

CNY Business Exchange magazine asked three leading sports authorities from Central New York how the culture and mind-set of sports can benefit the business world.



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PUT ME IN, COACH: AN OLD-SCHOOL PARADIGM SHIFT OR A NEW BUSINESS APPROACH? By Kevin Seaman

The world of business is no doubt a competitive one. In order to succeed, we must constantly improve, revise our approach and know our product, our market and our competition. These qualities are the foundations of business. For athletics, this is an old-school approach unbroken since the Greeks founded the Games of Olympia.

But is there more than meets the eye for the Game of Business in this approach for the win? How can this competitive philosophy serve as a business model? Here are Nine Key Principles that, when applied and followed, can serve the components of any business and give it a competitive edge.

Practice, Practice and More Practice — Although natural aptitude and ability will take you into the competitive running, a truly outstanding champion is developed through constant improvement, performing best through subconscious expression. This quality can only be achieved through practice. It is repetition that drives the patterns and capabilities

necessary to perform at the upper competitive level deep into our mind. The work ethic in high-level athletes is relentless. It may mean a second off the time, an inch further on the jump or a clutch shot before the buzzer. In business it is an essential that can be measured by the bottom line. Preparation makes the difference, and through practice comes mastery.

Adaptability and Flexibility — The mark of a great team is being able to play for the moment. Adaptability is a key component of success in the clash of competition. Mental flexibility is an almost instinctive command of change often necessary to play to the opponent's lesser strengths. Adaptability and flexibility are only enabled through the release of ego, doing what is necessary to accomplish the win, regardless of what your original plan was. In the modern arena of business, adaptability means the ability to change with technology, customer needs and trends. A lack of vision and a fixation based on tradition can cripple a business or an entire industry.

A Belief in Yourself and Your Team

— Our beliefs are based on the references we focus on, which in turn support that belief. These references (experiences) can be firsthand, second-hand or imagined and can substantiate our empowerment, giving us confidence or create an opposite effect, depending on our mind-set. Focusing on our losses supports the belief that we will lose again. When we focus on our wins, we create a sense of strength through the possibility of continued victory. Our mind always leads us in the direction of our dominant thoughts.

Put Yourself Out There — It is that very moment, when you take the risk that defines you. Athletes frequently operate on an intuitive moment of decision that will make or break the tie score. This is the very hallmark of the All-American, the MVP and the Hall of Famer. In the words of leading hockey scorer Wayne Gretzky, "You miss every shot you don't take." In a competitive business environment, you will stand out by what you do. In sales, for example, it's purely a numbers game. The more clients you see, the higher your sales percentage. So, put yourself out there.

Play With Strategy-Specific Game Plans — Although athletes play best when they do what they do best, a game

plan is essential. If you play head to head with your competition, you may win through tenacity; however, play to their weakness and you will own them.

Visualize to Win — See it, then achieve it. Athletes have long used visualization prior to an event. Did you know that your subconscious mind cannot really tell the difference between experiencing something vividly in your mind and actually doing it? The neuro-receptors in the brain respond almost identically. Visualize that meeting over and over with what you need to achieve and the outcome you expect. It will be convincingly apparent by your outward confidence that you have a complete conviction toward your directive.

Team Excellence — There is a difference between a team playing excellent and team excellence. Team excellence is setting the standard higher than everyone else; what got you here in the first place, will not get you where you want to go in the present and future. In order to succeed, business operations must be evaluated in the pursuit of excellence. To do this means to raise our standards, setting us apart from the rest.

Learn From Your Wins and Defeats — What did you do wrong, what do you need to do more of and what do you need to improve? The bounce-back attitude of the best players is clearly evident. Winners may not always win on the scoreboard, but they never give way to their opponent or give up on themselves. Most of all they learn and evolve.

Play With Passion — Athletes with a true love for the game play from the heart. It is this passion that drives them to become the BEST they can possibly be, to play each game with an enthusiasm and emotional state that are authentic. This can only be accomplished if you enjoy what you do. If you love what you do, you will be successful and you'll never work a day in your life.

"Life is 10 percent what happens to you and 90 percent how you respond to it." Lou Holtz 

Kevin Seaman has taught at Cornell University for 16 years. A former world champion in full contact martial arts and holder of eight black belts, Seaman is known for his unique approach as a performance coach and speaker, having helped thousands to accomplish their goals over the past 27 years. To learn more about his program and his book, "The Winning Mind Set," go to www.thewinningmindset.com