

Bodies in motion

Leadership is all about movement

BY MICHAEL DEVENNEY

LEADERS CHANGE THE WORLD.

A dream isn't enough. Thinking about making a difference is ultimately just thinking. Leaders take action, translating a vision to results. In taking action, leaders inspire those around them. Each of us can contribute to a bigger future—something that positively affects others. By getting off the chair and making a move, leaders inspire others to act as well. It is a chain effect. Are you making a difference?

To take action, leaders build on an area of passion, have clear goals, follow their plan with persistence and stay positive. Leadership starts in an area of our life for which we feel great passion and want to make a contribution. In leading from our passion, performance is not just for our benefit but the ability to create changes that will move other people to act as well.

In sports, there are those that compete for their own results. There are also great athletes who follow their dream with such passion that we are inspired to take action and make a move in our own lives. When we watch Olympians overcome the odds against them, their vision inspires us. These athletes act as leaders.

Olympic athletes who show leadership love what they do and it shows. Their passion for their sports is the foundation for their ability to perform at their best. Without the love for what they are doing, athletes would not be able to compete at a level to make a difference. Similarly, leaders need to follow their passion and inspire those around them to move.

Lisa Ross, a Nova Scotia native and member of the Canadian Olympic sailing team in both 2004 and 2008, finds that “motivation comes from loving what you do.” Think about where you can make a difference that matters to you. It may be in your family, in your business, in your community or in another aspect of your life.

Only with clearly defined goals do we translate potential to performance. When clearly defined goals are attached to an area where we are passionate, we see the ability to make a difference.



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For Olympian Karen Furneaux, leadership is ultimately a choice. “People have the potential to be great,” she says. “It is a lifestyle, a philosophy, and a way of life.”

When interviewing Olympic athletes who had competed on the world stage and inspired others to get out of their chairs (both in sports and life), we found a common element: the ability to set long-term goals and break them down to specific short-term actions. Writing down your goals is the key to taking action. What is the outcome you want? Success as a leader is moving beyond an individual goal and helping others succeed.

By following their passion and setting measurable goals, leaders help people strive for excellence and realize their potential. Athletes overcome the blocks and challenges through goal planning. “Everything is linked to the end goal,” says Ross. Oliver Bone, a member of the Canadian Olympic sailing team in 2008, puts it more bluntly: “Keep the goal in front. Be stubborn.”

But there will be challenges and obstacles. Leaders get up after the fall and learn to keep moving forward. The essence of leadership is understanding the challenges and deciding that the goal is worth the effort. “You have to take risk to achieve anything that is worth it,” says Ross. “If you don't take risk, you'll never achieve more than average.” By persisting, leaders motivate people to keep moving.

Staying positive is a key characteristic of the ability to lead. That doesn't mean not acknowledging the losses. Leaders know

that failure is just part of success. “People say you should shake the dust off after a failure,” Bone says. “I say leave the dust on. It's a reminder of what didn't work and you build on it.” Keep perspective and commit to the hard work of success. Staying positive is not about denial or wishful thinking. Leaders reflect on their performance and always see the positive in their efforts, which they share with those around them.

Karen Furneaux, one of Canada's great Olympic rowers, puts it simply. “I never leave the water feeling badly,” she says. “I always find something positive in what I did.” Leaders first ask the question, “What did we do well?” and build on success. Keep the positive in front of you always.

Like Olympic athletes who inspire us through their passion, goals, persistence and positive perspective, leaders personify the hope of bigger futures. Make the decision to be one of the people making a difference. Focus on what you love, write down a goal to make a difference, have persistence and see the positive.

Our community needs leaders. Each of us has the capacity to contribute to a bigger future for Halifax and ourselves. Think about what you are passionate about, then do it. Write it down and take a step to make it happen. “People have the potential to be great,” sums up Furneaux. “It is a lifestyle, a philosophy, and a way of life.” ■