fact that this “tacit knowledge” has no place in the traditional scientific method. This knowledge, he concluded should be combined with evidence gathered in the field. Thus, following the advice given by Martens and the suggestion of Strauss to “Mine your experience” (1987, p. 11), I present my background not as bias but as a form of “tacit knowledge”.

My experience in this field stretches across all aspects of participation in alpine skiing, from the club to the top international level as an athlete and a coach. In addition, I have been involved in the training of coaches. As an athlete, I experienced frustration with the strategy of the national ski team, especially regarding psychological aspects. As a coach, I was frustrated by the lack of knowledge in the field and the difficulty of gaining practical coaching knowledge. Many of my frustrations were caused, I believe, by poor communication. These experiences have resulted in a desire to improve the conditions that athletes face, especially coach-athlete communication, in an effort to optimize the positive benefits from their sporting life.

Participants

As indicated previously, the coach-athlete communication pattern might differ relative to the age and the level of the athletes. For this case study it was decided to investigate the communication process in a female junior national ski team. This setting was of particular interest because the adolescent age group

seems to have been largely neglected in sport related research (Allen & Howe, 1998) and also, because in skiing, the transition to the elite level coincides with the period of adolescence. The team was composed of two coaches and six female athletes. Both coaches were about 30 years old and had experience competing in this sport. Dave (all names are pseudonyms) was the head coach, and Charles was Dave's assistant. Both coaches were bilingual (anglophone and francophone) and one had predominately worked with female athletes, while the other predominately with male athletes. The team was made up of six women, 17 to 19 years of age from across Canada, some being anglophone and others francophone.

Data Collection and Data Analysis

The data collection phases and methods for this study are outlined in Table 1. Two interviews were conducted with each participant except one athlete who withdrew from the study after one interview, due to injury. In total, 16 days were spent in the field observing training sessions and four competitions. Also, the coaches and athletes were asked to keep a journal to remind them of significant incidents in the teaching-learning process. Several of the athletes sent some of their journal entries to me via e-mail. These entries proved to be very rich and provided me with data that was alive and very much "in the moment" of the athletes' experiences.

At the last camp of the pre-competitive season the first interviews were conducted and a first period of observation took place. These data were transcribed verbatim by the researcher, and each participant was given a copy of their interview with the instructions to check if there was anything that needed to be added or changed. After the second observation period, approximately one third of the way through the competitive season, all the data from the interviews and the field notes were sorted into major themes, using the NUD.IST (QSR, 1997) software program to manage the data. These major themes, referred to as sign-posts by Kelle (1995), presented a de-contextualized overview of the major issues and problems that the coaches and athletes either had experienced or that they might experience.

The effort to understand communication as it occurs in action requires that the issues be examined within the context in which the participants are interacting. Thus the next step of the analysis was contextualizing: Understanding the data in context. Miles and Huberman (1994) recommended the use of matrices to help in the analysis of data. The sign-posting step served as a guide and the data was analyzed for interactions and information that supported these areas. The result of this analysis was a series of matrices (see Table 2) that established a specific referent, the evidence needed to clarify the interaction or issue, and the likely source of that evidence.

Table 1. Data Collection Phases and Methods.

Time Frame	Pre-competitive Season	Competitive Season		
	End of off-Season (November)	Throughout season (October to April)	1/3 into competitive season (New Year)	National Championships (late March)
Methods of Data Collection	-1 st interviews -Observation (training)	-Journals -E-mail -Telephone contact	-Observation (training and competition)	-2 nd interviews -Observation (training and competition)

Table 2. Example of a Matrix Used as an Interview Guide for the Second Interviews.

Matrix: Athlete T		
Referent	Further evidence needed	Likely source
Race feedback (Europe)	What was the outcome of the last email? Did T. talk to coach D? Ask Dave how it went in Europe with this athlete? Was he angry with T? What was the intent of his silence? Did he eventually discuss this race with her?	Ask T and ask coach D.

The matrices were used as to prepare for the second round of interviews. The final stage of the analysis involved using the model described above to help explain the process of communication as it was documented in the data. In this stage specific interactions or situations were analyzed and certain factors that may have caused problems in the communication process were put forward.

Trustworthiness

The following is an explication of the measures taken to promote trustworthiness. A pilot project with a sailing team was conducted to test methods and concepts. The sampling decision was based on the selection of a reputational case.

That is, a trusted person, knowledgeable in the elite ski world, recommended the team as one that would be suitable for such a study. Care was taken in the establishment of a good research relationship with the participants. All of transcripts were member checked, as well as the entire results by the head coach. The data collection and analysis was conducted in such a way that interpretation could be checked or clarified with the participants as the study was in progress. Finally, the researcher engaged in reflexivity and was involved in a weekly peer review process.

Results and Discussion

The Pre-competition Season

The pre-competition season is the off-season and includes summer training camps, both on-snow and dry-land for fitness, as well as one or two pre-season camps in the fall. The first interviews with the coaches and the athletes were conducted during the last pre-season camp, just before the start of the competitive season. At this point, the coaches and the athletes expressed various opinions regarding effective communication.

Coaches' perspective

Both coaches expressed a similar philosophy that viewed the coaching process as interactive. They also expected the athletes to work hard. Here is how the two coaches discussed their approach.

I guess my coaching philosophy is, it is somewhat of an interactive deal with the athletes. I really see it as a two-way deal I guess you could say. You know I need a lot of effort from them and they get a lot of effort from me... And a lot of that is sort of a lot of interactive dialogue between us... But sort of maintain that guidance as the person in charge, and when there are issues when the direction is unclear, then that's where that coach really needs to step in and say, "Okay, this is where we are and this is where we want to go, and these are the steps we need to take. Let's talk about it." (Dave, interview 1)

... that's my philosophy, don't put it too complicated. Also try to put them in a situation that they can learn, not only by telling them what to do... Dave and I, we've got the same philosophy too. (Charles, interview 1)

They also seemed to appreciate when an athlete was able to initiate the interaction.

She is really fairly honest and direct with us and I like to know when it is not working, and I kind of wish that more of the girls were like that, a little bit more blunt and honest about things... With her, we don't waste time, trying to figure each other out, we just talk and she just sort of talks like a 28-year-old, she doesn't talk like an 18-year-old. At the same time she's the kind of girl that really balances the work with the fun. (Dave, interview 1)

Athletes' perspective

The athletes, when asked what sort of approach they thought worked best for them, expressed that they liked an open, interactive relationship with their coaches. These athletes, still teenagers, also remarked on the importance of mixing fun with work.

Dave and Charles are straightforward; they make it fun. (Athlete S, interview 1)

... it has got to be a two-way thing going on... But a big part of it for me is also having a lot of fun... I like working hard and I have no problem with that, but you have got to enjoy it too. I improve usually lots when I'm having fun, even thinking less about my skiing. (Athlete R, interview 1)

With my old coach, he showed us how skiing can be fun, how I can enjoy it... I need it to be fun. (Athlete M, interview 1)

The coaches and the athletes matched on their idea of good communication. Their ideal followed the model for effective

communications: A two-way process (Fuoss & Troppmann, 1981). However, they differed somewhat concerning the context within which the communication should take place. The coaches emphasized that they wanted the athletes to work hard. The athletes expected to work hard but they emphasized that it must be fun. In addition, a look at the factors that influence the communicators in the communication process (Figure 1) raised some evidence that effective communication might at times be hindered.

Communication skills

Several comments made during ordinary conversation with coaches and athletes outside of this team, pointed to the perception that Dave was going to need good communication skills in order to be an effective coach for this team. There seemed to be a sense that the team represented a coaching challenge that was not necessarily technically based. A male athlete, met during the initial observation session, had previously been coached by Dave and he said, “Dave should be a good girl’s coach”. I told Dave this and asked him if he had any idea why that might be said. He replied that he did not really know, but that he tried to talk to the girls and make them feel heard. This represents his acknowledgement that the communication process is viewed as a priority for him with this group. (Researcher’s notes)

While the coach’s comments indicated that Athlete S might possess the necessary skills for direct communication, other comments by coaches and athletes during the interviews just prior to the competitive season suggested that some athletes might not yet have adequate communication skills. Athlete R de-

scribed herself as being shy and finding it “hard to go up and say, tell them all that’s going on” (Athlete R, interview 1) and another athlete was described as being very timid, both by herself and the coaches.

Knowledge level

Traditionally the summer camps are used to do extensive technical work. Since both coaches were new to this team, even though Charles had recently worked with three of the athletes at the provincial level, the off-season was also used as a time to develop relationships between the coaches and the athletes. In the model, this would equate to increasing each communicator’s knowledge level of the other. In discussing his approach at the end of the pre-competition season, Dave said:

... a lot of it for me is really getting to know the athletes I’m working with ... It’s really sort of a dynamic changing discussion all the time and it sort of revolves around all the aspects as far as technique and tactics, and psychology and physical preparation and stuff like that. But I find that you really need to spend time to learn your athletes and get to know who they are and what they sort of stand for, and what they want to get out of the deal, and adjust your coaching to each person I guess... (Dave, interview 1)

When, asked what point he was at in getting to know his athletes he said:

I’d say at about 50% right now, and the only reason that I’d say that is that I have figured them out pretty much to their maximum capacity in training I just haven’t seen them race. You know and racing is sort of 50% of the deal. We

can interact pretty well and tell each other exactly what we want. I just haven't had them in a racing environment yet. (Dave, interview 1)

Attitude

Dave's attitudes toward the athletes were very positive.

Athlete C knows technique pretty well. She's pretty coachable, will do what you want on the hill...

Athlete S: Technically great, just sort of another person that I have a lot of technical discussion with on how we can make her faster.

Athlete E: Really the kind of girl that you want on the team, you know, a lot of energy, a lot of positive energy. Strong physically, strong mentally, and pretty much ready to do almost anything to get on that team and perform... she's a coachable girl in that way, so we were able to make some pretty good changes. (Dave, interview 1)

All the athletes expressed positive views towards the coaches at the end of the pre-competition season. A number of the athletes mentioned that a very important feature of their coaches up to that point in the season was that they displayed a positive attitude in the feedback communication that they gave to their athletes.

I think that coaches have to be very good at communicating with their athletes, and in a positive way. I mean everybody learns in different ways, but for me I learn best when coaches are positive. I mean they don't have to be saying good things all the time, but, when they are positive, you can really talk to them ... I

think it is even more important to have a coach like Dave and Charles are great, because, they understand that you are not going to have a good day everyday. (Athlete R, interview 1)

Another athlete spoke of the effects upon her of previous coaches.

My coaches were like "What are you doing? This isn't skiing, this is garbage!" I can't be negative. I can't have people around me be negative, like coaches, I need them to believe in me. (Athlete P, interview 1)

Even though the coaches and athletes were clear on the importance of having a positive attitude, once the competitive season began, and actual interactions were observed, or recorded in journals, we saw attitudes directly affecting communication.

Sociocultural system

The sport of skiing has a relatively long history in Canada. The national championships have been contested for well over half a century. The "team" is big business, with major corporate sponsorships. But fund raising is still a major necessity, and families do not put athletes on the team without years of expenses in excess of \$10,000 per year. All these factors, along with the distinctive lifestyle of ski racing, contribute to a distinctive sub-culture. An integral part of this sociocultural system is the image that goes with being a team member. The data showed that being selected to the Junior National Team, and wearing the uniform for the first time, clearly added to the pressure experienced by many of these athletes. Here is how one junior team athlete described the situation:

And that was going really well, then as

soon as I got onto the junior team the next year, it was like everything just totally crashed, like I had, I felt like I had so much pressure on me. You get the uniform, right, it's the national team uniform, and I just was so afraid of what other people thought. You know, you're on the national team, now you have to do well, there's no excuse. I don't think I was mentally ready to be there yet. Physically I was at that level, but mentally, I think that I was far from it. (Athlete P, interview 1)

The Competitive Season

It is important to underline that this team is not atypical in the sense that there were not a lot of problems, and the problems encountered are probably of the same general nature as those encountered by many coaches and athletes during a season. Even though both the coaches and the athletes in this study believed that communication should be positive and interactive, just as recommended by numerous authors and organizations (CAC, 1989; Martens, 1997; Nakamura, 1996; Orlick, 1986), the start of the competitive season brought about a discrepancy between these perspectives and what was really happening. The problems raised herein show that during the competitive season, coaches and athletes sometimes stray from their philosophy of effective communication.

As the season progressed, events or issues that took place between the coaches and the athletes were documented and analyzed (Culver, 1999). For the purpose of this article, three specific issues, two regarding the role of silence and one pertaining to an athlete having difficulties performing, will be presented and analyzed using the model of Fuoss and

Troppmann (1981). Following that analysis, several general themes will be linked to Orlick's "Wheel of Excellence" (1996). In particular, the elite participants in this study raised belief, confidence, the importance of a positive approach, and enjoyment as being critical to effective coach-athlete communication.

Issue # 1: "Silence is not golden?"

Athlete T was feeling the pressure to perform and expressed a total lack of communication with the coach. This is an athlete described in the first interviews by both coaches and herself as being very quiet and timid, especially when it came to communicating. This entry from her journal left no doubt as to the level of her anxiety.

I skied well but was really slow because I almost stopped at the bottom because I couldn't see the next gate. Dave hasn't talked to me yet because I think he is angry. I was having trouble in the training runs the past couple days and today I did everything well and nailed the tough sections. I am in a very depressed mood after today. (Athlete T, e-mail journal)

Speaking in retrospect about the same incident this is what the coach said.

... sometimes when I get really frustrated with somebody's performance, I just I don't even know what to say, and I don't say anything, and it is probably not a great thing. I don't know... she really struggled there, and that's when we sort of hit our low in the confidence. I think she needed a lot of support there, but I was in a position where I was so frustrated and at that point I was under

incredible pressure from above. Why things weren't going well and you know it was just... A lot of stress there. Stress on me and coming from me probably. There was so much frustration that I couldn't say anything. That's something that I need to work on, is figure out a way to constructively deal with frustration like that, because I mean, I don't know how, right now. I don't know how to do it well. The way I do it is not the right way. I just haven't figured out a way to do it... But no she didn't tell me that she thought that I was angry. For sure she would have thought that I was angry because I was, I wasn't angry at her, I was frustrated at... I was angry, no I wasn't really angry I was frustrated that we couldn't get what we wanted out of that deal, and it just wasn't working. I was frustrated because of that, plus that was on a weight bar about 100 lbs. The other 400 lbs were co-ing from other places, that had nothing to do with her and it's not her fault, you know but it affected me a lot. (Dave, interview 2)

Here is what happened in this interaction (shown in Figure 2). Dave was frustrated and did not know how to communicate [1] so he decided against sending a verbal message [2]. Even though he sent no verbal message, the athlete perceived the silence as a message and decoded it as Dave being angry at her [3], which was only partially true. The coach was frustrated because of the low performance that was confounded by pressure from above [5]. Due to the athlete's low communication skills [6], she was unable to go to the coach and discuss this issue. Her confidence (self-perception), which was low to begin with, was negatively influenced [7].

Issue #2: “When silence means neglect”

Several months after the incident “Silence is not golden” the coach and two athletes were involved in a situation in which the coach's silence once again posed a problem for the athletes.

