



# Healthy Mind, Healthy Business

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**S**port psychology is recognised as an important cog in the wheel of improving sports performance. The study of how a sportsperson's mind can affect their body has grown from the 'healthy mind, healthy body' philosophy which dates back to ancient Greek and Chinese civilisations. The techniques used today to improve an athlete's performance in sport have evolved from the ancient methods developed thousands of years ago and can equally be applied to other areas of life. You may not be aiming for Olympic gold but could sport psychology improve your business performance?

Think of your business arena as an Olympic stadium. If you are in business, you are a competitor in that business arena. You may be competing as an individual - a sole-trader; as part of a team; or as the coach - the manager, but the techniques used by competitors to create winning performances in the sports environment can also be used by competitors in the business environment to achieve the same winning results.

## Understanding motivation

An athlete lacking motivation will under-achieve so the same can be said of a staff

member or of an entire business. What motivates an athlete to stay in their sport through months or years of training? Learning to understand what motivates you (and your staff) is a way to get on track to realising your full potential.

## Goal setting

In the sports world, a series of smaller goals are used as stepping-stones in training towards an important competition, the big goal! These goals help to prepare the athlete physically and mentally by boosting confidence and maintaining motivation. Learning how to set SMART goals will be of equal benefit in the business world.

## Mindset

An individual can be in either a fixed or a growth mindset. In a fixed mindset, the individual believes that the skills and ability they have are just what they were born with and nothing will change that. In a growth mindset, the individual believes that change is always possible and that nothing is set in stone. An athlete, and equally a businessperson, in a fixed mindset will struggle to improve on a mediocre performance but in a growth mindset, the world is their oyster!

## Visualisation

Visualisation techniques allow a sportsperson to 'see' a winning performance through their minds-eye. Learning how to visualise a positive outcome under a variety of potentially negative circumstances is an important part of an athlete's preparation for competition and is a proven coping strategy when used in stressful situations. Knowing how to use this technique will reap equal rewards in the high pressure world of business.

## Developing team spirit

Team-building and developing team spirit doesn't need to include a group bungee jump in the deepest Cairngorms or even the compulsory purchase of a fluorescent kagoul but it does need good communication. Improving the performance of team members with the goal of improving performance as a team requires open, honest communication as feedback. Learning how to provide positive feedback as the team leader and how to promote the use of feedback among team members encourages the growth of team spirit.

So, if you want to give yourself a head start in business, get your toe on the start-line by utilising some sport psychology techniques. Get ready to react to the 'b' of the business world, "**bang**" and don't get left behind!



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