LOCKER ROOM LEADERSHIP

2 FIVE LESSONS FROM TEAM SPORTS

8 YOUR BUSINESS IS A MARATHON – PACE YOURSELF

9 “I QUIT MY 9-5 TO PURSUE MY PARALYMPIC DREAM”
**Lesson #1: Pass the Ball**

This lesson comes from the idea that in life, you need to be a leader in order to be successful. It's about recognizing when you should pass the ball to others and when you should take control. It's about using your strengths to complement others' strengths. There is no room for complacency in life; you must always be willing to learn and adapt.

**Lesson #2: Appreciate Diversity**

This follows naturally from the lesson of passing the ball. If you have a group of diverse talents to play the ball, the game looks a lot easier, in which way, you have a position at the best competitive level. We all know that to win in competitive sports, you need to have a diverse team. This is also true in life. By leveraging the strengths of others, you can achieve more.

**Lesson #3: Build a Bench**

In sports, the bench is a critical component of any team. It's about developing a pool of talent that can replace your starters when needed. Similarly, in business, it's about having a strong bench that can support your team and help you achieve your goals.

**Lesson #4: Pass the Baton**

This lesson is about transitioning leadership. It's about recognizing when it's time to pass on your responsibilities to someone else. This is important in both sports and business. It's about empowering others and allowing them to take ownership of their roles.

**Lesson #5: Every Experience is a Confidence Builder**

Every experience, whether good or bad, can be a confidence builder. It's about learning from your mistakes and using them as opportunities for growth. It's about recognizing that every experience, no matter how challenging, can help you become a better leader.

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**The Bottom Line**

Leadership is not just about winning games; it's about developing a culture of learning and growth. By embracing the lessons from the Olympic Games, you can become a better leader in your own life. Whether you're a professional athlete or a business leader, the principles of teamwork, diversity, and personal growth are universal.

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**The Author**

Roshan Thiran is a leadership coach and author. He has worked with leaders across industries, helping them to develop their leadership skills and achieve their goals.

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**The Readeronomics**

Readeronomics is a platform that focuses on leadership, management, and personal development. It's designed to help leaders develop their skills and achieve their goals.
By KRISTOFER ARVINDRAJ
editor@leaderonomics.com

CALLING THE SHOTS

HOW A FOOTBALL MANAGER GETS THE BEST OUT OF HIS PLAYERS

A 

quiring a strong leader is imperative in grooming a successful team. In sports, the role of a manager as the final decision-maker can determine the team’s potential to reach greater heights.

Fostering social change, adapting to economic progress and building a healthy culture sustains the productivity of a team.

Many people would like to acquire these traits but leaders are not born; they are made by putting in the effort to be a class above the rest. A leader must attain a behavioural process that encourages individuals to hit their goals and then go on to achieve major success.

The Leaderonomics team recently caught up with Cedric Cha, the director of launch by Saltycustoms, an online platform that helps brands sell t-shirts and raise funds for a charity or cause. Cedric plays fullback (or makeshift striker) for his Sunday team, BBNFC. As a full-time boss and part-time foot-

ball fan, we picked his brain on some of the parallels between the office and the dugout.

How do managers impact the team? If players are the hands and feet of a team, the manager is the brain. He chooses the players, deploys the strategies, and is ultimately responsible for success or defeat.

When a manager “fails” at what he’s doing (i.e. not bringing in trophies), how should one cope with that as a player? Losing and failure are part of the game, and of life. Overcoming failure in a team comes down to the trust between the manager and his players. Players look to their manager for encouragement and motivation after a defeat.

The moment a manager loses the trust of his players (also known as “losing the dressing room”), things go downhill from there, which often results in the manager or some players leaving the team.

The dressing room relationship is there really a genuine friendship between play-

ers or are they just treating it as a job? It depends. There are teams whose established players to strengthen the team. Some teams like Barcelona believe in grooming a player from the grassroots to a professional level, while others like Chelsea adopt a culture of bringing in established players to strengthen the team. Both enjoy equal amounts of success. But once again, certain players, as great as they are, do not fit in with the culture of certain teams.