In mid-season Athletes T (from “Silence is not golden?”) and R spent two weeks training and competing alone with Dave. Then the two athletes went to some races with their provincial teams and Dave took another group of athletes to the World Juniors. The incident happened when the two athletes rejoined Dave and the other athletes. Dave had been travelling for several days and arrived at the competition tired and over-worked. With twice as many athletes as usual to look after, he was stretched to the limit in terms of time to do everything. Athletes T and R were worried because the coach was not talking to them. They thought he might have lost confidence or interest in them. They wanted to understand Dave's behavior but were unsure how to approach the problem. The athletes asked if they could discuss this concern with me and we went over the problem and their options. They decided to talk to Dave. This is how Athlete R discussed communicating with the coach. (Note: researcher's words are capitalized throughout).

I'm fine for any other mental stuff, it's just asking for stuff that I have problems with. Because I don't want to be a pain... But I think talking, whenever you have a problem, I think, it's my belief that you got to go and be really demanding and just say, “Listen, what's up?” Even if they're going to be really mad or angry after. It usually makes things better.

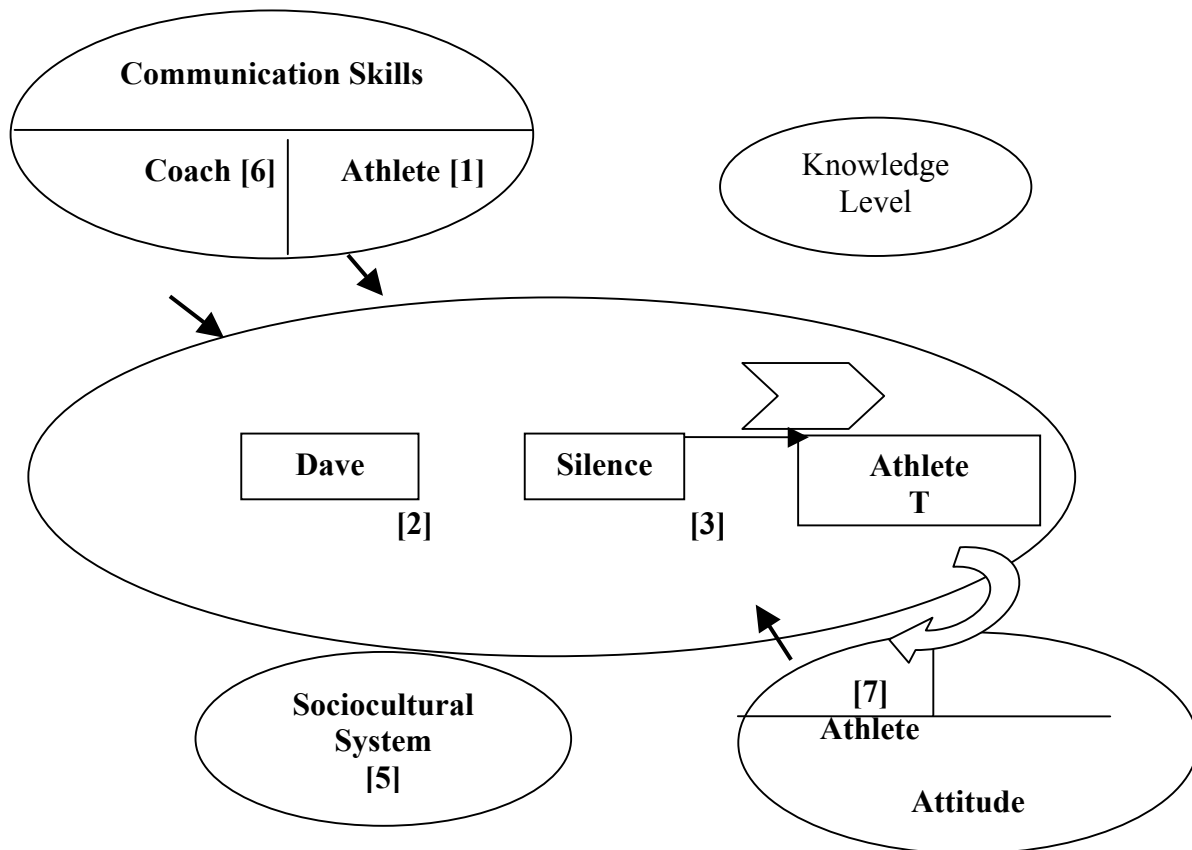


Figure 2: “Silence is not golden?”

(Note: When appropriate the chevron (➤) indicates initiator of the message.)

YOU FIND IT REALLY HARD TO DO THOUGH?

As far as something like that? Oh yeah! But if it’s something else, like skis or whatever, I have no problem. But asking for more help, or...

EMOTIONAL SUPPORT OR OTHER KINDS OF SUPPORT?

Yeah, that’s hard. I think that’s hard for everybody.

BUT IT IS PRETTY IMPORTANT?

Yeah, it is! (Athlete R, interview 2)

On this issue, Dave, the coach, said:

They were frustrated because we didn’t see each other for two weeks... You know, we are short staffed. We have 15 girls here and the first couple of days there were only Charles and myself. So there are a lot of things going on where we have to cover a lot of things, you know not just them. They didn’t really react to that very well. They thought that they were getting left out of things and not really knowing what’s going on. They felt that us not talking to them as much meant losing a lot of confidence in

them and that we didn't care any more. You know that kind of stuff, and that to me shows that their self-confidence, you know, that there's an issue there for sure. (Dave, interview 2)

In this case (Figure 3), Dave just did not have time to communicate with the athletes [1] because of the pressure put on him to take care of many athletes at the time [2]. The athletes had previously had the chance to work very closely with

Dave and had developed certain expectations of him. These high expectations were now challenged in this new context [3]. Athlete R knew that it is important to communicate but she believed that in a ski team it is all right to ask advice about technical or tactical matters but maybe not for other types of help [4]. This is why the two athletes asked the advice of a consultant (the researcher in this case) who suggested that they talk with the coaches [5].

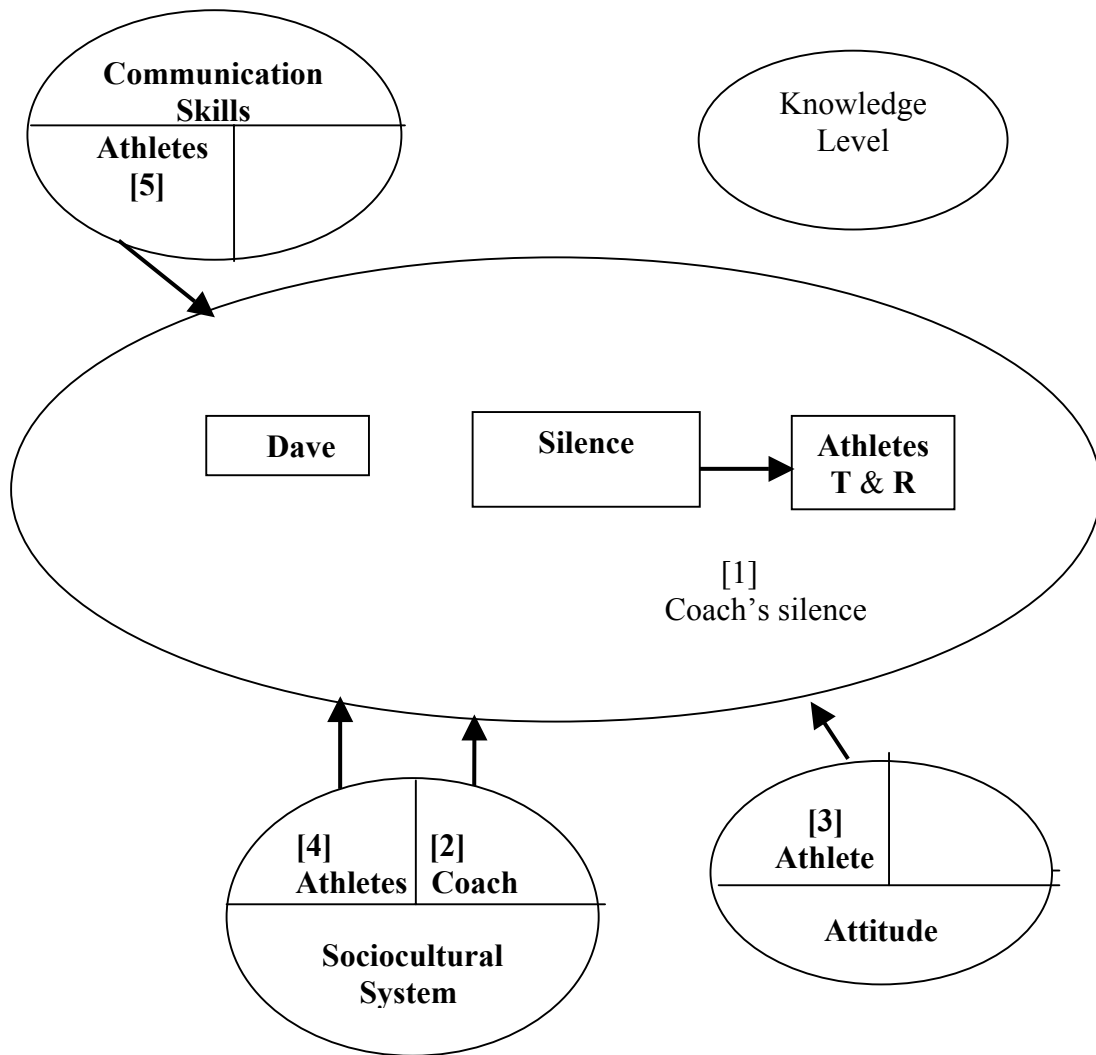


Figure 3: “When silence means neglect.”

In both of the above incidents, the coach and the athlete were unable to communicate in an effective manner. In terms of coaches' behaviors, the difference between what might be predicted according to stated perspectives and what actually occurs has been highlighted by Strong (1992). He reported that coaches, in post-season interviews, rated sportsmanship as the most important reason for youths to play football, and winning as the least important reason. This declared philosophy was almost directly the opposite of their observed coaching in actual practices and games. He concluded, "when winning became the most important reason for playing, the other purposes – learning skills, discipline, sportsmanship, and having fun – were not seriously pursued" (p. 325). Furthermore, Chaumeton and Duda (1988) found that coaches of elite teams put more weight on the importance of winning than coaches of non-elite teams. The incident "Silence is not golden" occurred at a time when the coach, Dave, was under intense pressure from the administration to obtain results. This is not an unknown phenomenon. It has been noted by Bernard (1998) that coaches are often evaluated solely on the performance of their teams, which tends to have the unfortunate effect of tainting their interactions with their athletes.

Added to Dave's frustrations were the stresses of a long competitive season, in this case from mid-November until early April with only a few days off. Dale & Weinberg, (1990) reviewed burnout in sport and described coaches as prime candidates for burnout due to the environment within which they function, which includes the normal stressors of those in the helping professions as well

as additional stressors such as high pressure to perform, and the variety of roles they are required to fulfill. Yukelson (1998) related that burnout can have an adverse affect on coaches' capacity to transmit and receive messages. The incident "When silence means neglect" is an example of the coach, Dave, being so overwhelmed by stresses that he was not even aware that his lack of communication was affecting the athletes.

Issue # 3: "What happened to the coachable athlete?"

Athlete R was weak technically when she joined the team but made incredible progress during the two summer camps. The words of Dave after the last pre-season camp were:

... she improved a lot with us that second camp, she took a lot of work, but she's a coachable girl in that way, so we were able to make some pretty good changes and then get her going in the right direction... Basically every run they do all year is on video-tape, and to watch her at the beginning of the second camp and some of the runs she had at the last camp. It is just unbelievable. You won't even recognise who she is. You know if I could have five or six Athlete Rs on the team, that would be just unbelievable. (Dave, interview 1)

When asked, during the first interview, what she thought helped her improve so much over the off-season, Athlete R said:

I think one of the main things was just believing. Like it was frustrating for a point, because I'd look ahead and see everyone skiing down and be like "Ah!

How am I going to get there?” But believing that it’s going to happen and your coaches believing in you, that he knows it’s going to happen. I found that really reassuring that it’s like, you know it’s going to come. You’ve got one part, you need another part, it’s going to come. And I kind of went, all of a sudden one day it did. Then once it does, you know, you gain confidence and get better and better. And that’s like... It is not easy to change but it is good, you need somebody who wants to change with you. (Athlete R, interview 1)

A few months later, after the start of the season, the coach, Dave, was clearly frustrated with the performance of Athlete R. The following are quotations from my field notes during a training session prior to a race series.

Athlete R seems fine but Dave is very frustrated and says that she is taking criticism very badly, is very sensitive. Dave was trying to give her technical info to help her skiing but felt that he was not getting anywhere. He said that she always has to (that’s the way he said it) work harder, have an extra run, and she said that she was working really hard. I asked Dave what his plan was with Athlete R. He said he didn’t know, he sighed. “I don’t really know what to do with her”. I decided to remind him of what he said about Athlete R in his first interview “If I could have seven Athlete R’s, I’d be really happy”. He replied “Yeah, that was during training and she was doing really well”. In fact, she [Athlete R] repeated feeling a lot of pressure to perform at the races before Christmas because she had been selected to the team. (Researcher’s notes)

This athlete said, “At first I felt a lot of pressure but that wasn’t from them, it was my own wanting to do well.” She also said that she had never gone over her goals with the coach and commented:

I think the only thing is that doing goals would have reassured me. Sometimes it’s just good to know that you are on the same wavelength (as the coach) and that you know what’s going on... and maybe that pressure I was putting on myself would have been avoided. (Athlete R, interview 2)

In this issue (see Figure 4), the coach was the initiator of on-going messages and the issue was the athlete’s performance [1]. The sociocultural system was affecting the athlete as she put pressure on herself to live up to the status of being named to the team [2]. In addition neither the coach nor the athlete appeared clear concerning appropriate goals for her [3]. The athlete’s confidence was low [4] and her emotional feedback [5] added to the coach’s frustration concerning her performance, changing his attitude toward her [6].

This athlete, similar to Athlete P cited above, expressed that she felt a pressure to perform and live up to her selection to the junior national team. This issue, “What happened to the coachable athlete?”, demonstrated a deterioration of effective coach-athlete communication that was affected by external pressure on the coach and pressure to perform on the athlete. The result was a loss of confidence and belief for both the coach and the athlete. The athlete in this incident was very clear that believing in herself and feeling that the coaches believed in her helped her perform well

and enhanced her learning. In the following response Athlete R even went further to make the link between belief, confidence and effective communication.

YOU SEEM TO HAVE MADE THE RELATIONSHIP THAT WHEN YOU ARE COMMUNICATING WELL WITH

THE COACHES, YOUR CONFIDENCE IS HIGHER?

