



Going for Gold

In the third article in her six-part series on mastering the art of business, **Pam Underdown** explores the journey of a “small business athlete”

Welcome to the third in a six article series to help you to “master the business of aesthetics” and be on your way to achieving exactly what you want for your business. This month I would like to share with you a moment of clarity I recently experienced: there is a remarkable overlap between the business and the sporting worlds. I realised that my most successful clients are actually the business equivalents of Olympic champions. The strategies that give my clients the energy, belief and

confidence to succeed are the same strategies olympians have followed for decades.

At the time of writing, Team GB has just finished an amazing two weeks of the most thrilling, inspirational and exciting sports at the Olympic Games in Rio. I don't know about you, but I was just as hooked and emotionally engaged as I was throughout London 2012. But for someone who hardly ever watches sport on TV, why was this? What was it about the Olympics that had me on this journey of emotions and gave me that sense of pride as tears welled in my eyes?

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MAKING SACRIFICES

As we know, these Olympic athletes made many sacrifices. So many sacrifices in fact that their training plans often took them away from their loved ones and normal everyday life. Anything that didn't serve them well and didn't move them further towards their goals was stopped. They had to commit to their training plan 100%, they had to stop doing things which weren't serving their best interests such as eating and drinking what they wanted to. They had to eliminate any bad habits, such as staying up late, partying or having a social life. They had to get up at the crack of dawn in the pouring rain and cold and do their training – even if they didn't feel like it and wanted to go back to bed. Their ultimate sacrifice was to prioritise their goal above and beyond everything else. And all of this was done with little or no funding in many cases.

If you have followed the personal journey of any athlete, you will know that many of them had to carry out their training either by holding down another job, or relying on fund-raising by family and friends. Ultimately the majority of these athletes are amateurs, no one is paying them handsomely for doing it – although a few of the very talented ones were fortunate to get sponsorship and what a difference that made. Look at the GB hockey team: their lottery funding meant they could practice full time and this meant they won. In the end, most athletes are not driven by money, that's not why they are doing this. They are driven by personal ambition, a real desire to make a mark, to leave a legacy and to inspire a whole new generation of sports people.

One of the many lessons small business owners can take from Olympic athletes is that we all need to be driven by more than just money. We need to have a goal, with a set timeline and a plan of action that nothing will get in the way of. When we inevitably hit obstacles and challenges we must get up, dust ourselves down, and get on with it – just like Mo Farah did. We must commit to achieve our very own vision for our future and our business – whether it's a gold medal, or a personal best – no matter what it takes.

When I speak to aesthetic professionals who will do anything they can to achieve their goals – I see and hear about what it takes first hand. Those who have achieved a certain level of success are the ones who have made many sacrifices and put in the blood, sweat and tears that is always needed in small business. Most end up sacrificing their family or social life, some get up extra early, or stay awake when the rest of the family have gone to bed, some are working two jobs in order to pay the bills and some are learning new skills, taking on new challenges and pushing themselves out of their comfort zone. These individuals also have the belief and mindset that their business will be a success “no matter what” – because they know they don't want to go back to being an employee. >

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First of all, what struck me is the similarities between an Olympic athlete and a small business owner. No of course, I don't mean the physical similarities, but the sheer hard work, determination and sacrifice that it takes to succeed.

If you think about an Olympic athlete, this is someone who truly wants to win a medal – no matter what. They have their own specific goal in mind, their own personal reasons for achieving their goal. They know without a shadow of a doubt that they want to be an Olympic champion in their field. They have four years to train for this goal and they embark on their journey with that goal at the forefront of their mind throughout every single minute of every single day as they commit to their training plan. If athletes didn't

THE RIGHT MINDSET

If you did watch the Olympics, you would have heard the commentators, the coaches and the medal winning athletes say that their mindset and belief was as much as 80% of their success. It was this that made the ultimate difference to them winning by a fraction of a second or not winning at all. Whilst most may not be that different physically to their fellow athletes, the winning medallists were streets ahead in terms of belief and mindset. They knew that mental preparation was pivotal to their success and they weren't afraid of talking about it. If you have ever heard the phrase "success breeds success" – it was so true in Rio 2016. The more success that Team GB had across all of the sports, the more that the rest of the athletes believed it could happen for them – and it did – it delivered arguably the greatest achievement in British sporting history. Have you ever had that happen to you? You had an amazing week, an amazing month and suddenly your belief levels grew? Or you had a bad week, but some amazing reviews brought you back on track to help you to believe you could do this thing called business again?

I am sure that if you lined up a number of medical professionals side by side, all with the same experience and training and they started a medical aesthetic business at the same time, there would probably not be too much difference in the actual treatment outcomes for their patients during their first day, week, month or year (although I am sure that some would be marginally better than the others – due to a natural talent and skill in some areas). I would imagine that the main differentiator in their success levels during this time wouldn't be just about clinical skills, it would be down to their commitment to their new business, their personal belief in themselves, their positive mind-set, their confidence and their ability to pick themselves up during tough times and keep going.

So why was I so emotional when watching the Olympics? Why did I care so much? Ultimately I believe it was because I could really see and feel the extremes of their personal sacrifices. I could imagine the blood, sweat and tears and everything they had put into winning. I could empathise with their challenges, their injuries, their lack of money and the tumbles they have had along the way – because I have been there too – metaphorically speaking. Ultimately I was celebrating their four-year journey with them – this celebration wasn't just the medal, it was a culmination of all of their hard work and effort and it was the raw emotion that made it so compelling to watch.

Isn't that what we should all celebrate? Shouldn't we all celebrate the fact that we have taken this huge leap into business ownership and private practice, that we have survived on little or no money in the first months or years, that we have got up when everything was knocking us down,

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that we battled on when everyone around us was telling us we are mad and that we should go back to the "easy" world of work?

Every day I see the differences between those who are succeeding and those who are not doing as well as they want to and the majority of the time it is down to belief and mindset. Many of my most successful clients have got a lot in common with those successful athletes. They have been committed to their business and they have had a plan and a vision that has driven them to succeed. They have been coachable and they have stayed up late doing their marketing because they couldn't afford to outsource it in the early days. They have learnt new skills and pushed themselves out of their comfort zone to create videos, or write blogs. They have survived on little or no money in the beginning, or they have worn themselves out working in two jobs, but they have put a smile on their face and greeted their patients even after the most exhausting of days. Ultimately they have done what they needed to do, even if they didn't feel like it. I take my hat off to all of them – they continue to inspire me and the people around them every single day and for this, I thank them. They know who they are.

I have yet to see an Olympic champion who became an Olympic champion on their own – without a coach by their side, pushing them, challenging them and supporting them every step of the way. I will leave you with that thought. **AM**



Pam Underdown is the founder and owner of Aesthetic Business Transformations, a business growth specialist working exclusively to help medical aesthetic business owners increase their profits and reduce their costs. Pam has more than 25 years' business development, sales and marketing experience and has been specialised in the aesthetics industry since 2005.