

## **Management and Performance Associates – July - August, 2016 Competing or Winning?**

There are several versions about the origins of the original Olympic Games, and they all focus on the religious and athletic aspects of the festivals. According to the first written inscriptions, the Games were born in the year 776 B.C. in the city of Olympia.

As Brazil is hosting the 2016 games, local press cites the following version: Ancient Greeks had always maintained a dramatic relationship with their gods, and therefore created the games to demonstrate their accomplishments to make their Gods proud. In this spirit, the idea was to show their skills in speed, strength and throwing events.

Baron Pierre de Coubertin, the father of the modern games, famously declared that “The most important thing in the Olympic Games is not to win, but to take part.” At the ancient games, the objective was to win, although at the time, winning not necessarily meant to defeat the opponents in the arena. The meaning was to beat the following vices: indiscipline, laziness and resignation.

Regardless of being an Olympic athlete, an amateur, a sports fan or none of the above, practicing Olympic virtues in any professional activity will also contribute to success. Let’s have a look at them:

### **Discipline**

Discipline is the focus on establishing objectives and the activities that must be executed to reach them. Focus on establishing challenging but realistic objectives, which motivates us to reach higher performance standards.

Focus on the objective is the starting point. The real challenge resides in the journey to reach it,

as it requires determination to keep moving ahead in order to overcome obstacles that compromise quality, scope or deadlines. Discipline is also critical to perform when the task at hand is not one of our favorites.

In addition to their innate talent, exceptional athletes like Usain Bolt, Katie Ledecky and Simone Biles, among others, have created preparation routines which are followed with discipline in order to reach the outstanding outcomes obtained during the games. By the way, talent without discipline will not bring consistent results to anyone.

### **Dedication**

The possibility of breaking records challenges the athletes. Demanded results are always higher. Doing more of the same is not enough to face these permanent challenges. We need to expand capabilities, develop skills and competencies, and demonstrate dedication in creating the conditions to solve increasingly complex problems.

Self awareness is critical. Identify your Achilles heel, the weakest link of the chain, and then channel your efforts to reinforce it.

And practice. At his peak, Michael Phelps was swimming impressive 85,000 meters per week in an Olympic pool. His medals speak for themselves.

### **Ethics**

Loyalty is the maximum expression of ethics in sports. Following pre-established rules puts athletes in equal conditions for the competition. Ethics also involves respect. During the Rio Olympics, when the audience misbehaved and booed silver medalist Renaud Lavillenie,

Brazilian Thiago Braz, Gold medalist in men's pole vault asked respect to the audience and a round of applause to the French athlete.

In the corporate world, ethics go beyond complying with legislation and policies. It is extended to the way results are achieved, to respecting differences, and to the quality of relationships with peers, managers, clients, staff members, suppliers and other stakeholders.

### **Constant Improvement**

During an interview after obtaining her first gold medal, Hungarian swimmer Katinka Hosszú was asked if that had been the best achievement in her career. After reflecting for a few seconds, the athlete said: "No.....the best is yet to come." And it did. Twice, as she obtained two additional gold medals.

The above summarizes the essence of the constant improvement mindset: the desire and the pleasure in reaching even better outcomes, being sure that we are able to achieve increasingly challenging goals. It is about knowing your limits and expanding them.

Obviously, the journey will present obstacles, frustration and errors. In those situations resilience will make a difference. When facing adversities, instead of complaining and blaming, learn from the mistakes and develop new ways of accomplishing the proposed goals.

The pleasure to reach results every time the bar is raised represents the fuel that makes each obstacle to be seen as a stimulus, each difficulty as an opportunity, each frustrating situation as a chance to find a more powerful solution.

These virtues will make a major contribution in forming and consolidating high performance, regardless of the field in which they are

attained. The Olympic Games are an endless source of inspiration for performance improvement.

Vinicius de Moraes, a famous Brazilian poet, once decreed that "Beauty is fundamental." In a parody to this statement, and in these Olympic times, we would say that "winning is fundamental" (Sorry, Baron de Coubertin.)

**MAPA Consulting can help you and your team to develop these competencies.**

**See you next time. As always, we welcome your feedback**