Yeah, definitely! That’s really key. Definitely... Because you start to go with assumptions when you are not communicating well, even if they’re not true, which is really bad. That’s really, really key. (Athlete R, interview 2)

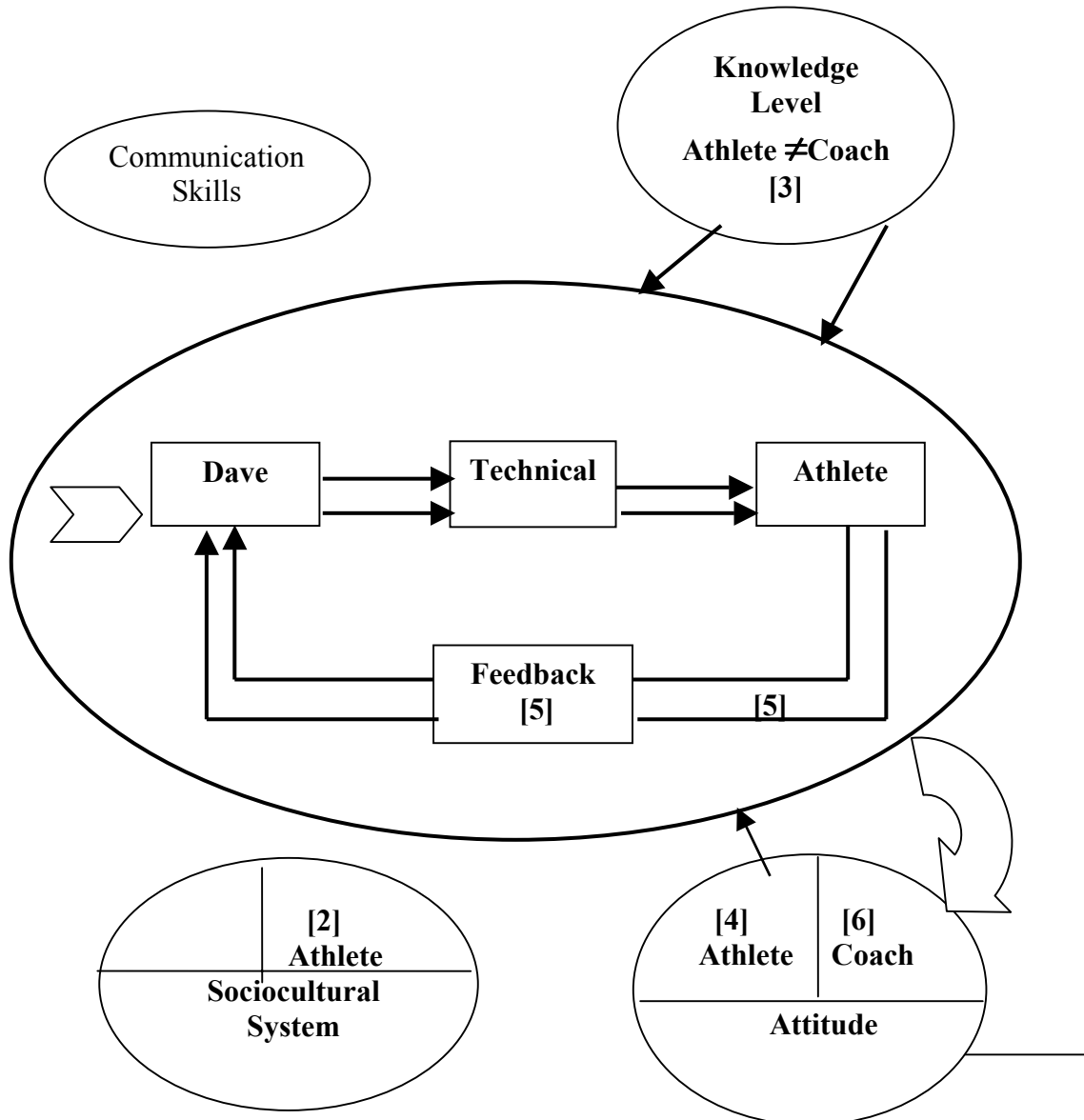


Figure 4: “What happened to the coachable athlete?”

Theme # 1: The importance of positive coaching

On the whole the coaches of this team were positive in their style of coaching, and several athletes were explicit about the importance of the relationship between coaches being positive and athletes communicating more effectively with their coaches. One athlete reflected on her experience with a previous coach, “Things were so much better when he was positive. I understood skiing more, and then I started to tell him what I wanted” (Athlete P, interview 1). These words describe clearly the progression of an athlete who felt that when the coach was more positive, she was more able to participate openly in the communication process. Even at the World Cup level, the importance of positive coaching and belief were evident, as indicated by this athlete:

... at the level that I am racing at now, at World Cup, it's not a lot of technical coaching that you really need, it's more you need a lot of emotional support, motivational support. You have to really believe that the coach believes in you... and that they coach positively. (Athlete B, interview, late season)

The importance of being positive is well documented in the coaching literature (CAC, 1989; Martens, 1997; Nakamura, 1996; Orlick, 1986). Smith, Smoll, and Curtis (1979) found that a positive interpersonal climate was conducive to greater athlete satisfaction, and higher self-esteem. The women in this study were adamant about the importance of a coach being positive. They felt they communicated more effectively, learned better, and performed better in a positive atmosphere. Beyond feedback and other coaching interactions, the women said

that it was very important to them to have fun, to enjoy what they were doing.

Theme # 2: Enjoyment

The data show that the words used by the coaches and the athletes were very similar regarding the importance of having an interactive approach to communication. However, a close reading of the transcripts showed that this communication should, as far as the coaches were concerned, take place within the parameters of hard work. Their view on hard work is understandable. In his book for coaches, Orlick (1986) stated: “Leading Olympic athletes work incredibly hard to achieve the highest level of performance, regardless of sport or country of origin” (p. 1). The athletes, for their part, put greater emphasis on the importance of a positive, agreeable environment in which to work. The aspect of “fun” or “enjoyment” is considered important to young amateur athletes (Boyd, Trudel, & Donohue, 1997), Olympic athletes (Werthner, 1998), professional athletes (Barbour, 1994), and even internationally renowned classical musicians (Talbot-Honeck & Orlick, 1998). Strong (1992) found that in youth sport, learning skills and having fun were among various phenomena that were not seriously pursued when winning became the most important reason for participating. It seems likely that this junior national team might have presented a particular communication challenge because the level and age of the athletes placed them in a transition period in which winning was important. At the same time learning skills was still very important for the proper development of the athletes, and having fun was viewed by the athletes as an essential element of their continued desire to persist.

There are however examples where “fun” is not permitted. A recent article by d’Arripe-Longueville, Fournier, and Dubois (1998), about the perceived effectiveness of interactions between expert French judo coaches and elite female athletes goes completely against the idea of coaches being positive, open communicators that show respect for their athletes. The coaches in the French study were authoritative and they purposely used different strategies to maintain their authority, and their athletes displayed strategies that demonstrated compatibility between them and the coaches, regarding effective interactions. Such strategies are totally the opposite of those recommended in North American coaching literature. There are four sub-cultural groups involved in these differences: European versus Canadian and judo versus skiing. Even though the judo sub-culture can be very distinct, there is evidence that national culture might be predominant in determining what coaching style will be accepted by athletes. Moraes (1998) found that traditional Japanese judo coaches had to change their autocratic style to be effective in the Canadian context. Canadian teenagers are part of mainstream North American culture, and the athletes that compete on the national team in this study come from an environment in which choice is an integral part. They indicated a clear choice to commit themselves to the sport, but not at the expense of having their enjoyment taken away from them. These are the words of one of the athletes.

But a big part of it for me is also having a lot of fun. Because, I don’t know, I kind of decided this year, I like, you never know how long you are going to get to ski. You can always be injured.

You have got to make the best of every year and enjoy it and we’re pretty lucky to go where we get to go, so I don’t want anyone or anybody to get in my way of enjoying it. And I think that is also like the coaches have got to know. I like working hard and I have no problem with that, but you have got to enjoy it too. I improve usually lots when I’m having fun, even thinking less about my skiing. (Athlete R, interview 1)

The World Cup athlete echoed the younger athletes. “I came to the bottom line this year and said, ‘I want to be happy with what I am doing and I want to enjoy what I do’ ” (Athlete B, late season interview).

Scanlan and Lewthwaite’s (1986) sport commitment model maintains that commitment is a product of cognitive and affective factors. The cognitive component involves weighing up of the relative desirability of alternative activities. The affective component is sport enjoyment. As declared, the athletes in this study have choices. They choose to be ski racers, but if their enjoyment of the activity is removed, they indicate they will choose to do something else. The French judo coaches are not concerned if their negative approach scares away the odd athlete. They say that they have plenty more to fill that spot. Apart from the moral and philosophical issues that underlie the recommended North American coaching approach, Canada can not afford to chase away its elite athletes, since the country does not have great numbers of them.

Closely related to the connection between the coach being positive and demonstrating belief in the athlete, the communication improving and the ath-

lete's confidence increasing, is the issue of what happens when the athlete is going through a period of poor performances.

... I think a coach has to stick with you in the good times and the bad times... Dave and Charles are great, because, they don't, they understand that you are not going to have a good day everyday. And that is when you really need a coach, to get you through the bad times because the faster you can do that the better you are going to be. But I think that the coaches that have been the best for me are the ones that can help me on the bad days, to get through them, and overcome those days. Because I think that more you can overcome those days the better skier you are going to be, because you will know how to deal with them and overcome them... In those times I find it really hard to tell coaches, "Listen, I need more support here". Like that is the hardest thing that I have to say. (Athlete R, interview 1)

This athlete described the how the ability of the coach to stay positive even when the athlete is experiencing a bad day is critical to the learning process. Three elements of the "Wheel of Excellence" (Orlick, 1996), belief, constructive evaluation, and positive images are intertwined in her words. The last two sentences refer to another significant theme raised in this study; that is, psychological messages and who initiates them.

Theme # 3: Communication regarding psychological issues

When the participants were asked who initiated the messages according to the different referents (technical, tactical, and psychological) there were some in-

dividual differences, but the athletes seemed to feel that the coach was the initiator of more messages concerning technique and tactics. The coaches' and the athletes' perceptions on this division of initiating matched. On the contrary, messages concerning psychological issues seemed to be a problem in terms of who actually initiated them. The coach felt that these other messages should be addressed first by the athletes. Here is the coach's view on this matter:

I think it is individual, but I think there are trends as far as technical, versus tactical versus psychological, emotional that sort of thing. I'll give you an example, technical for sure there is open dialogue but it's more initiated by me. I'd say it's sort of like a 70/30 or 60/40 split, me 60% and them 40%... A lot of times they need me to take the first step, in the technical stuff and then we talk. I'll say something about this and then they'll answer in their own way, how they felt and then we can start talking about it, just so we establish a connection there. Tactically it's more of a 50/50 thing because I can't ski down the hill for them, I need to know what they see, so when we talk about tactics, I can give them my perspective but I can't give them the perspective of skiing down the hill so it's more 50/50... The other thing is I guess, the personal, psychological, emotional thing, where I think that it swings more to them, because I can see something is wrong, but I really don't know what it could be, and I don't feel like pushing and prying, you know? ... If they have a problem they need to tell me... I think they need to initiate and then we can talk. I just am not a sport psychologist. I'm not a pro in that area and I'd like for them to be able to take

the first step in those things. (Dave, interview 2)

The comments from two athletes confirm that the coaches speak to them most readily about technical and tactical matters, and do not initiate concerning psychological issues. The younger athletes indicated that they found it very difficult to initiate these types of messages.

In the technical, I'd say like 60/40, coaches to athletes. Tactical I'd say 80/20. Because that is something they kind of have to tell you, especially on the course. Emotionally, psychologically, they don't initiate anything, so it's all us (laughs), but that's hard for me. (Athlete R, interview 2).

...For sure Dave talks to me most often about technique. But he lets me go on my own with that. Tactically, he is starting to talk to me more since that is what I am working on. Then psychologically, (she laughs) he does not talk to me about those things... (Athlete S, interview 2)

Thus, concerning psychological messages, the athletes found it very difficult to approach the coaches with these problems and the coaches felt that it was not up to them to initiate messages regarding such issues. As a result coach-athlete communication regarding this whole area of support was a problem. As a society we recognise that these issues are not easy to talk about; thus the existence of a variety of professions cantered around the act of counseling. The coaches in this study felt that it was beyond their capacity to deal with “heavy” psychological issues. Nonetheless, the job of coaching does require

the effective coach to be able to understand many psychological aspects. One of the attributes of great coaches is that they listen to others (Bloom, 1996).

Interestingly, Egan (1998) sees empathy as an intellectual process which he presents as a communication skill, made up of empathic listening and the ability to communicate this understanding to the other person. Athletes, like anybody else need to feel empathy if they are going to divulge their psychologically related problems, including showing their emotions. As pointed out by the World Cup athlete in this study, this type of support is perhaps the most important requirement for many athletes, especially at the elite levels (see also Werthner, 1998). Several incidents in this study showed that to avoid communication about difficult issues led to further problems.

Effective communication depends on mutual sharing and understanding (Orlick, 1986). The word communication comes from the Latin *communico*, which means to share. Furthermore the word respect is from a Latin derivative that includes the idea of “seeing” or “viewing” another person’s value (Egan, 1998). Athletes need to share and coaches need to show respect and empathy. Sharing requires trust and assertiveness, on the part of the sender, and empathy on the part of the receiver. The women and coaches in this study had some problems with these, especially when the pressures of the competitive season were upon them.

Several authors have noted the importance of athletes learning to be assertive and to stand up for things that are important to them (Connolly & Rotella,

1991; Howe, 1993). Despite this, Connolly and Rotella also noted that sport psychology consultants working with athletes to help them communicate effectively often fail to prepare athletes with the required skills. In the present study, there is also clear evidence that the younger athletes have a harder time expressing their concerns, and do not want to appear like complainers to the coaches. According to the literature, people have difficulty being assertive for such reasons as worrying what others will think of them, lack of confidence, vulnerability, and lack of awareness (Connolly & Rotella, 1991; Egan, 1998). Connolly and Rotella found as consultants that some athletes have been socialized to fake honesty in communication so as to appear to “agree” with the coach in order to stay on the coach’s good side. This concern with looking good to the coaches surfaced in the incident “When silence means neglect”. In the same incident, the coach and the athletes recognised that lack of confidence was an issue for the athletes. The two athletes involved in this incident, Athletes T and R were feeling vulnerable, not having been selected to travel to the World Juniors with the rest of the team. It is not surprising that these adolescent athletes had trouble asserting themselves, and communicating effectively with their coaches. Assertiveness is a social behavior that requires time and practice to learn (Yukelson, 1998). Older athletes may learn to be more assertive, but considering their standing in the prevailing sociocultural system, athletes might need their coaches help to open communication. Coaches can do this by creating an environment that encourages their athletes to initiate communication (Yambor, 1998).

Conclusion

The coaches and athletes agreed on the ideal communication process in sport. The first interviews indicated on one hand, the desire of the coaches to provide a training environment in which communication was open and, on the other hand, the wishes of the athletes to be able to talk to their coaches. Observation revealed that this ideal of two-way communication got lost, at times, in the heat of the action. The analysis of specific incidents using the Fuoss and Troppmann (1981) model demonstrated how effective coach-athlete communication is an important part of the pursuit of excellence, affecting and being affected by such essential elements as belief, confidence, and enjoyment. This study has raised important issues concerning the education of coaches and the training of athletes in assertiveness. A clinic on coach-athlete communication at the start of the season or during coaching courses is unlikely to be satisfactory, as it was only when coaches and athletes were in action that problems arose. Furthermore, each problem occurred in a particular context. Instead, a case study approach similar to that used in educating doctors and business people might be envisioned. Both coaches indicated that they learned a lot from participating in the study, even though the primary objective was not to train the coaches. Dave said that reading through the analysis of the interactions was amazing, and added: “It’s like having a video of your self working, but better because you get to see it from the other people’s view too”. The reading of the incidents was akin to having a mirror of his work that allowed him to see behind each individual’s words and actions, helping to explain why communication did not always go as well as it might.