As a manager, how do you manage other coaches under you? (In the workplace: your board of advisors/heads of department)

Firstly, be good at what you do. People respect and listen to those who know what they’re doing. Secondly, and just as importantly, inspire those under you. Help them realise their contribution to the team is equally as important as yours.

The manager represents the team in front of the public, while the physiothera-

post works hard behind the scenes to ensure the players are not injured. The team needs both. We all have different roles to play based on our strengths and skills.

Leadership plays an important role in sports. Different demands according to times and situations and succeeding in complying with those demands is what makes a great leader.

A great leader must be effective in the most favourable situations as well as the least favourable situations.

In Summary: The Author’s Take

A key element in being a great leader is to know how to breed success and to innovate according to times. There are many ways to define leadership but essentially, it all boils down to inspiring people to be their best and surpass their highest potential to always have that hunger for continued success.

Everybody wants it, some long for it, but very few actually manage to make it happen. Inspiring and empowering is, to an extent, a way of life and making it into principle of life will be the difference in becoming a great leader.

Those now referred to as masters such as Sir Alex Ferguson and Jose Mourinho have proven that they had earned leadership every day of their lives through hard work, years of practice, and the ability to constantly move with the times.

They reinvented and remodelled the appeal of the sport globally. They are leaders in their own right because of the desire, the dream and the vision that was embedded somewhere deep inside them.
SPORT IS A BUSINESS

The parallels between sport and business success also equate to time—sustained success is not achieved in the window of a one-off game. In sport, athletes need perseverance and commitment for them to see continued success throughout their journey. Sport demands being committed to years of training. Perseverance and belief is a mindset that requires athletes to embrace failure as part of the learning process.

PERFORMANCE DRIVES SUCCESS

Success in sport is governed by what works and what performance—when we perform better we have more success. If I try winning the game or creating a new personal best. At the individual level, improved athletic performance is a coordinated effort from athletes, coaches, scientists and their professionals. Much like the business community with shareholders, lawyers, partners and contractors. Sport provides performance metaphors at all levels from within the construction of a track to the performance and, ultimately, success. For example, in business, at the production line level, questions could arise as to “how do we help them perform better?”

The sporting elite just don’t get where they are without constant assessment and enhancement of athletic capacity. Many of the techniques and principles employed in improving Olympic performance are the same ones utilised in teaching teams some basic skills.

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Playing the Ultimate Game

By REZHAN MAJID
editor@leaderonomics.com

SPORT has always been a love for me – from being a youth player and weekend warrior to this day while also being involved in the business of sports and community building. I’ve played the game, been a coach, a referee, an administrator, a fan and everything in between.

Whatever sport it was, the part that I always enjoyed the most was simply figuring out the game. What I have always found consistent was how each game paralleled life and leadership experiences.

Discovering myself on the pitch or court allowed me to understand myself in life and in business. In a lot of ways, it was a laboratory for testing and stretching out approaches that were applicable outside the game.

Competition and drive are the basics, but there are infinite nuances similar to those needed on the court or field. Focus, preparation, humbly, practice, execution, winning, timing, rest, recovery, offence and defence.

In a tough economy, skills and disciplines like these are even more important – choosing whether it’s the time to make a play or to step back and sharpen the saw. Applying these lessons to the sport of business has helped me hone my skills in the ultimate game of life.

Here are a few that I continue to learn:

KNOW YOUR POSITION/ROLE

Whether you are part of a corporate team or leading a start-up, understanding your position is fundamental. Are you the superstar, coach, role player, manager? Where do you add the most value? What is most needed? Towards what are you most naturally inclined?

In high school, I played on the basketball and volleyball teams. I was a decent enough player in those sports for the athletic director to ask me to try out for the football team as well.

Prior to that, the zenith of my football career was playing barefoot in the parking lot near our home where the kids in the neighbourhood where the goal posts were stacks of our slippers. I was clearly unprepared and, when asked what position I played, I unwittingly offered myself up as a striker.

I was always a playmaker for others so this was not the right move. I couldn’t keep up with the drills, and felt out of place. I performed about as terribly as you would expect. Being unprepared was one thing, but specifically trying out for that position that didn’t play to my strengths sealed my fate.

