



Prepare Like an Olympian for the Challenges of the Business World

How does an Olympian prepare mentally for a once-in-a-lifetime event that can literally be over in seconds, but its results will last for the rest of his or her life? Surprisingly, in a very similar way as businessmen and women prepare for big projects.

Because of my background as the first American Olympic gold medal aerial skier, motivational speaker and author of a much-talked-about inspirational book, I was honored when the U.S. Olympic Committee engaged me to help train the current and upcoming athletes.

So what are the secrets of Olympic-caliber preparations? In highlighting a few of the most intense obstacles presented to the athletes at an Olympic Games, you'll see that my recommendations for coping with their issues can easily be paralleled in the business world.

OLYMPIC CHALLENGES	BUSINESS CHALLENGES	NIKKI'S COMBATIVE TOOLS
Fear of failing to make the Olympic podium or even winning the Games	Fear of failing to land a job / promotion or being able to take on a leadership position	Ask yourself, "If I knew I couldn't fail, what would I try?" After you answer this question, ask yourself why it would be so awful to fail at the task or activity. We learn much more from our failures than we learn from our accomplishments.
Focusing too much on the Olympic medal, extensive media, or hometown parades	Focusing too much on the praise you'll get from colleagues or higher ups and forgetting the elements that help get you there	We need to learn to live in the moment and concentrate on what we have control over. And that's the process, not the end results. For example, we can't control someone else's impression of our work; we can only control what we produce.
No accountability! Not claiming your goal of winning an Olympic medal or taking the blame when you don't	No accountability! Not claiming your goal of winning an account / producing the company's best results or taking the blame when you don't	Most successful individuals will take credit for the good AND bad results. Write the challenge down on an index card and tape it to the wall to remind yourself of your goal. This commitment will make you accountable to your goals and responsible for your actions. Read your index card

		and/or check in with your friend weekly to keep yourself on track. If you aren't willing to put a goal in writing, you probably aren't really committed to achieving it.
Intense pressure of personal / family's / country's expectations, extensive media hounding you, and thoughts of what you could lose out on all bottled in a one-time shot for the next four years	Intense pressure of personal / company / clients' expectations, company consequences, and deadlines	The best way to deal with the stress, pressure and anxiety is to build your confidence . Start journaling to recognize what you do well and what you can improve. Each day, write down one thing you did well that day and one thing you could improve on. It's often easy to see the achievements and improvements others make, but we have to take the time to recognize that regardless of what we are going through, we can change, too. Build your confidence by getting to know and appreciate yourself.
Unexpected incidents such as weather, equipment/course problems, sickness, competitor issues, changing schedules / delays, trouble sleeping, etc	Unexpected incidents such as the economy, losing a client, changing deadlines, colleague mistakes, competitors' issues, company, product problems, reorganization, sickness, etc	No one can control unexpected incidents, but you can control how you prepare for their possibility. Pick a project or activity you are working on and come up with three alternate plans in case something goes wrong. As with fire drills in grade school, it helps to plan several escape routes in case of an emergency. Expect the unexpected and you will never be thrown too far off course.
Distractions such as media, family / friends, other events / athletes, Olympic village hype, podium celebrations, teammates' successes and failures, etc	Distractions such as colleagues' successes and failures, competitors' results, family, financial pressures, etc	There are so many distractions in life and if we don't build a hard shell to defend against their enticements, we'll be sucked into mediocrity. Whether it's the hype of Opening Ceremonies, meeting Wayne Gretzky in the Olympic Village, a bad flu, or an impending deadline, we all have to block out external factors. Keeping your goal fresh in your mind will allow you to clear the clutter of all your distractions. Remember what's most important and make sure that this factor is driving all of your actions.

So if you want to be as competitive as the Apolo Anton Ohnos, Bode Millers, Lindsey Vonns and Shaun Whites of the world, get in the game and start your "training" now. Using a list of gold-medal-caliber tools to overcome your own adversities or challenges, you too may be ready to withstand the pressures of a once-in-a-lifetime event.