Sport psychology consultants concerned with communication problems could

adopt the methodology used in this study.

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Athletes Doing it for Themselves: Self-Coaching Strategies of New Zealand Olympians

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Abstract

Self-coaching in sport (athletes coaching themselves) is a little understood concept that has not been researched or written about by academics to any great extent, although practitioners have made some contribution to the literature. In an effort to define self-coaching more clearly and to understand what athletes do when they self-coach, questionnaires were posted to the 97 members of the New Zealand 1996 Summer Olympic Games team. Also, 36 semi-structured interviews were held with Summer Olympic Games medal winners from the 1956 to the 1996 Olympics. As a result, a definition of self-coaching is proposed as well as strategies that New Zealand Olympians have implemented to enhance their self-coaching experiences in their search of excellence.

Introduction

For most athletes the need to be responsible for their own coaching will arise at some stage in their sporting career. Although a large number of both developing and elite athletes are engaged in 'self-coaching', an important and prevalent dimension of coaching, it is seldom discussed nor recognised as a legitimate coaching process. The literature, mainly popular and not academic, does not provide a definition of self-coaching or describe researched strategies, but does intimate that some athletes undergo a process whereby they are responsible for their own sporting destiny. This research has defined self-coaching as the responsibility for performance-enhancing and self-fulfilling activities, independent of a formal coach. In New Zealand, many athletes do not have

access to the guidance of a full-time coach and thus are responsible for their performance outcomes. They sometimes self-coach not by choice but by default.

Among the authors who have acknowledged or referred to the term self-coaching, Greenwood (1986) considers self-coaching as problem solving, that is, observing results, and working out how to improve them. Cunningham (1986), in *American Rowing*, does not define the term but describes how one who observed and listened to his boat [sic] would learn a great deal from it and, in effect, be self-coached. Whitmore (1994), who utilised the term self-coaching in the business and not in the sport environment, describes its usefulness for the practitioner as helping to "clarify their needs and make their best decisions" (p.2). Stringer, in

Whitmore (1994), also refers to self-coaching in the business sense as a "performer-centred approach, completely in line with a participative management style promoting the ethos of ownership equals commitment" (p.105).

As there is not a common definition for self-coaching in the literature or one understood universally, a working definition was developed as follows: "the facilitation of performance enhancing and self-fulfilling activities, independent of a formal coach or mentor"¹. Athletes may call on a coach, mentor, observer, or technical advisor for input when, or if, required.

Specific researched self-coaching strategies are not clearly identified either in the literature but a range of strategies are described in some of the "how to" or "self-help" books for a variety of sports. For instance, *Softball, Slow and Fast Pitch* is not titled or described as a self-coaching text but is essentially that, offering strategies for a softball player to improve their game and skills. The purpose of this book is "to assist all softball players of any age, ...to acquire the knowledge and skills necessary...suggestions are included to foster improvements in performances" (Kneer and McCord, 1995, preface). They suggest watching the "experts" play, reading about the game, and goal setting as valuable developmental strategies.

Newman (1986), a track athlete and former editor of Canada's national coaching magazine *Coaching Review*,

¹ This working definition evolved from reading the available literature and from discussions with elite athletes, coaches, sport administrators and academic colleagues.

discussed self-coaching from his personal experiences when in his youth he did whatever he thought was required to get in shape for racing. He finished ninth out of a field of 3000 in a cross-town race and attributes his success to his self-designed and unwritten training programme executed four times a week: I think I always believed I needed a coach - an assumption to which I still adhere - only now I have found my best coach to be myself. I don't pretend that this situation is entirely desirable, but I've come to recognize that I coach myself as well or better than the large majority of coaches I see (Newman, 1986, p. 46).

He offered sport science and management related strategies for self-coaching:

- keep a training diary to monitor performance and reactions to the training programme;
- periodic blood testing to prevent, monitor or identify overtraining, potential overtraining or an inadequate diet;
- develop and commit to a programme for the entire training and competitive season;
- set realistic and achievable training goals; and
- integrate recovery time and vary training activities to revive motivation and enthusiasm.

Moortgat (1996) who experienced self-coaching as a developing tennis player offers yet another strategy. He was not sure of his actions but he initiated an approach to his self-coaching in the following manner:

When I was 16 years old, I started keeping a log of what I did on and off the

tennis court. I had no real idea of what I was doing, I was just basically writing down how many hoppers I served, set scores, what worked, etc. I wanted to be able to look back and document just how hard I was working. I continued this log through college and on the satellite circuit - never really having a plan, but just writing everything down

Training to be a dancer is similar to training for tennis or any other sport. Martha Graham, a dancer who created her own artistic forms, diarised her dance experiences in notebooks, published as *The Notebooks of Martha Graham*. She recorded her dance experiences learning from each diary entry just as Moortgat did. Graham's notebooks, analysed by Gardner (1993), included such items as dance step sequences, diagrams or drawings, and quotations such as:

...the notes accompanying Night Journey begin by describing some of the opening movements, both in language and in terms of steps. The instructions are quite literal: "Runs with tip 3X l - r - l; two darts and turn to stage r..bourre turn to stage r. left hand holding right elbow" (p.294).

Gardner (1993) speculated that Graham developed as a dancer through her notebooks, and through observation and experimentation of her own body either alone or in front of mirrors or friends, and then eventually audiences.

Much can be learned from observation and 'giving it a go'². A swimmer (S-10) in Bloom's 1985 study did exactly this: "At thirteen I started to get into sport as

a science. I started reading health books. I started watching stroke-technique films. I would watch films for an hour everyday and then go out and try to do it" (p.166).

Hall (1997), a self-coached Olympic laser yachtsman, supported observation as utilised by Graham and the S-10 swimmer as useful tools to help sailors. He suggested taking a day off from sailing to watch others sail: "There is a tremendous amount to be learned from watching a day's racing or even a whole regatta. Afterward, ask the fast sailors why they set up the way they did, or what the wind seemed to be doing that day" (Hall, 1997, p.24). He also suggested reading books and discussing simulations of permutations and tactical situations of sailing using model boats.

Greenwood (1986) promoted yet another strategy, reflective questioning, to enhance an athlete's comprehension and development of self-coaching. He believed the coach's whole approach can reinforce or inhibit the opportunity to learn to self-coach. A coach can reinforce self-coaching by asking questions that the player can answer and inhibit it by imposing answers without explanation. For this reason, Greenwood believed that players are their own best coaches.

However, the lack of guidance in the form of strategies can be problematic for many self-coached athletes seeking excellence. Speaking of misfortune in the 2000m double scull finals at the 1996 Olympics, New Zealander Philippa Baker uttered a post-mortem. "We've done a lot on our own and I don't know if people realise how difficult it was winning those world championships" ("Poor final for sad",

² A New Zealand colloquialism for experimentation or trying something out.

1996, Atlanta '96 p.III). Likewise, New Zealand coxless pairs rowers David Schaper and Toni Dunlop trained without

We were a bit concerned initially because we had a couple of months by ourselves. It was really hard because we had never trained like that before. You normally always have your coach there to motivate you and check that you are making technical changes. We started off being a bit lazy and then realised that we had to get hard on ourselves.... It has been a big learning curve on taking the responsibility for our own training (Sanders, 1997, p.5).

Self-coaching has also been experienced by non-New Zealanders. Linda Leaver, an American figure skater turned coach, spent the last five years of her skating career uncoached. Her coach was ill and his recovery stretched into years. She said, "There are hundreds of things I learned from that experience. It taught me to understand the principles behind skating, much more so than if I'd had someone standing there saying, 'Do this, do that'" (Leaver cited in McKee, 1994, p.29). But, Leaver did not believe self-coaching is conducive to excellence and wondered how much further she could have gone if her coach had been with her. Leaver seems to have an inner conflict as in one voice she says she learned immensely from the experience but in the next she doesn't support the idea as being conducive to gaining maximum sporting excellence.

In order to investigate this phenomenon of self-coaching in more depth, a study consisting of self-administered questionnaires and semi-structured interviews was undertaken. The purpose of the study was to define self-coaching and

their coach. Speaking of the situation Schaper said,

identify those strategies used by New Zealand Olympians to assist self-coached athletes achieve excellence in their sporting, and potentially personal, lives.

Method

Participants

The eligibility criteria for this study was based on membership on the 1996 New Zealand Summer Olympic Games team or winning an Olympic medal for New Zealand. A 52% response rate was received from a questionnaire posted to the 97 members of the 1996 Olympic team from 11 Summer Olympic sports (New Zealand was represented in 15 out of 26 sports). Semi-structured interviews were also recorded between the researcher and 36 Olympic Games medal winners from between the 1956 and 1996 Olympics. These athletes came from the sports of archery, athletics, badminton, canoeing, cycling, equestrian, field hockey, rowing, shooting, swimming, and yachting.

Questionnaire and Interview Construction and Protocol

A questionnaire and interview format were designed to elicit perceptions from Olympic athletes about their experiences and ideas on self-coaching. Both tools were piloted on New Zealand World University Games team members and only minor changes were made. Both were structured similarly with sections investigating background demographics, general information on coaching experiences and then more specific information on self-coaching experiences. Participants were also given the opportunity to supply any further information

on self-coaching that they felt had not been previously addressed.

Procedure

In accordance with the requirements of the 1993 Privacy Act, the New Zealand Olympic and Commonwealth Games Association posted the cover letter and questionnaire to each of the 1996 Olympic team members and an interview information sheet and consent form to all Olympic medal winners. The cover letter and interview information sheet detailed the parameters of the research providing the purpose of the research, the right to withdraw, confirmation of privacy and confidentiality, and information about the use of the research results.

Data Analysis

Analysis of the data was both quantitative and qualitative. For analysis of the questionnaire, the closed questions were coded and then analysed via the SPSS computer package and the open questions were categorised and analysed via content analysis. With the permission of the interviewees, audiotape and detailed note taking recorded the interviews. These audiotapes were transcribed verbatim, including the researcher's questions and comments, and their accuracy confirmed by the interviewees who suggested minimal changes. This process protected the interviewee from misinterpretation, and provided a full record of the dialogue. The researcher, to ensure familiarity of content, reviewed the interview and open questionnaire response transcripts and then highlighted key phrases for analysis. The variety of responses provided was reduced for coding purposes without losing the voices and ideas of the respondents. Following this, the summary of the interview responses was posted to the interviewees

for concept mapping (a Q sorting technique) to ensure that reliability of the categories had been achieved. The variety of interesting results, together with some relevant literature, enabled the construction of an effective definition and the creation of a list of potentially useful strategies for implementation by self-coached athletes to achieve excellence.

Results and discussion

Rates of self-coaching among respondents

From the 1996 Olympians, just less than half (43%) said they self-coached, just over half (52%) said they sometimes self-coached, while less than one-tenth (7%) said they did not self-coach. From the medal winners almost half (47%) said they self-coached (of which around one-third said they self-coached with the assistance of an outside advisor), almost half (47%) said they sometimes self-coached, and again less than one-tenth (6%) reported that they did not self-coach.

With such a high level of self-coaching activity it is the obligation of academics and practitioners to define and explore strategies for self-coached athletes to employ. Even in situations where an athlete has intermittent access to a coach, athlete empowerment and self-responsibility should be encouraged. The resulting potential growth may carry over not only to excellence in their athletic endeavours but to all aspects of their life.

Definition

Questionnaire and interview respondents were not provided the working definition of self-coaching so as not to bias or

influence their response. Instead, an open-ended question was posed as, “how would you define or describe self-coaching?” The most common questionnaire responses included: ‘athlete makes decisions on training’ (38%), ‘someone who thinks they know it all’ (34%), ‘taking ownership’ (30%), ‘critically analysing your performance’ (27%) and ‘coaching yourself’ (22%). It is surprising that ‘coaching yourself’ did not have a higher frequency. Very few respondents (only 9%) reported ‘having no outside assistance’, which again is unexpectedly low.

My experiences and observations when working as Chef de Mission with New Zealand World University Games athletes and New Zealand Paralympic athletes led me to expect that these two descriptions would have been noted more often. When self-coaching was discussed with these athletes, they would say they were coaching themselves, meaning self-coaching, insinuating the terms were the same and therefore interchangeable.

The interviewee replies were more aligned with the anticipated responses for a definition of a self-coaching. A large number of the respondents (58%) suggested ‘training yourself by setting your own plans, goals and training and then reviewing them to get the best out of yourself’. Almost one-third (28%) suggested ‘the ability to be self-analytical or self-critical’ with the next closest responses (17%) being; ‘without the outside help of a coach’; ‘coaching yourself’; ‘the athlete takes control of everything’; or ‘being a coach yourself’. A few respondents considered self-coaching to include athlete empowerment that is, letting the athlete take re-

sponsibility for their progress and activities. For instance, Greg Dayman, a 1976 field hockey gold medallist, said:

...the elite level is about trying to get more out – more of the players coaching themselves...the players themselves need to basically know as much as the coach and be able to make decisions for themselves on the field. In other words, they need to be in control of the total picture otherwise they are not going to be able to make those kinds of decisions (8 April 1998).

As a result of the responses reported here, the working definition developed early in the research was revised to read: “the responsibility for performance-enhancing and self-fulfilling activities, independent of a formal coach”. Only two alterations were made which were replacing the word ‘facilitation’ with ‘responsibility’ and deleting the words ‘or mentor’ which followed the word ‘coach’. These changes were prompted by suggestions made by many respondents that self-coaching activities are the responsibility of the athlete. However this does not preclude a self-coached athlete from calling on a coach, mentor, observer, or technical advisor for input when, or if, required. Many of the respondents said that it was extremely important to have an outsider assist them at various stages of their training.

Strategies

Based on the popular literature, a list of potential strategies was compiled and included in the questionnaire. These strategies can be found in Table 1 below.

Questionnaire respondents, the 1996 Olympians, were asked which of these

strategies could be used to enhance self-coaching. The interviewees, past Olympic medal winners, were asked in an open-ended question, “what are strategies that could enhance self-coaching?” The most highly selected strategy (96% of the questionnaire responses) was to learn from their mistakes. Chris Gregorek, an All-American 1500 metre runner and now coach, supported this. “Runners should learn not only from

their successes and triumphs, but also from their failures” (cited in Wischnia, 1998, p.51). There may be better ways for athletes to prepare to self-coach than to learn from their mistakes. For instance, if they did their “homework” and followed guidelines (steps) implementing certain strategies then progress could be made more quickly than by learning from mistakes. None of the interviewees mentioned this particular strategy.

Training diary	Use of mirrors
Video analysis	Training partner
Peer feedback	Competition diary
Self-analysis	Self-awareness
Self-management training	Mentor feedback
Self-coaching workshops	Self-reflection
Talk to more experienced athletes	Long-term planning programmes
Learn from mistakes	Specialist assistance
Modelling other athletes	View other elite athletes in same discipline
Books, journals, magazines	Discussions with other athletes

Table 1 Potential strategies for self-coaching.