Years later, the first corporate job I had was as a financial data analyst for Motorola in its heyday. It was long hours crunching data and staring at spreadsheets. It wasn’t long before my friends would ask me for help on Microsoft Excel.

I was the Excel guy – how did this happen? Looking back, I couldn’t imagine a position less suitable for me. Though I performed well at the job, it didn’t come naturally to me nor was I was inclined towards thousands of rows of numbers and formulas.

In sports, genetic gifts by no means guarantee success. You may not have the size and speed but you can work hard to compensate and have a positive impact on the game.

Similarly, you may be built like a Greek god but, no matter how hard you work, your physical abilities may have a ceiling. So, who are you and what are your natural inclinations and abilities? How do I add value to my team and to the business?

If you’re feeling stuck, maybe you need to consider how you can affect the game from a different position. Maybe you’re more of a strategist and playmaker and less of a striker out in the field acquiring customers.

Mayorly you’re a role player best suited to support the leader. Whatever your position, there is likely one that suits you naturally better than the others.

Knowing it will increase your value and will make you a lot happier as well.

COMPETE OUTSIDE YOUR COMFORT ZONE

Growth and improvement are critical in getting results and fulfillment. You do not improve without adding to your game. Nor do you improve by playing the same competition over and over. When it comes to business and professional development, the efforts are exponential.

Exposure to how the game is played and how to best approach the game – everything from strategies and practice to your attitude on the court and the concept of competition itself; you can see this everywhere in sports. Whether it’s Malaysian-born medalled athletes training in the United States and the United Kingdom, or youth training camps with Premier League teams or pro level basketball summer camps.

You cannot elevate your standards if you do not expose yourself to them. In sports, this is a big part of the coach’s job, but the best players can feel their way through it.

In basketball, unless you are built specifically for it, you don’t full court defensive press the entire game. In a marathon, you don’t sprint for 42km. Know when to attack. Know when the competition is vulnerable. Know when to get off the field and get in the gym and hone your craft.

Sometimes you need to go for that coffee with that ex-colleague to get some perspective. Sometimes you need to pick up that Tony Robbins book or put on that Tim Ferris podcast.

Sometimes you need to pivot the business. Sometimes you need to pick up the phone right now and make that call. Sometimes you need to just put your head down and get to work.

It’s a marathon and you need to know your pacing.

GO FOR GOLD

Finally, play the game with joy and passion. And this isn’t a conversation about finding your passion and how. Nor is it about passion as being necessary to success.

One of pro tennis’ current rising stars, Nick Kyrgios, is one of the top 20 players in the world and yet is infamous for his disrespect of the sport in which he is so talented.

Some have attributed to his youth, but even Serena Williams has expressed in the past that she doesn’t know how she became an athlete and tolerates tennis only because it allows her to pursue things she loves. So, we know you can be a success even without passion.

That said, have passion in whatever you are doing in the moment. And stay in the moment – it will give you the energy you need to give your best self to whatever you are giving yourself to.

Kobe Bryant recently talked about how even though he didn’t like geometry class, he stayed focused on the lesson and present in the moment as a form of practice and creating that habit that he could transfer onto the basketball court.

Instead of passion, look for energy. Get outside your head and move. Exercise, work out, walk, play basketball, play dodgeball, meet new people. You don’t have to read the tenth article on your Facebook feed that tells you that getting active is good for you.

It increases your energy which helps you optimise your output. Output, not results. Lots of output is required for you to hit the positive results you want in life. Things will not go well.

You will put in a lot of energy and effort and passion and heart and you will not get the result you want. But if you and your body have the energy to continue putting out into the world, chances are much better that you’ll get the result you wanted. Or, even more.

There are sprints of joy and accomplishments followed by sports of exhaustion and setbacks. Still we run the marathon.
WHY I ASPIRE TO BE A MENTOR

HOW PLAYING ROLE-PLAYING VIDEO GAMES TAUGHT ME THE VALUE OF THE 'CHARACTERS' I HAVE MET IN MY LIFE

One of the things that I enjoyed most as a child was playing video games, and one of my favourite genres was Role-Playing Games (RPGs), especially those along the lines of a fantasy adventure. I really liked the journey, as the character I controlled met different people along the way. Because of his encounters with companions, new friends, villains, and other quirky characters, the protagonist grows stronger and more mature as a hero.

