

## **In the flow, as a business owner!**

It is a clichéd statement to say that business can learn much from elite sport yet this assertion retains its currency because of its apparent truth. Elite athletes achieve marvellous outcomes under difficult circumstances and after many years of training, requiring substantial personal discipline, sacrifice and considerable persistence and effort.

Many business owners could relate to these factors. So why do we persist, often against the odds and in light of the personal hardships? Is it simply because we can make a lot of money, because we could be famous or retire sooner to something we would rather do? Or could it be possible that we enjoy the so-called journey more than needing to attain a prescribed outcome? Perhaps like sport, we can succeed in our business if we first strive to enjoy what we do. Accordingly, there is a clear and reciprocal relationship between wellness and optimal performance. That is, when we are well, we are more likely to perform optimally, and vice-versa, when we succeed we are likely to feel better and be healthier.

Could it also be possible, that being in business is an end in itself, just like the professional athlete 'living their dream' where their satisfaction is as much about the participation and the lifestyle afforded? Maybe it can be those special days or performances when an athlete can experience 'flow' that keeps them 'hooked' on their lifestyle choice. Indeed, the allure of those special experiences keep athletes motivated, and maybe, it could be the same for successful business owners too.

So, what is flow? Csikszentmihalyi first coined this term which some people may know as 'being in the zone'. Subsequently, Australian Susan Jackson has popularised this phenomenon in her book called 'Flow in Sports'. Jackson explains *flow* as being a state of consciousness where we are totally absorbed in a task, to the exclusion of other thoughts and emotions. In this state, our mind and body are in harmony, this experience is especially enjoyable and "it is in those moments that we feel truly alive and in tune with what we are doing". It is during these times that individuals, and sometimes teams too, can achieve optimal performance as well as experience joyful emotions.

Flow is a powerful motivator for many performers, not just athletes. To the extent to which business owners must perform, there is a role for flow to contribute to the success of business people too. Trouble is, how do you achieve it? Simplistically, by being process focused, not outcome focused. By aiming to be your best, not to beat your competitor, by committing to wellness and all those related principles, including the basic principles of relationships, being integrity and trust, and through the delivery of products and services that your customers will strive to patronise.

When your business is a place that values humanity, when respect and equity pervade your workplace, and when you feel like your business is special, then you may already experience this wondrous state of flow from time-to-time. If not, then perhaps it is time to review your business practices and attitudes, as you may be missing out on something that can truly elevate your business to that next elite level.

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