A training diary was ranked a very close second (89%) in the questionnaire but the interviewees ranked it much lower (37%). Möeller (1993), a disabled athlete who discussed her perspective to training programme design, emphasized that she did not keep a training log but felt it was a very important strategy as it would help the athlete, and the coach, to evaluate and control the effects of training. Hall (1997) concurred that one be used to debrief and analyse training or competition: “The more you use a notebook, the faster you will learn in a lasting way from your experiences” (p.24). The questionnaire respondents

rated a competition diary much further down the scale (64%) which the interviewees did not even consider. It might be assumed that they considered training and competition diaries to be one and the same. Also frequently reported by questionnaire respondents (87%) were self-analysis, discussions with other athletes, and talking with more experienced athletes. The interview respondents had a minor variation to these last two responses, to talk to other athletes to find out what they were doing and to take what works best for you, giving it a similarly positive rating (94%). To talk to athletes

who ‘have been there’ can be a valuable learning opportunity. Yachtsman Chris Timms, a 1984 and 1988 gold and silver medallist respectively in the Tornado class, spoke of how he and his teammate learned from other world class athletes.

There are two priorities in yacht racing: one was learning how to sail a boat, the second was making a boat go faster. Our answer to that was always ensuring that we were surrounded by the fastest people that we could find - the fastest people on the planet. We cultivated that when we went offshore. We cultivated friendships with top Europeans and top Americans - we were fraternising with them. We became personal with the guys who were good at it and we'd learn from them. What to buy, what gear to have and how to work it and how to acquire it - that was the key. I suppose you could say in a sense, the performances we got were a rub off from competing with these other guys. If you go out there and sail for three weeks with the world champion, if he goes twice as fast as you do, you can bloody soon work out the techniques to stay with him. And that is the way it was all the way through (12 March 1998).

Long-term planning programmes (84%) and the use of a training partner (82%) were also popular recommendations from the questionnaire respondents. American Joan Nesbit, a 1996 Olympic 10,000 metre runner, saw great value in a committed training partner:

It may seem odd to hear a coach say this, but I think a really great training partner is more important for a runner than a coach. Any training system can work out fine if a runner is committed to it, but sometimes that commitment is the

difficult part...That's where a training partner is so valuable...A great training partner stimulates and motivates you. You can learn from each other and both raise your level of performances (cited in Wischnia, 1998, p.52).

The interviewees (37%) did not consider a training partner as a very beneficial strategy. Eighty percent of the questionnaire respondents believed self-awareness to be a positive strategy. Viewing athletes in the same discipline was suggested by not quite three-quarters of the questionnaire respondents (71%) while viewing athletes in other disciplines was far less popular (42%). Reading books, journals and magazines, and researching the Internet were placed relatively high (67%) whereas nearly all (97%) of the interviewees reported this strategy as highly useful. Mentor and peer feedback or specialist assistance in the form of observers, mentors, or coaches were all placed relatively high in the questionnaires (65%) and the interviewees indicated similar support (69%). The questionnaire respondents ranked video analysis well (60%) but an extremely high percentage (86%) of the interviewees suggested it as a strategy that they would use and generally suggested it first.

A number of strategies emerged from the data, which are supported by the literature. As a result of this study, three changes were made to the initial list. The questionnaire respondents put forth a new strategy of observation and experimentation. The interview respondents altered a listed strategy on the questionnaire, ‘long-term planning programmes’, to one a little more specific, ‘setting a realistic training programme’. They also provided two

new strategies, testing via sport science tools and watching other athletes, which were not reported in the “other options” section in the questionnaire. A comprehensive list of potentially effective self-coaching strategies includes:

- learning from your mistakes;
- using a training diary;
- observation and experimentation;
- reflective analysis;
- reading and Internet research;
- video analysis;
- setting a realistic training programme;
- testing via sport science tools;
- using a training partner;
- viewing and talking to other athletes; and
- using outside observers, mentors or advisors.

These strategies are reflected in the researched definition of self-coaching. By implementing strategies for which the athlete alone is accountable, performance may be enhanced and excellence achieved. Not all strategies are going to suit all athletes as seen in the various response frequencies given in both the questionnaire and interviews. While any one of these strategies is better than none at all, a combined selection is probably more effective. The items are not mutually exclusive and depending on the athlete, the stage of the athlete’s career, the time and place, and the environment or situation, a different mix may be selected at any one time.

Conclusion

In the review of the literature, especially academic, it was difficult to find material written directly about self-

coaching. The popular literature, however, held some information about the authors’ personal experiences. Hall (1997), one of the few practitioners who has written and experienced self-coaching, was highly supportive of self-coaching in sailing and believed the only person who can help an individual improve in their sport is that individual. Not all are as confident of self-coaching as a tool however. Leaver’s comment about her self-coaching experiences may point to an ambivalence towards self-coaching. When self-coaching there is no one to blame for the performance output except oneself, as according to the researched definition, (the responsibility for performance-enhancing and self-fulfilling activities, independent of a formal coach), the individual is responsible for one’s own personal destiny. It was noted by Hall (1997) that athletes must be honest with themselves to identify and cure any weaknesses they have. If they do not have characteristics such as self-confidence, discipline, motivation, self-belief, dedication, and determination (Bradbury, 1999) trying to self-coach may in fact lead them to inner conflict. Ambivalence may also be related to widely held attitudes that someone who self-coaches is ‘someone who thinks he or she knows it all’ and who is considered arrogant or egotistical. These individuals may not call on an outside observer, coach or mentor when required and may lack in the characteristics noted above. However, overall the feedback on self-coaching is positive. In New Zealand self-coaching is a realistic situation and this research is much needed to help elite athletes on their pathway to athletic, and potentially personal, excellence. The researched strategies - learning from your mistakes;

using a training diary; observation and experimentation; reflective analysis; reading and internet research; video analysis; setting a realistic training programme; testing via sport science tools; using a training partner; viewing and talking to other athletes; and using outside observers, mentors or advisors - are a step in the right direction to help self-coached athletes achieve much sought after excellence.

Finally, the purpose of this study was not to draw conclusions about the suitability of self-coaching for elite level athletes in search of excellence. Further research is

required to present more data to support or negate this notion. However, in New Zealand many athletes are assuming the role of a coach and coaching themselves, with no agreed definition or strategies to aid this endeavour.

This paper has begun to address this lack, by proposing a definition of self-coaching and identifying a set of research-based strategies which are considered to be effective by successful New Zealand Olympians. Application of the findings from this research will assist elite athletes to achieve sporting excellence.

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Quality Of Life In The High Tech Sector: Excellence In Work And Non-Work

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Abstract

The present study explored the relationship between excellence in job performance and excellence in quality of life. Twelve interviews were conducted; seven men and five women participated in the study. Participants represented a wide range of employment levels from high tech employee to members of the executive group (vice-presidents). Inductive analysis of transcripts revealed that all participants used the term “balance” in their definition of quality of life. When asked to define “balance”, the following domains were included in the comments of all participants: (1) family; (2) work; (3) physical fitness. Factors contributing to quality of life were listed as (1) family/ relationships; (2) physical activity and leisure; (c) making valuable contributions at work. Prerequisites for achieving quality of life and job performance excellence included: (1) having a commitment to a balanced lifestyle; (2) having supportive relationships; (3) participating in physical activity; (4) being highly effective in work roles. Participants believed that increasing the quality of life of employees would increase long-term productivity and performance levels. Recommendations were made by participants on how to improve the quality of life of employees.

Introduction

The relationship between work and nonwork inspired such early writers as Adam Smith, Karl Marx, and Max Weber (Keller, 1987). In recent years, the connection between work and non-work experience has been investigated by numerous researchers. Although much of the research in this field has focused primarily on the impact of work on personal well-being and family dynamics (Burke, Weire, & Duwors, 1979, 1980; Jackson, Zedeck, & Summers, 1985) the effects of nonwork experiences on work role behaviour have also been examined (Greenhaus, Bedeian, & Mossholder, 1987; Kanter, 1977).

Two theoretical models, the spillover model (Wilensky, 1960) and the compensatory model (Wilensky, 1960), have directed the majority of the studies examining work and nonwork relationships (e.g. Kabanoff, 1980; Keller, 1987; Martin & Schermerhorn, 1983; Near, Rice, & Hunt, 1980; Rousseau, 1978; Staines, 1980). Proponents of the spillover model predicate that positive relationships exist between work and nonwork factors due to the fact that the two domains generalize to one another. For example, an employee who experiences difficulties at home may then experience a decline in job performance due to the fact that the initial family disruption has generalized into the work

domain. The compensatory model, however, argues that a deficiency in one domain will lead the individual to compensate for the shortcoming by engaging in positive activities in another domain. Hence, a negative relationship between work and nonwork factors is posited by the compensatory model. For instance, an individual who is experiencing excessive pressures at work may compensate for this pressure by seeking out positive experiences with family members or through leisure activities.

There is increasing indication that work and non work roles are mutually interdependent (Greenhaus, Bedeian, & Mossholder, 1987). The majority of research exploring this interdependency indicates that negative experiences within the work environment can impair the quality of life for both the individual and family (Greenhaus et al., 1987). Moreover, researchers examining the relationships between the work and nonwork domains of life have further concluded that non work activities may affect an individual's work life (Champoux, 1981; Near, Rice & Hunt, 1987; Near et al., 1980; Staines, 1980).

Some researchers suggest that rather than focusing research solely on proving which theory best explains the relationship, investigators should examine how the nature of the relationship between job and life satisfaction might differ between individuals (Judge & Watanabe, 1994). Moreover, Judge and Watanabe suggest that it is conceivable that each model is possible for different individuals, and hence individual differences should be explored.

Methods

The purpose of this study was to explore

the relationship between excellence in job performance and excellence in quality of life for a selected group of high performance individuals who were also identified as having a high quality of life outside of work. Part of this exploration included gaining an in-depth understanding of quality of life based on participants' subjective perceptions of this concept and examining how these individuals manage their lives to attain excellence in job performance and excellence in quality living

Participants were chosen from personnel working in a leading high-technology company. There is a lack of empirical data concerning quality of life in this industry (Gamst & Otten, 1992; Nijkamp, Bouman, & Verhoef, 1990). Each of these participants met stringent criteria of excelling in the workplace and excelling in their lives outside of work.

Two grand tour questions guided the interviews conducted in this study. Is there a relationship between excellence in quality of life and excellence in job performance? How do individuals manage their lives such that they attain excellence in job performance and quality of life?

The definition of quality of life used in this study was based on the work by Myers and Diner (1995) which stated that quality of life is a subjective summation of the quality of an individual's life and no one but the individual can evaluate his or her life. In this study both peers and the person him or herself judged their life to be of high quality and balance.

Job performance was measured using the Nortel Networks job evaluation measure

called the MFA (Managing For Achievement). The MFA is the name of the Nortel Networks performance review determined annually. It is based on three possible job performance evaluations: Ex (Exceeds), Ac (Achieves) and NI (Needs Improvement). The Exceeds rating indicates that an employee has exceeded their annual objectives and has performed at a very high level. The Achieves rating indicates that an employee has achieved their annual objectives. Finally, the NI rating indicates that the employee “needs improvement” and has not achieved their annual objectives.

Description of the participants

The sample included employees from the various band levels within the Nortel organization. The band levels at Nortel Networks vary from band level 3 to band level 9, plus the executive group (vice-presidents). The various band levels are typically associated with specific titles, e.g., manager (band level 7). Executives are individuals above band level 9.

The sample varied from individuals who had achieved a minimum of 1 Exceeds rating to 3 Exceeds ratings in the past 3 years. An attempt was made to recruit participants who vary in age, marital status and gender. This variation was desirable in order to interview individuals who may possess different perspectives and points of view. The specific description of the sample follows.

A total of 12 individuals participated in this study - seven men and five women. Seven participants were married; an additional 3 participants were involved in long term committed relationships. The final 2 participants were not involved in relationships at the time of the study.

Four participants were parents at the time of the study, and an additional two were expecting children. Age ranged from mid twenties to late thirties.

In order to gain entry to the organization and to obtain permission to recruit participants, we relied on contacts within the organization who arranged initial meetings to discuss the proposed research which led to a series of steps allowing the research to unfold.

Interviews were arranged and conducted in such a way that afforded a high level of input from the participants. The first step involved allowing the interviewees to select the date, time and setting of the interviews. A second aspect involved demonstrating a high level of respect and understanding for the interviewees as well as a genuine interest in their lives. Furthermore, we familiarized ourselves with some of the particularities of the cultural arena (language use, terms). Participants were also informed that could edit their interview transcript as desired after the interview freeing them to be open and honest during the interview.

Data collection procedures

All participants partook in a semi-structural interview. The interviewer introduced main questions, followed by probe questions, and then proceeded with follow-up questions. The questions were predominantly open-ended in order to enable the participants to express their beliefs and understanding of the area without being constrained. Interview guidelines were developed based on previous extensive interview work by Orlick and Zitzelsberger (1998) as well as through informal discussions with individuals within the high-technology

industry. All interviews were tape recorded and transcribed in their entirety to ensure that data was maintained in an accurate and retrievable form.

Data analysis procedures

Listening to the interview tapes prior to transcription, the process of transcription and reading the interview transcripts were all viewed as opportunities for data analysis (Maxwell, 1996). Upon completion of each interview, a detailed analysis took place in order to pull out themes, concepts and quotes that should be examined in greater detail.

The main categorizing strategy involved coding or classifying individual responses into categories that brought together similar ideas, concepts, or themes (Rubin & Rubin, 1995). Coding strategies were developed inductively during the analysis and were grounded in the data being analysed (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

Participant verification or member checks

Member checking involves requesting feedback about data and conclusions from the participants of the study (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). It is the most important way of ruling out the possibility of misinterpreting the meaning of what the interviewees say (Rubin & Rubin, 1995). Participants were involved in all phases of the research including the opportunity to edit their interview transcript, provide feedback on categories and themes as well as provide feedback on the links made between the categories.

Results and discussion

The twelve interviews were analyzed using inductive content analysis. Themes are presented and discussed in conjunc-

tion with direct quotes from the interviews in order to present the participants' perspectives in their own words. The main areas that are discussed include: (a) definition of quality of life; (b) definition of balance; (c) factors contributing to quality of life; (d) factors contributing to job performance excellence; (e) relationship between quality of life and job performance; (f) prerequisites to achieve excellence in job performance and quality of life; (g) relationship of quality of life and job performance during career span; (h) recommendations to employees to increase quality of life and job performance; and (i) recommendations to the organization to increase quality of life for employees.

Definition of quality of life

In the present research, the definition of quality of life was created by each individual participant rather than being imposed by the researcher. This open-ended approach was consistent with the exploratory nature of the research. Participants were asked, "How would you define quality of life?" An interesting theme evolved from their definitions. Nine of twelve of the participants spoke specifically of the role of 'balance' in their definition of quality of life and the remaining three defined the construct as being a holistic concept comprised of different components of their lives.