I’ve always believed that, in this journey called life, we are bound to encounter people who will help us grow, either as individuals. You could say we are the protagonist—or the hero—of our own journeys.

Some of these people will travel with us at significant points of our journey, while others may just be passers-by. Sometimes, we even encounter people who become challenges along the way. Nevertheless, we can always learn something from the different people who cross our paths. Here are some of the things I’ve learnt from my journey with the people around me.

LEAN ON YOUR FAMILY OR CLOSE FRIENDS FOR SUPPORT

One of my strongest pillars of support, since I was young, has been my parents. My father was a great man and I learnt tenacity and determination from him. My mother is a loving parent who sacrificed a lot before and after my father passed away.

Ever since my father died of a heart attack when I was 14 years old, my mother had to start working after being out of the workforce for well over 16 years. One of the greatest things she has done for me was to support me in all key decisions I’ve made in life and to trust me enough to allow me to see them through.

When I wanted to apply for a psychology course in college, extended family members discouraged me. My mother, however, told me that the decision was mine and that I shouldn’t be concerned about the opinions of others.

I think that the trust and support she gave me were key factors in my growth as a teenager. Most of all, I knew that she loved me and that I would always have someone to come home to when the challenges in the world overwhelmed me.

I am very fortunate to have such loving and supportive parents. I have met friends who may not have had the same privilege, and grew up without parents or sometimes even with abusive ones. I believe that though our families play a big role in our lives, we are not prisoners of our upbringings.

We have the power to choose and change how we live our lives. Even then, it is so important for us to have a few people who can become our pillars of support. I no longer live with my mother and, although I know that I will always have her support and love. I also have a few friends with whom I could share my ups and downs.

It is especially great when you can share your journey with people that have similar values and vision so that you can all support and encourage each other.

IGNORE THE NAYSAYERS

There are people who will give their opinions because they care for you and those who discourage you simply because they have a habit of sharing pessimistic views. I’m not advising you to discount any-and-all opinions that differ from your own, but it is beneficial for us to be able to differentiate between people who are concerned about our well-being, and those who are not.

When I decided to resign from my full-time position to be a motivational speaker and pursue sports as a paralympic athlete, there were people who commented that, at the age of 26, I was too old to be pursuing sports. Others said it’s probably not the wisest thing to do in the current economy. However, I was so determined in my convictions that I ignored all of them and am now six months into my paralympic journey. It’s still not easy but I have the support of my family and friends instead.

Naysayers have a habit of discouraging you for the sake of sharing an opinion or to appear “right.” When we spend less energy trying to please everyone, we are able to focus on achieving our goals.

FIND A GOOD MENTOR THAT WILL CHALLENGE YOU

When I was younger, I was never put into any leadership roles in school because of my disability. I could still remember that I expressed my interest in being a school prefect and the teacher told me that, although I had the right temperament for it, I was simply not a suitable candidate. No other reasons were given to me and probably because of that disappointment, I never tried applying for any other leadership roles while in school.

My first leadership role came when I went to college. I was in the Christian Fellowship and the president at the time saw a potential in me and decided to assign me to lead a weekly discussion group. Her name is Wen Lin and she was one of my first mentors in life, someone to whom I owe most of my initial growth as a leader.

I remember telling her that I wasn’t good enough and that I needed more time before I could be confident enough to take the role. She assured me that I had the potential to grow but also pushed me to take on the challenge.

She would later become a great friend and a person who would challenge me in my views, convictions and motivations whenever I needed the advice of a good friend.

It wasn’t easy at times because I would often have a view that was coming from a lack of experience or insight, and she had to challenge me so that I could grow as a person and a decision-maker.

I could not be more grateful for her role in my early years of college that have laid the foundations to my leadership journey today. I still talk about the impact of her mentoring to the people around me to this day.

Since then, I’ve had many mentors in life who have nurtured me along the way. I really appreciate those from my time working in the Leaderonomics Youth Team as well as my personal life mentors who have been there for me.

