

Beijing and the Credit Crunch

The Beijing Olympics were a pretty useful learning opportunity for us and as we go into 2009, some of the lessons learned there seem worth re-starting to see if they can help you get 2009 off to a great start.

We knew the Beijing Olympics were happening from quite some time before, so there was plenty of time to research and prepare for the challenging conditions that would be faced. The current financial climate hasn't had quite the same amount of forewarning, so it's even more important to be able to react *as if we had been warned long ago*.

One thing that was clear going into Beijing, with the potentially unhelpful air quality, the athletes had to be prepared to be doing their normal performance thing (sorry about the technical language), but actually feel and perhaps see slightly different results than they were used to. Fortunately, this didn't transpire, but the mindset was there in place just in case. Just like many of you at the moment, there had to be an acceptance of the following:

1. What I'm used to doing might feel harder than I'm used to it feeling (but this doesn't mean I've become a worse performer).
2. At a time when I want to be showing my best performance, I may end up being far from that (but that will still be better than the rest!)
3. Even though the Olympics can be about Usain Bolt like phenomenal performances, it's actually about doing what needs to be done to get a gold medal (very few world records get broken at Olympic Games).
4. If things I normally trust for feedback about how well I'm doing seem to be giving me dodgy readings, I must not stop trusting that I know what I need to be thinking about and focusing on in order to get the best out of myself.
5. It's a classic, but if I'm better than anyone else at controlling the controllables, then I'll get my optimal performance out of me, when all around me are still worrying about things they can't control.

So, how are you doing on this kind of thinking right now? Are you giving yourself the best chance of performing in challenging circumstances by thinking in the right way at the right time?

Are you getting bloody-mindedly superb at controlling only those performance influences that you are in control of?

Have you got a great performance recipe that you can follow that you know will give you optimal effectiveness in the here and now, even when the numbers you're getting back look far from the normal standard you expect?

Are you re-focussing effectively onto constantly improving your personal ingredients, rather than fixating on KPI's and outcome measures that are currently less than useful?

Are you focused on being the best performer in the current climate and setting new standards in these conditions, rather than thinking about shattering all time bests? (Steve Waugh, the former Aussie cricket captain reckoned one of his best test match innings was a 67 he scored in India on something of a challenging wicket!)

thought pieces

Are you tenaciously protecting your self-confidence as a performer, constantly reinforcing to yourself how good you are, even though things look and feel different to previous high level performances.

Making a commitment to these kinds of attitude choices, every day, allows you to thrive in these conditions, while others feel sorry for themselves and under perform in the face of adversity.

If you work hard enough on these kinds of attitudes, you can ultimately get to the point when you quite enjoy how tough the conditions are (and maybe wish for them!), because you know you'll thrive and flourish while others whither and fail in a sea of self-pity.

True champion performers deliver their best performances despite the conditions (performances, not results..an important subtle distinction).

Who's up for being the Ben Ainslie of the corporate world? Mumps, injuries, atrocious weather, cancelled races, terrible start to the regatta – easier to give up and go home really! Or, tough it out and deliver a startling performance to once again demonstrate how critical the combination of talent and attitude is.