The following statement is representative of their views, "If I say I have quality of life, a piece of that would be that I have a balanced life." This holistic definition of quality of life with respect to integrating lifestyle balance is consistent with the findings of a recent study with high performance athletes (Amirault & Orlick, 1998). The following quotations illustrate how the participants

in the current study view the issue of balance in quality of life.

I think it means a balance between personal and professional, live a personal balance where you have enough time to devote to family, friends, activities that you enjoy, but also balanced against the professional side.

Quality of life to me is that you have to have a balance. You need to work to provide the money but for me it's work and family and entertainment and what-ever follows in the evening.

This is the stuff that I'd like to think I live and breathe each day of my life. I don't live to work, I work to live. I've been very blessed to have been brought up with a value system which allows me to keep this balance. Family to me is the most important thing in my life, work is great and I'll always give 110%. I've always done well in my career, but I do it because of the foundation that was built when I was growing up, so I have been thinking about it. I think it's very important and I think people would be more effective in work if they had balance outside of work and I think I'm a living example of that. So that's the perspective that I have, even throughout university, family's always been my priority. That was the values instilled in me as a kid and I've lived with them ever since and I've gone from being a kid in a family to being a husband in a relationship that only strengthens those responsibilities. I continue to make that my first and foremost reason for living.

To me it means there's a level of enjoyment, a level of recharging yourself, balancing things so that the time that you have is of value to you.

This notion of different components of quality of life is consistent with the cognitive view of subjective well-being that has been conceptualized as a multidimensional construct consisting of several life domains that are common and important to most people (Alfonso et al., 1996). In their seminal study on social indicators of well-being, Andrews and Whithey (1976) tried to identify those domains of life “that are commonly held, that are relatively broad in scope, and that have significant impacts on people’s sense of well-being” (p.27). The domains of life that appeared to be important to most people were job, family, outdoor recreation, and global satisfaction.

In his treatise on subjective well-being, Diener (1984) reported that “the domains that are closest and most immediate to people’s personal lives are those that most influence subjective well being”(p.345). Included among Diener’s important life domains were self, income, job, and relationships.

The following quotations from the participants in our study identify the principal life domains related to their quality of life. They include the domains of job, family, relationships, self, and recreation.

I think quality of life equates to that, there's not one particular area in your life that dominates to such an extent that it either prevents or blocks you from enjoying other components of your life. So the components of that are family life and work and pastimes.

I think it means that I am comfortable with the time that I am spending with things that are important. Quality of life

is not all about your personal side, it's about work at the office as well. It is about making decisions about what really needs to be done. I need to be cognizant of what the down side is in terms of the other aspects of my life. I am then considering my total quality of life and setting boundaries accordingly.

Quality of life to me would be looking at a month of my work, a month of my life and looking at how happy I am getting up in the morning, going to work, or how happy I am on the weekends, spending time with friends, because they are all intertwined, there's no way to remove work away from my life and just look at my home life.

When you say quality of life, I really believe that quality of life, for me it's taking care of some very basic things which are eating properly, exercising and sleeping. These are these natural things that we should all do and yet a lot of people neglect them. I feel that I have proven over the past five years for sure that a good balance of these things makes you a better person, and a healthier person.

Definition of balance

In that balance was a term raised by participants, it was explored in an effort to understand what lifestyle balance meant for each of these individuals. Participants were asked the question “How would you define balance?” The common themes in the definitions of balance included: family, work, physical fitness, and leisure. It should also be noted that all participants included a variety of domains and themes rather than focusing on one.

What I try to aim for in my personal side

is the recharge element, whether it's physical fitness or reading or whatever. It prepares you for the output of energy that typically happens during your workweek.

It's a lifestyle where you're getting enough from a variety of different groups if you looked at it like the food groups to sustain yourself. And over a little period of time, work may be particularly onerous or there may be personal reasons why you're not contributing or doing the things you want from a work perspective but I think balance plays a significant role. I'd say they are very closely related.

In short, I would use the word happiness. If you're happy about going to work and if you're happy about coming home, and doing things outside of work, then you've established a kind of balance. I think that's a good way to summarize it.

Balance for me... I really have a strong sense of when I'm in and out of balance. Balance for me would be getting a daily dose of stimulation from various sources, a bit of technical challenge, a bit of managerial challenge, a bit of quiet time with my (spouse), a bit of quiet time on my own, time for building my (hobby) or reading, I have a (computer program) for my computer, pursuing interests, doing a little bit around the house, doing something outside, maybe chopping wood. It's a hobby of mine.

Factors contributing to excellence in quality of life

Participants were asked the open-ended question, “What contributes to your own quality of life?” Knowing that balance

and quality of life were related for these participants, an effort was made to explore the areas of life that help these individuals achieve a high level of quality of life. The following domains were listed as being contributors to quality of life for all participants: (1) family/ relationships; (2) physical activity and leisure; (3) contributing at work/sense of accomplishment. Another important area identified by most participants was nature/the outdoors.

1. Family/ Relationship

All participants spoke of the importance of family and relationships in the achievement and maintenance of quality of life. Furthermore, family was the first aspect mentioned by all participants except for one unmarried individual, who first mentioned the importance of relationships with friends. The following quotations identify the importance of family as a domain of quality of life.

I really enjoy being at home, I really enjoy being with my family.

I think my (spouse) and I spend time together doing whatever, walks, bike rides, those kinds of social activities. Some hobbies, a little bit of gardening.

There are a number of things that make up the quality of one's life. Certainly there is my family, my (spouse) and my (child), but also my extended family. It's funny because I've thought about this and I've chosen them to be the most important piece of what quality of life is for me. If these relationships begin to erode I feel it effects my quality.

I have two little girls, and as much as it's difficult to have children and a (spouse) who's self employed who works

day and night and me working Y but as much as it's difficult, I'm so glad I have those anchors, having the kids, having the family anchor. It helps me put the rest of it into perspective. If I had to prioritize, that is my ultimate priority. By having the (children) and the family, it helps to put the zannyness of here (work) into perspective.

Time with my children is definitely part of my balanced lifestyle. During the school year we tend to read books a lot more, in the summer, we're a little lazier but I'll get out and play with them, and do sports. I coach my kids (sport) team .. so those are all things I like to do. From my perspective, if I'm going to be there, I want to be involved, partly because I like sports and partly because I want to help my kids. Time with my wife, not intentionally last on the list, but with young children, it's not a lower priority, it's something that you just fit into all the other things, and we make reasonable efforts to fit it in. So I think those are the major components to a balanced life.

2. Physical activity and leisure

Every participant felt that physical activity was a necessary contributing factor to their level of quality of life. The involvement and level of activity varied from high performance athletes who played in competitive adult leagues, to people enrolled in dance classes, to those who thrive on walks and bike rides. Not only were participants physically active but for a number of individuals, physical activity was a part of every aspect of their lives; they worked out at work, participated in organized sports with friends, coached their childrens' team, and spent time with their spouses walking or going on bike rides. The following representative quotes refer to the role of

physical activity in quality of life.

I play hockey, we both golf, so sports play a reasonable role, we're both sports minded.

Physical fitness is something that is important to me...normally it is a day to day thing... downhill skiing, mountain biking, hiking.

In the winter time here at work they built an ice rink and they have flood lights on it at night, so I started doing that last winter and I'd play hockey with some of my colleagues.. I need to stay in shape. So I bought myself a bicycle and now I bicycle to work 3 times a week.. So I figured it's going to take about 1 1/2 hours out of my day, 45 minutes each way but it's important to stay physically in shape, I have a challenging job.

I need my sports. Up until 5 years ago I was playing very competitive (team sport), at the semi pro level. I had some injuries and I'm out of that now, but I do biking, I do running, mostly individual stuff now. It's very medicinal to just go out on the road and ride and your mind is so focused that you don't have time to think about other things. It's amazing how soothing it is when you get back and you're tired. It feels good, so that's part of my balanced lifestyle.

So I've been out with the dogs, with the 'girls', and I've had people over and I've started my dancing lessons, got all my books read for my book club so I do feel that I have a really nice mix right now. It's good.

3. Contributing at work/Sense of accomplishment

All participants discussed the importance of feeling that they make a difference in

the workplace, that they contribute something of value. This varied from the accomplishment of a deliverable to the development of another individual. A difference that was identified between managers versus those who held non management positions was that those who were supervising others in a management role spoke more about gaining satisfaction from developing other individuals rather than completing a specific task or deliverable. The following quotes reflect the participants' comments about how their contribution and sense of accomplishment at work plays a role in their quality of life.

Happiness at work would be a solid sense of achievement. I'm very much goal oriented so I set myself a goal and try to go towards it as effectively as possible and when I achieve it, I get a great sense of satisfaction.

At the office, it's (feeling good) about being on top of the projects and it's having projects that are making a contribution. It's about having an impact on this organization that results in us being a little better as a corporation.

It's been really great because it's been work that I know is really valuable to our organization and really valuable to our employees at large and received well. We've tried using the WEB, we've had great response back and I've been learning it every day. I know I did good work today, like I just know I've done it, and yet I've been managing my time well.

The sense of accomplishment, the sense of doing things right, the sense of as a manager, specifically developing other people plays a significant role in quality

of work life.

4. Nature/Being Outdoors

Nine participants mentioned the importance of being outdoors, or being in nature as being an important contributor to their quality of life. Some spoke of simple acts or pursuits like gardening, running or going for a bike ride; many others referred to activities like camping or spending time at the cottage. Participants spoke of the importance of activities in the outdoors both in terms of solo activities and those that were geared for family.

Quality of life is also about nature. It's funny, I was walking to the cafeteria across the street and I had this real sense of being outside. The sun was beautiful and I was thinking how much I was looking forward to going to camp for 5 days next week. There's joy in simple things. There are many joyful moments that I have with my (spouse) and my (child) on the boat. There's nothing like coming home with the sunset at your back.

I've always been someone who loves being outdoors, being part of nature, getting outside. I'm from(city), but my parents were fortunate enough to have a cottage, so every weekend literally we went there and all summer long. I'd spend my summers outside and so it was always something I wanted to do that way.

We have a cottage and that's a wonderful place, no TV, no phone, there's nothing. Not that it needs to be, but it forces us to behave more like a family, rather than a bunch of individuals doing a bunch of activities, going in different directions. So we go up there between

June and September 80% of the weekends and we spend at least 3 weeks holidays up there. So that has turned out to be a wonderful investment from a quality of life perspective.

5. The role of pets

Four participants mentioned the importance of the role of their pets in their overall quality of life. Interestingly, none had children at the time of the interviews. Each spoke of the level of joy they receive from the bond they share with their pet.

I try to get home by a reasonable hour - by 6 in the evening. My (spouse) and I always have dinner together, I play with the (pets) and brush their teeth. It's a challenge. They're really dear to us because they've been kind of like our kids. We take them outside and supervise; we each watch one.

I feel like I'm their mother in lots of ways and that's the way I think of it, they're my babies. My mother has three grand(pets). What do I do, I mother them. I'm always touching them and petting them, they're house (pets) but I take them outside and make sure they have that freedom to be natural.

6. Time for self

Three participants spoke of the importance of having time for self. All of these individuals were in committed relationships but did not have children. One participant spoke specifically of the need for time for self for himself and his spouse.

There has to be some solitude, some time for myself. I'm not someone who likes well structured off time, or well structured personal time. I need to plan but

there's some things that I need to do on my own.

I do need self time to go off and do my own thing. It's a me time, and a me thing, and he (spouse) gets his time when I'm not around, he gets to wake up and do his thing which he likes and needs. We purposefully set that up, I do believe that that's important. I think I bring things back to the relationship when I do things on my own. I think we both understand the (need for) individual time.

7. Role of faith/religion

Three participants spoke about the importance of their religion as a contributor to their quality of life. There was a great variation between the value placed on religion by the twelve participants. It should be noted that six participants felt that religion had no importance in their overall quality of life. The following quotations represent the views of participants who are committed to the value of religion as a positive contributor to their quality of life:

There's a whole bunch of other things that come into the value system like faith, religion, all that stuff. (Religious faith) is very, very important to me. That has to take a lot of the credit in striking a balance between life and work. My faith and my family are really important.

We go to Church, not every Sunday but pretty regularly. We think that's a balance for ourselves and our children. A lot of people are surprised to find that I attend church regularly and it's not more of a figurehead thing, it's a way of life. The specific aspects of religion are important, but more, it's a time once a week when I get to reflect on myself, things that I did well, things that I wouldn't have wanted to do but I did,

things that I did do that I'm appreciative of. It's a form of meditation and at the same time our children get used to the value set and that's important to me.

Prerequisites to Achieve Excellence in Job Performance

The participants were asked to give their own perceptions on how they have achieved excellence in their job performance. The question was very open-ended yet four prerequisites or contributing factors were identified by all participants. They must: (a) be highly organized; (b) have strong interpersonal skills and communication abilities; (c) seek additional responsibilities in their role; (d) have balance in their lives.

1. Being organized

All participants identified the need to be organized as a factor in their success. This was viewed as an essential skill across all occupation levels. Organization was described as including planning a days work the night before and delegating tasks. Two participants described their need to be organized in the following terms:

Organization is a big one and trying to keep managers organized, making sure they know what they're doing because a lot of times they're so busy that if you don't leave everything laid out for them, they'll forget (something).

Everyday I never leave stuff. Every day I go through what I need to go through, so I always try to keep current of what's going on. I'll either throw it out, send it off or delegate it.

2. Interpersonal skills - communication with others

Succeeding at a high job performance

level required strong interpersonal skills and the ability to communicate well with others. This belief is reflected in the following,

“I don't think of myself as any star around here. There's some really bright people around here, I'm not one of them. I'm an average Joe who has pretty good communication skills which helps. I think I have a real strength with people interaction and I think that's a real important quality”.

For some participants, this was viewed as the single most important skill in the workplace. Three main trends were identified throughout the responses.

(a) Managing people. The individuals who were very senior within the organization listed the ‘ability to manage people’ as a main contributing factor to their success. This was also evident in individuals who held positions not specifically identified as ‘managerial’ yet involved managing groups of people. The following quotes reflect the participants’ comments about the role of managing people.

If you know how to manage people, you write your own ticket because there aren't a lot of raw term managers in any industry that I've seen, and it's a tough skill to teach because there isn't a lot of formal training on how to manage so I think I'm one of the lucky ones to have a natural knack for doing that. It's part of what makes me successful, it's that relationship I have with the workers that work in my group, so you need raw skills, you need discipline, you have to be extremely organized, but the bottom line is, in my opinion, to excel in this type of environment, is to know how to

manage people.

This last year's Exceed (rating) was all around grouping people, people who had never worked together before, it was people management to potentially deliver a program and I aced it. I had a plan, I got these people and I knew how I was going to address it, one on one so they trusted me and then I was going to bring them to a group. Then I said now we're going to work as a team, I used certain words like the team, I made promises and I delivered on them and so everybody's happy, where in the past, they'd never been happy.

(b) Communication with managers. A second theme that evolved was the role of communication with managers. Participants spoke of the manner in which they communicate with their managers and bosses to teach them about what kinds of feedback and rewards bring out the best in the participant.

At work, it's recognition, it's reward, it can be even a simple pat on the back, I work to that and in fact I tell most of my managers when they try to understand who I am, I say you reward me and you'll get more out of me, and I think that's for everybody but in particular it works for me.