HELP OTHERS IN THEIR JOURNEY ALONG THE WAY

I believe that there must come a point where we should start thinking beyond ourselves and begin thinking about our legacy even while we are in the midst of our journey. Just as How Wen Lin, the mentor I mentioned earlier, nurtured me early in my leadership journey, I have aspired to be a mentor to others and help young leaders in their own journeys.

Which reminds me again of the fantasy RPG games. The hero is not just someone who grows only in his or her own sphere while ignoring others. A hero is someone who will recognise his or her own potential to impact others and proceed to make a difference along the way even while the person is growing and progressing in his or her own journey.

Are you currently working on your own journey as a leader? Whatever your goals and aspirations may be, know that you are not alone and, just as much as you can grow with the help of others, you too can help others in their growth.
DO YOU FOCUS ON SUPERSTARS OR SLACKERS?

BIRDS OF A FEATHER FLOCK TOGETHER. OR DO THEY?

By ASHVAAJNI RAMANATHAN

As a consultant within Leaderonomics, Ashvaani believes that most companies have either underestimating the impact of humanising the workplace or a great culture. She hopes to help companies maximise their opportunities for growth because they underestimate the impact of humanising the workplace within a great culture. She believes that much of the struggle to shift culture from concept to realisation.

To explore a free consultation with Leaderonomics, Good Monday, e-mail editor@leaderonomics.com

A major factor in determining an organisation’s success is a team that can work together under any situation. The Team Leadership Simulation by Knolskape will focus on resolving interpersonal conflicts with others, effectively and motivating and up skilling team members by identifying and responding to needs. This programme is packed with intense events and scenarios that a leader might face where the simulation tests participants’ adaptability and leadership styles in adverse situations. Contact training@leaderonomics.com for more details.

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On the surface, at least, football and cricket appear to be two very similar sports. They are both contested between two teams of 11 players; they are both ball sports; they are two of the most popular sports in the world; and the England national teams aren’t as good at either of them as I might like.

But for all their similarities, there are also no shortage of differences, not least of which is the disparity between each sport’s definition of the word “captain”. It could be argued that the role of captain is different in nearly every single sport, but these two in particular represent the starkest of contrasts.

**THE FOOTBALL CAPTAIN**

The team of a team in “the beautiful game” is largely seen as a motivator—the on-field embodiment of the team philosophy. They have the loudest voice, the imposing presence, a special connection with fans and the media, and unlimited respect from their peers.

What the football captain is not, however, is a decision-maker. Rarely in the course of a football match is the captain required to make an actual on-field decision that will affect the course of the game. Those responsibilities are reserved solely for the manager.

**THE CRICKET CAPTAIN**

By comparison, the cricket captain is so much more than a motivator. The head coach and board of selectors may have the most significant say in the build-up to the match but, from the moment the initial coin toss happens to kick-start the game, the captain is in charge.

The placement of fielders; when to declare (prematurely call an end to the batting team’s innings); who will bowl the next over (six balls); and when to appeal an umpire’s decision. These are the decisions constantly faced by cricket captains, as the head coach watches on in what is merely an advisory role.

**MIDDLE MANAGERS AS TEAM CAPTAINS**

Hopefully, you can already see where I am going with this analogy: the football managers and cricket head coaches are the chief executive officers (CEOs).

In some organisations (the “football” ones), the CEO is heavily involved in the decision-making process and has an autonomy on matters of organisational importance.

In other companies (the “cricket” ones), they put their faith in their people and are happy to sit in more of an advisory role.

In either case, the middle managers are the “captains” of the organisation. They are the ones down in the trenches working day-to-day with the employees while acting as an intermediary between them and the “head coach”.

For some, they are football captains—a motivator who gets the best out of their workforce. Others prefer to be more of a cricket captain—taking on huge responsibilities in matters both big and small.

Whichever you identify with more strongly, take a closer look at the stars paid the big bucks to lead their teams through the high-pressure, high-energy world of live sport. You may just see certain traits that can be brought back to the office to help you lead your team more effectively.