I've actually learned to manage upwards a lot better over time. If you don't get the expectations and communications right, usually upwards, you can get caught. I think I've always been good at managing my bosses in such a way that I can be managed the way I want to be managed during the time that I am there.

(c) Creating a network of knowledgeable people. The final aspect of the

importance of interpersonal skills was to create a network of knowledgeable people who could be of assistance. By developing strong work relationships with specific individuals, they are able to solve problems and get answers in a very timely manner.

I understand technical things and people respect that and I can get to the bottom of technical things. I guess it's part of the network, it's part of knowing who the people are that you can rely on. If there's some things I need to know, I go to certain people and they go find out, and I have a good interaction with them such that I can get information I want to know reasonably quickly, partly because they think like I do, partly because of our relationship, professional, work relationship and I think that's important.

3. Seeks challenge and responsibility

The need to be challenged and the desire to be given responsibility were identified by all 12 participants as important for achieving excellence. Participants spoke of their initiative in finding more tasks or being given more duties.

I'm a pretty ambitious person, I'm not shy to speak up. If I'm getting really bored with my job I'll say what else can I do?

One of the big things was that I asked to be challenged, I knew that I could do a job that I wasn't necessarily banded at, so I went out and asked for it. I said I could do this, I've been a major contributor of a team that's delivered this before. So I think that taking on initiative, and then delivering, I was able to do it. And the next couple of years it was because I kept on growing kept on delivering, I kept on taking on something

else, a bigger thing and expanding my horizon and always being able to deliver.

Participants also spoke of their desire for independence and ownership of tasks. This perception of trust and belief from the employer was viewed as extremely important by the participants. For some it was deemed as “empowering”, for others it was the challenge of being responsible from the beginning to the end of a specific task or deliverable. These views are echoed in the following quotes:

I like to be empowered, I like it when people trust that I'm going to do a good job and off you go. I check in, and not that I go off on a tangent and nobody knows what's going on, I do all of the right bureaucratic things keeping everyone in the loop but I do like to know that I don't have to report in on every little bit. So that's important.

When given a task, I like to take ownership of the entire task, and to do the best I can with it, and try to envision what the goal is and then go beyond that. It helps in achieving the goals in a timely manner.

4. Living a balanced lifestyle

Every participant spoke of the value of balance as being a contributing factor to their sustained high level job performance. For some participants balance was viewed in terms of getting a bit of time for themselves and for physical activity, whereas for others it was respecting various areas in your life, which leads to high performance in the work place. The following consist of illustrations of these views:

If you have a balanced life, spend your time in many different areas then that's a good pace for doing well in your job. Intuitively, it makes sense that if you're going to run a big company, you need to be able to manage your time. If you can't decide on how you're going to use your time in your personal life, how are you going to be able to decide on how to use your time in your professional life? Over the long term, you have to argue that, especially today, if you can't manage your time in life and work, then you won't last very long. If I look at people who work for me, I have a high amount of respect for people who try to do a lot of things and come to me and say they're going to take off on Friday afternoon to take their kid to a hockey camp or whatever, and I see a fair amount of people who work for me who do better because they do more.

I think the fact that I get to have some time for myself, get home and relax and I don't mean on a couch, because a lot of times I think about work things at home too. I think the fact that I have another life, I get to bring new things to work. I think that some of the things I do outside do effect my work life. I think the biggest thing is that I'm a happy person so because I have my own me time, I can come into work and enjoy it and do a good job.

5. Being viewed as being different

The importance of being viewed as different or unique was mentioned by three participants. It was stated by participants that they felt that the belief that others felt their skills or behaviours were different from other employees had a definite effect on job performance evaluations. This view is represented in the subsequent quotation:

I've always been seen as doing well, as being a capable communicator, but always being a bit different than other people in terms of my approach. I've always been seen as being good at work, different than others, maybe more capable than others, but also broadly capable. I do think that my broad capabilities and my broad interests indirectly has affected how people see me as being different and being set apart from others.

6. The role of commitment

The role of commitment was identified by six participants. The definition of commitment varied between individuals. For some, it was based on working hard and being disciplined, and for others it was defined as following through and making deadlines. It was described as “doing what you say you're going to do”. An example of each perspective is illustrated below:

I think the commitment is that you just have to do the best that you can do. The ability to come up to speed and be a quick study, having a technical background in school allows me to understand things that you need to understand in order to excel in this kind of environment. So as long as that drive to succeed is there and you are equipped with some of those raw skills, then I think all you really need is the ability to be very organized and the ability to be very disciplined.

Commitment is really, important to me personally, but I've seen it from organization's perspective, like actually saying you're going to get things done, getting them done, getting them done on time, getting them done in quality, and that's just something I've always done. I think

people remember that, so having things done when they're supposed to, so you don't screw up other people.

Relationship between Quality of Life and Job Performance

All participants felt that there was a relationship between their level of quality of life and their job performance, that their balance has contributed to their job performance. Some spoke of the effect of excessive work for a continuous period of time as having a negative effect on their overall quality of life. Participants' views regarding a relationship between their quality of life and their job performance are illustrated below:

If things are out of kilter for me, then something suffers. So to be able to sustain a 70 hour work week for a month, or 2 months, well then stuff suffers, and you know that.

Of course, absolutely, absolutely (they are related). I think depending on what's going on in your personal life, we don't have kids but I can imagine if we had children, for the first little while it would take quite a bit of getting used to and adjustments to the lifestyle and work style and that would probably impact work performance.

It's interesting because the first Exceed rating came the first year that we had our son. I focused on less travel but I think what happened there was that I became very passionate about the work that I was doing and secondly, I had a manager who really understood what my strengths were and what I could bring to the table. This is interesting because I think if anything in those two years, I was more focused on balance and you learn to be more effective in the time that

you have. I don't see that my personal life has been negatively effected over the past 2 years and in fact I think I made my family life more of a priority and it had a positive impact on my job performance.

I know I'm more happier now and I know I'm performing better now than I was back in the 80s. I think now that I've become more happy in my life, and more enthusiastic about the future, and positive and looking forward to being a dad, I see all the linkages in my work life, all falling into place. I'm happier at work, I'm more successful at work and I'm happier in my personal life, they're all kind of working together.

I've always done well in my career, but I do it because of the foundation that was built when I was growing up, so I have been thinking about it and I think it's very important and I think people would be much more effective in work if they had balance outside of work and I think I'm a living example of that.

Since participants spoke of balance and quality of life as contributing factors in good performance, they were asked if they felt they could achieve high job performance without being “balanced”. Three participants responded that they did not think they could.

The other nine participants talked about the ability to perform at a very high level while being completely unbalanced as long as it was for a short period of time. This concept is very similar to that of “seasonal unbalance” described in the study by Amirault & Orlick, (1998).

I think you need to look at it over a long enough time span to see the balance. In any given time there may be reasons why

you spend more time in your professional life or in your personal life but overall I think the balance part of it is key in terms of making sure that in a reasonable interval 6 months, a year, two years, that you're satisfied. For me it's absolutely important that work play a significant role in that balance, in that equation.

As long as I know it's short term (you can have high job performance without being balanced). So if I do feel out of balance, and I do right now, at least I'm enthusiastic about what I am doing.

My own view is that they all come together, and they're not (segregated). You have to be sure to look at time frames. You can be maxed out, focused on one part for a short period of time, and usually that's work, but if you're looking at sustained performance over the longer term, months, years, it's all got to come together. It doesn't mean that you can't go for weeks without balance, but I think that if you go for months, you won't get good performance.

Prerequisites to achieve excellence in job performance and in quality of life

The participants were asked if there were any prerequisites that they required in order to achieve both excellence in job performance and excellence in quality of life. All 12 participants identified the following four main prerequisites to achieve their 'balanced excellence'. The participants must: (1) make and maintain a commitment to a balanced lifestyle; (2) have supportive relationships at work and at home; (3) participate in physical activity and/or leisure activities; and (4) be highly organized and efficient.

1. Commitment to balance

All participants spoke of their commitment to balance as a goal in their lives. This was discussed in a variety of ways but a consistent statement was that it was necessary to ensure that decisions are made as life decisions rather than just work decisions: "So you've always got a sense of what's important." Participants further explained that it was important to determine and fully understand the potential effects on all aspects of your life when decisions are made in the work place. These views are expressed in the following quotations:

I think it's all about priority, if you have balance as a priority and you're conscious of it, then you think of ways to maintain it. It is just another hurdle in what you're trying to achieve. We try to schedule our travel for team meetings in order that we don't have to travel on Sunday. You would never arrange things like that if you weren't conscious about putting a value on family and balance.

I have to keep things in perspective, to see things as what is really important. Making sure that you're making the best decisions for you even though they may not be the best decisions for work. Occasionally I lose perspective but I have a lot of people at home who help put things into perspective so that if you lose it, someone's there to bring something to light. Also, it's important to listen to your own intuition and listen to that flag.

I know where the next level is and I know I have the capability to achieve it and the next level beyond that. The question is the time frame and the cost associated with that. It's a question of trying to balance the cost and the value of what you try to do. At the end of the

day you sort of weigh it off and say is this an investment I'm ready to take now, versus no, I think I'm willing to forgo this excellent career opportunity because we're going to have a baby and the next couple of years is going to be very important. I don't want to be in a situation where my work life is hairy because I'll be in a situation where my personal life will be hairy. I'm not naïve enough to think that I'll be able to be in control of all the knobs all the time. Right now I feel comfortable that I, we jointly, my wife and I are reasonably in control of things. That's enabled us to have the success that I've had and to have the success she's had.

2. Supportive relationships

All of the participants discussed the importance of having understanding supportive relationships with family and friends as being a major contributor to both their job performance and their quality of life. The subsequent quotes reflect the value that individuals place of the importance of their families.

If I took a look at it, it's (balance) a whole bunch of factors. It's my personal situation- my wife who I think has a good understanding of me, sometimes I think better than I do, and she helps to provide some grounding.

I feel like I've had support all my life, maybe because of who I am and my positive outlook and that I'm a happy camper, that people have naturally supported me. I feel that the organization's always supported me and maybe it's my managers, who they are but I've always felt that the organization was there for me and it's never scrutinized. I get up and 4 o'clock and I leave and this place is still buzzing. Nobody turns around

and says why are you leaving at 4 o'clock. From home, I've always had positives - you're doing well - and I have a healthy relationship from my husband, we have a happy home. I think a lot of that has to do with just being able to go outside and enjoy the garden, that you literally can enjoy the garden because you don't have any other worries behind you.

3. Physical activity and leisure

The importance of being physically active was identified by all participants. The involvement in sport, recreation and leisure were believed to be major contributors to the ability to achieve both excellence in job performance and excellence in quality of life. The following quotations echo these views:

I've always been involved with sports, with competitive sports all my life so, volleyball and soccer and touch football, and hockey, baseball, and softball, and then I got married I had to cut down on those sports because there were other things, I go 3 or 4 times a week to work-out and I still play competitive volleyball and that's really important, if you like that competition at that level, that brings something to your life, that other things don't necessarily bring to your life, like being on the court with a bunch of guys all striving for the same goal and playing at a pretty high level is something that turns me on and I really enjoy that. That adds to quality of life for sure. But it's less important to experience that than to experience the bonds I have with family, so if that stuff ever interfered with my family life, and playing on 5 sport teams rather than I did, so I cut 4 of them out.

At one point a couple of years ago I went

back to aerobics but that's gone again. I go biking with my oldest, and I tend to do exercise at home very regularly for muscle building. I'm not a big athlete or a big sports person but I really need that sense of movement, so my trade off to my crafts and painting has been a half hour of exercise at home at 10 o'clock at night.

4. Effectiveness in the workplace

All participants spoke of the importance of being highly effective in their jobs. They felt that this ability to be organized and efficient contributed to their job performance and their quality of life by effectively using their time at work. Intuitively, this would then allow the employees to leave the work place at a more reasonable hour, thus leaving more time to enjoy the people and things that are of value to them. These views were communicated in the subsequent quotes:

I used to think it had to do with brain power, it has something to do with brain power but more to do with effectiveness. I think I have a very common sense approach to how I look at life and that helps a lot.

I think I'm more effective if I know that I'm going to leave the office at 5 o'clock, so I work more efficiently if I know I have a deadline to get out of my office.

If you're expecting that you have to put in 80 hours a week to be successful, I can't answer that. I think a 40 or 50 hour a week of mine is probably as productive if not more productive than a lot of 80, 90, 100 hour a week of some of my peers.

Other themes that were identified by certain participants included: being in the moment, knowing yourself, religion

or faith, and interpersonal skills. “I think it's a question of trying to maintain a sense of who you are and what you are all about. So trying to maintain a balance in your head in terms of what's important.”

Recommendations to new hires

One of the main goals of this research was to develop a better understanding of how people can achieve excellence in terms of quality of life and job performance. The findings may be of value to newly recruited employees who may be seeking advice and recommendations to achieve excellence in life and work. Participants were asked if they had any recommendations or advice to offer to other employees to help them reach a high level job performance while still maintaining a high quality of life. One of the main themes that was reiterated by all the participants is represented by the following statement: “The most important thing is to be aware of what you want to achieve at work and what you want to achieve for your self, your quality of life.” The following reflects some of the advice offered by participants.

Make your own decisions, manage your time and what is important, and work hard, and you know you're going to have to spend a lot time so manage your time as being the most important thing that you have.

Be choosy about what it is that you want. Recognize that minutes are finite, so work carefully, scope out where it is you want to go, be clear about the types of responsibilities you take on as to where you want to go. Set goals, set reasonable goals. I think taking care of yourself, so invest in yourself as well as in your ca-

reer and recognize that yes, there's trade-offs. So be open, listen to your body.

You need to find out what you want to do with your life. So I think making sure that they are aware and able to make decisions and move in a particular direction. I think I would tell them to spend a lot of time figuring out what's important to them from a life perspective, from a whole life perspective, and know that there's steps they need to take. What you want to be, what do you want to do, what's important to you, figure those things out and those will help because I think a lot of people struggle with those very fundamental things, who don't have a good sense of what it is they want, not necessarily just from a work perspective but from a life perspective.

I would say to really have a clear mind to what your priorities are. I find a lot of people who are starting here are either right out of university and don't have a house or a spouse or children, so they're very easygoing and fit in and do what they have to do, even if it requires working 14 hours a day, because they have no responsibilities to go home to. I see a lot of frustrated people and a lot of unhappy people but it's almost just about setting your priorities. For me, work isn't everything, you need to have a balance.

I would tell them to be conscious of their values. They become more and more important as we move on in our career and they can easily be compromised. Balance is just one of them and it is more important to some of us than others. At Nortel the structures are all in place to make balance happen and it's all up to the individual. So for these new grads, it's all about standing up for what you

believe in if you truly value it.

I tell them that they've got to understand what their priorities are, I tell these guys, that for me, family is always the number one priority, you can never compromise what is happening in your family and in your personal life because of work, so don't make those kinds of sacrifices because you'll always regret them. When you're at work, give 110%, be the absolute best you can be, don't necessarily wait for the rewards or the pat on the back. If that's something that you want and you need, then you can make it easier for your boss to give you those pats. But if you don't want it and you don't need it then don't look for it and just really do the best that you can because at the end of the day, justice always prevails. Sometimes it takes a little bit longer in certain circumstances than in others, but if its taking longer, it's probably taking longer for a reason and it's probably because we have to learn some stuff as well. If you assume that justice is going to occur, and you just keep doing the right thing, then that's the mode I think you need to be in. When you're here do the best you can do and when you're here, be the best that you can be, don't let work interfere with your family life. If family's really important to you then keep it at the top of your priority list and don't compromise that for anything.