**AN OPPORTUNITY NOT TO BE MISSED!**

**HAVING trouble securing employment? Or doing a job that does not match your field of study?**

**Fret not, as the upcoming roadshow at Melaka International Trade Centre (MITC) from the 26th to 27th August will give you the perfect opportunity to meet with representatives of over 100 companies, attend on-the-spot interviews and even receive instant offer letters! If you’re struggling to write a standout resume, there will be a free “CV Clinic” run by the Campus team from Leaderonomics during the roadshow. Plus, you’ll get a chance to see local artists such as SonaOne, Joe Flizzow and Fazl Tahir perform live at the event! The roadshow runs from 3:30pm to 6pm on both days and is conducted by the 1Malaysia Training Scheme (SL1M) which aims to assist unemployed graduates. For further information, visit slim.my**
EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP
LESSONS FROM ELITE ATHLETES

LESSONS FROM THE WORLD’S GREATEST SPORTS STARS

By LOUISA DEVADASON
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PROFESSIONAL sport is a powerful metaphor for leadership and there are some striking parallels between the two. They both involve fierce competition, hitting goals and targets, strategising, winning by a small margin as well as qualities like hard work, determination, perseverance, teamwork and resilience.

Success in both sport and business is rooted in the ability to keep moving – higher and higher – looking for the next opportunity to best yourself and others. This drive is unrelenting and demands that you keep finding new ways to be the best.

So, what is it exactly that executives, entrepreneurs and leaders can take away from the behaviours of 'top athletes'?

WINNERS ARE NOT BORN – THEY ARE MADE

While we all have some degree of inborn natural ability as well as existing strengths and quirks – the real key to sustained excellence is building upon your abilities. Never being satisfied with raw talent and always driven to push oneself to the next frontier and then pushing even more.

It's not about just being able to swim fast or being a maths genius – it's about developing a mental toughness and a hunger for greatness. This means practicing every day. Learning every day. Challenging yourself at every opportunity.

HAVE A STRONG VISION
FOR THE END GAME

When athletes compete, they have their eye on the prize at all times. Usain Bolt says that, before a race, he sees the gold, he imagines the gold and he feels himself winning the gold.

In business, it’s important to have a strong sense for what your vision is – where you are leading your company and how you are going to get there.

BUILD A STRONG TEAM AROUND YOU

Whether it’s an Formula 1 race car driver, a football team or an Olympic runner – athletes don’t do it alone. They build a team of trainers, nutritionists, coaches, pit crew members and fellow sportsmen. As a leader, you need a team that your trust – if not, what are you leading or doing?

An athlete is accountable to himself, his team and whoever he represents – a nation, a state or a club. His team in turn work around him and with him in getting those wins and he trusts their strategies, their performance and their advice. Are you accountable to your organisation? Do you and your team trust each other wholly to score the goal?

LEARN FROM THE BEST

We all have our heroes and athletes are no different. They have people whom they aspire not only to be but to also surpass. The same goes for business leadership: who influences you?

Find leaders who have businesses you admire and aspire to replicate. Identify what they do well and learn from them – model their attitudes and behaviours. Professional development must be part of the plan as well as surrounding yourself with people who can do what you cannot.

WARM UP AND KEEP CALM

Athletes need to do things before any big event – they need to warm up, have adrenaline flowing but also find some calm within the chaos. They need to be ready, driven and not psyching themselves out under the pressure of stiff competition.

Similarly, leaders must be well-prepared before a pitch or meeting as well as having a personal system that keeps their mind clear and agile to the complexity of running a thriving business.

CELEBRATE YOUR VICTORIES BUT LEARN FROM YOUR FAILURES

There’s nothing more exciting than seeing an athlete celebrating a win. They express their joy with their whole being. In today’s rollercoaster of a world, it is important to take in one’s victories and milestones. It boosts morale as it reminds everyone that their hard work and commitment is paying off.

Mistakes though aren’t a stick with which to beat yourself or others. While it’s hard to lose – failure happens to the best of us (take Usain Bolt’s final race that ended in injury, for example).

Do not let mistakes defeat you or take away from what you have achieved. Reflect on what went wrong and use those learnings to change the future.

Of course, there are some contrasts between sports and business, but there are too many parallels to ignore. Internalising the attitudes and drivers of athletes can move you and your organisation to new highs.

“Earn your leadership every day.”
— Michael Jordan