Take time to find some channel, to find out what is important to you, to discover and be thinking about what's important to you because it's an evolving process. Make your decisions in perspective of that whole, not just the work part of your life. I actually gave that advice to a friend not too long ago. He was deciding about different jobs and he said it's only 70% of what I want and then this other

opportunity was a bit different. I remember typing back to him, saying okay, step outside the job for your whole life, what you want for your whole life, is it 70% or is it 50% or does that change for the jobs, so broaden your perspective and how does that change your decision?

All of the participants felt that in order to reach and maintain their level of job performance without compromising their level of quality of life, there were a number of key factors that needed to be taken into consideration. These included (a) determining priorities; (b) making your own decisions at work; (c) understanding your values; (d) ensuring that decisions are made from a life perspective rather than just from a job perspective; and (g) setting work goals and determining what specific job path they want to follow.

Recommendations to the organization

In terms of recommendations to the organization, participants were asked, “Could the organization do anything to assist in this goal”? All participants responded that the organization could make changes to increase the level of quality of life for their employees. Ten out of twelve of the participants specifically make reference to the importance of change at the managerial level. Change was recommended in the selection, development, training and monitoring of managers. The following quotations outline some of the ways in which the organization could improve or contribute to the quality of life of their employees.

I think it very much starts with the managers and the senior managers, they really have to set an example and en-

courage that kind of wise view, so I would call it counseling at this point because you would have an MFA (spell out) at that point. MFA's right now is completely goal oriented for your work objectives, but could be a good plan to make you aware of what else you can do for your quality of life as well.

Be smarter in the selection and development of managers. Developing managers is as much art as it is science, perhaps a little bit more art, and we don't know how to develop it. We need strong managers and we need to make sure that we're developing the right managers, stop putting excellent technical people into managers' jobs, we try to do it so often.

Managers learn from their managers and they learn from their managers. This is part of the problem. Most executives in this company don't have balance. Unfortunately you learn from how you're being managed. High tech is a high work environment. We have a reputation of 'take them in and burn them out'.

I think it's something that's got to be driven by management. People need to really look at the resources, people, and look at the core values. So you're almost talking about a cultural paradigm and they set the bar pretty high to begin with so I have no simple words on how to change it except for management to do what they say they're going to do.

I know some managers who are very much work oriented, try to get every minute of work out of a person as possible, and I'm very much against that. If that's what a person wants to do for a very short period of time and its urgent for their personal development, then

otherwise, obviously it's not going to promote any loyalty from the employee to that manager or to that company, so I think a level of care would help a lot.

The organization can make that a fundamental management principle, make it a behaviour that they try to breed into the management structure. Some do that anyway, the one's who have family as the priority. I think corporately we should be making sure that people don't feel that making family their priority is going to jeopardize their standing in the corporation. People want to take vacation and I tell them always not to cancel their vacation, vacation is family stuff so take your vacation. There's a lot of executives that react (negatively) to people that say that I want to take 3 weeks or 4 weeks in the summer because I want to go to Europe with my family. If I was running the company, I'd fire the manager or the executive that told their employee that this is what you should be doing because we can only afford for you to be away one week at a time. There's stuff in our literature that says we're people oriented and that people are our best resource, but we don't live it, and we don't reward people based on living those things. It starts at management. Managers have to behave we want them to behave, the only way we're going to get them to behave that way in my opinion is to reward them for those types of behaviours.

The participants also felt that the managers do not necessarily value an employee who chooses to develop their “soft skills” or who chooses to go and play beach volleyball during the day outside of the work building. It was stated by 4 participants that a change should be made to understand that productivity may in fact increase for employees in

terms of their commitment, motivation, energy, and satisfaction with the organization by supporting such ventures as the use of flex time, vacation, courses and physical activity.

We are in business to make a profit and there's a fine line always between what we have to deliver and how productive our people are in delivering it. A manager needs to have the attitude that understands that this will contribute to individual productivity.

Everything now has to be linked to keep our costs low, be very efficient. If it's not linked to putting the business forward, then there's no reason for us to be doing it. We want a balanced life, why, so that we can advertise that, so that we can get people and retain them, that's the goal. It would be that piece of it, of recognizing that some of that is just an investment you have to do, to believe it's the right thing to do.

Final reflections

Perhaps the most encouraging finding in this study is that this group of people was able to excel in their performance domain (at work) and to also excel in living their lives outside of work. All of their lives respected numerous domains that brought joy and balance. All spoke of the importance of family, the relationship with their partners and the devotion to their children, or their love of nature and physical activity. Participants gained by having multiple areas in their lives that contributed to their sense of meaning and quality. No single aspect of their lives was viewed as being “too much to handle”. Factors that contributed to their quality of life were viewed as opportunities to experience with a level of quality.

Rather than having the attitude that “there is simply not enough time” to exercise or to go on a bike ride with their wife or coach their child's soccer team, these individuals understood and lived the principle of quality of time rather than quantity of time. They understood that time was finite and that set priorities to experience what was of value to them. They understood what was of value to them, and acted on it. They don't merely “talk the talk”, they “walk the walk”, that is, the walk to quality of life.

Gaining an understanding of what leads to a high level of job performance and high level of quality of life can result in benefits for both employees and employers. The understanding of how employees achieve excellence in both of

these areas may lead to meaningful recommendations to organizations in terms of the promotion of quality of life of their employees. An investment in employee quality of life may result in an increase in overall work satisfaction and an increase in long-term performance excellence.

It is hoped that as a result of this preliminary step in exploring the value and means of achieving both quality of life and high level job performance, future investigations will further explore these themes. On a more personal note, we hope that you will apply some of the findings in this study to your own life - towards a higher quality of life and sustained high quality job performance.

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Profiles of Excellence

The quest for the South Pole: The preparation phase

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Abstract

In 1911 the Norwegian Roald Amundsen reached the South Pole and beat Captain Scott in a historic race. More than eighty years later, Erling Kagge was the first person to ski solo to the same destination. In 1994, Liv Arnesen became the first woman to achieve that goal. It may be difficult to grasp the underlying motives that drive these courageous persons to undertake such challenges. Of course, the context has changed and with that the motives - from that of conquering new territory in the Amundsen days to that of a more personal venture in modern times. In this article, Liv Arnesen reveals how she was thinking just a month before she started on her solo expedition to the South Pole. An inherent love for nature coupled with the importance of physical endurance and mental toughness is underlined.

Introduction

In 1994 the Norwegian Liv Arnesen was the first woman to ski to the South Pole - solo and unsupported. In fifty days she covered a distance of 1110 km, in complete solitude, in one of the World's most remote and hostile environments. This expedition distinguishes itself as one of the most successful in modern polar history because of the absence of dramatic incidents. However, this was not the first time Liv Arnesen tested herself against the demands of nature. In 1991 she led an expedition on Greenland which was the first all-women expedition to cross the ice cap without sled dogs. However, the expedition was stopped by a Pitera; a Greenland phenomenon of strong, hurricane-like winds. This was, though, only a temporary setback. The following year she made a second attempt together with Julie Maske, and this time they succeeded. This expedition, coupled with

extensive experience from Norwegian outdoor life including several years working as a guide in Svalbard, constituted a solid foundation for her to make a solo expedition to quest for the South Pole in 1994.

Let us turn the clock back to October 1994, - approximately one month before the expedition started. It is a common saying among adventurers that the main accomplishment of major expeditions is to actually manage to organize the whole project and to collect all the sponsoring money that is needed in order to undertake an expedition of this size. An expedition to the South Pole is financially demanding with a budget of minimum of USD 250 000. Thus, being able to sell the idea is a major obstacle in the preparation phase. I conducted an interview with Liv Arnesen while she was towards the end of this phase. In hindsight, when we know that everything went extremely well, it is of great

interest to recall how she prepared and how she was thinking during the preparation phase. I also interviewed her one month after she had returned from the South Pole and got her immediate feelings and thoughts about the adventure. This will be the focus of a later article. The story she tells us is one of great determination, commitment to a dream, and love for nature.

The preparation phase

The combination of being a woman and having an attraction towards strenuous adventures is a challenge even in a country that likes to promote itself as an “equal rights” society. Polar expeditions have long traditions in Norway and some major successes have been achieved such as the first crossing of the Greenland Ice-cap by Nansen in 1888, and the race for the South Pole in 1911 in which Roald Amundsen beat Captain Scott and his men. Also, during modern times there have been several examples of expeditions that have tried, and often succeeded, in pushing the limits. However, males, with only a few exceptions, have conducted the main portion of these expeditions. So, when Liv Arnesen entered the arena she was met with distrust and suspicion. A typical comment was, “Well, do you really know how to pull a pulk that heavy?” Obviously, it was difficult to believe that a woman, although she had successfully crossed Greenland by skis, would be able to achieve the same thing as only one man (Erling Kagge) had done before her. Several leaders in large companies met her with this attitude. The fact that they doubted her ability even before she had presented former achievements felt disturbing and unfair. Finally, she had to go abroad to Italy to be able to find a large-scale sponsor. She fully confirmed what oth-

ers have claimed earlier, that it is the preparation phase that often is the toughest part of an expedition.

Physical preparation

Pulling a 110 kg pulk through sastrugis - cold and dry snow which has a high friction component is a challenge (sastrugis are snow formations up to several meters high; they are waves shaped by winds at the polar plateau). The physical preparations are extensive in order to cope with the demands. It is important to simulate in practice the same conditions that you will meet during the expedition. Thus hours and weeks were spent on carrying heavy rucksacks while skiing, or pulling trunk-tires uphill during the summer months. A sound physical preparation is one of the cornerstones of the mental preparation as well.

Mental preparation

The South Pole has always been in Liv Arnesen’s mind. In early childhood she was inspired by reading stories written by the polar heroes Fritjof Nansen and Roald Amundsen. Her father was very interested in polar history and Liv followed in his footsteps, while her mother has always been very fit and fond of physical activity. Thus she is part of a long tradition, founded by her family, of spending a lot of time outdoors in all kinds of weather. Skiing solo to the South Pole was not an act of impulse, rather it was a result of a dream that has grown from a vague day dream in early childhood to a clear and definite ambition years later.

The greatest achievement is, according to Liv, to put your dream in to reality. Most human beings have a dream, but only a few are able to try and materialize it. Other motives such as public recog-

nition are secondary at best. This may be what separates Liv from her male companions. For her it was not a big issue to be the first women to ski solo to the South Pole. In fact she was unable to find a person who was as keen as she was at the point when she started to plan the expedition. After a while she realized it was sponsor gimmick that she was doing it alone. While her male counterparts have been promoted as being adventurous and challenge seeking, Liv, being a woman, has experienced less publicity and less recognition. “I probably tear down the myths of the great polar heroes” she reflected. It is as though even in the nineties people wonder, “How can it be such an achievement when even a woman can do it?”

There are two main dangers when you set off to the South Pole. One is the extreme cold with temperatures often down to -40 degrees Celsius during the “summer” period. “I am prepared to meet extreme cold and bad weather conditions”, Liv said, “and when I do I will camp early so that I don’t lose all my energy. One of the worst things you can do is to wait too long before you camp”. The second danger is the crevasses. Being alone, the chances that you will be able to rescue yourself if you fall into a crevasse are small. In order to avoid the crevasses, she has studied all the satellite photos that are available, and she is also confident that she will follow her own intuition. If she feels that she should avoid an area because of some uncertain reason, she will change her course immediately. She will trust her first hunch. “The older I get, the more I trust my intuition. I never ignore it anymore”.

Coping with stress

One of the main success factors on an

expedition is, according to Liv Arnesen, a will to sustain discomfort. Expedition life often includes long hours with physical struggle and also long days stranded in the tent, waiting for better weather conditions. Patience is a key word and ability to cope with monotony. In order to avoid the latter, Liv will bring with her her poetry. The idea is that when she reaches the end of the day, she will try to focus on and memorize poetry instead of letting the mind wander. From earlier experiences she knows that if you are not able to direct your thoughts when you are fatigued, you easily end up humming the same tune over and over again until it drives you crazy. Thus, the rhythm of poetry is far more attractive than a casual song.

She is also prepared to retreat if the conditions become too difficult to handle. She will not push the limits any further than she believes she can handle. But she is confident she has the necessary skills needed for a successful expedition. “I have experienced quite a few situations earlier, and I have never panicked, always stayed calm and managed to think clearly”, Liv said. Even when an avalanche caught her, she managed to focus on holding her ski pole high up in the air so that the others in the group more easily could find her. This ability to stay calm and focused in critical moments is a major strength of hers.

So, why do it? As mentioned, a main motive is to follow a dream and be committed to that dream - much in line with what Orlick (2000) claims high achievers need to have. But another strong motive is the simple joy of being in nature and recharging one’s energy. Contrary to some of her male counterparts who often have focused on the

strenuous parts of expedition life, Liv has spoken warmly about her love for the outdoors and being close to nature. She intensely looks forward to encounter what nature has to offer on the way. The final goal, the South Pole, is rarely mentioned during the interview, except when she is directly asked about it. It is as if the process of reaching the Pole is at least as important as reaching the Pole itself. Her final words were, “ Actually, now I just want to be on my way – I look forward to it! How will it be to spend 60 days with only myself as company? Will

I enjoy every day?”

Postscript

A dramatic incident happened just shortly before Liv set off to the Arctic. One of her best friends was brutally murdered. Life suddenly took a new direction. It would be a different trip. A stressful preparation phase became even more stressful, and the only longing she had was to be alone with her grief and be alone in nature.

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The focus of The Journal of Excellence is the sharing of knowledge and wisdom that is relevant to the lived experience of excellence in any domain (e.g., sports, performing arts, health, workplace, education, joyful living). Qualitative research of an applied nature, such as case studies, interventions, interview studies and narrative studies are welcomed. The journal also publishes personal accounts, short commentaries, interviews, poems or stories that offer insights into the nature of high level challenges and the mental links to excellence. Reviews of books, videos, films or conferences as well as notices of upcoming conferences and events will be considered.

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Louise Zitzelsberger, PhD

Editor

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All submissions must be preceded by an abstract not exceeding 150 words. All figures and photographs should be submitted on-line in Tiff format (600 dpi.). Tables should be included in the Word document. A short biographical sketch describing each author area(s) of expertise, performance or research interests and affiliation(s) should accompany the article.

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Founded in 1989, the focus of the ISMTE is excellence in performance and excellence in living. The founding President, Lars Eric Unestahl, organized the First World Congress in Örebro, Sweden, in 1991. Terry Orlick became the second President in 1991, hosted the 1995 World Congress in Ottawa, Canada and initiated the Journal of Excellence. Keith Henschen became the third President in 1998. Keith and Rich Gordin hosted the 1999 World Congress on Mental Training and Excellence, in Salt Lake City, USA. The next World Congress on Mental Training and Excellence will be hosted by Pavel Bundzen in 2003, in St.Petersburg, Russia.

Vision

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