Paving the Path to Success: Practice, Perseverance, Preparation & Passion

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Every four years, the world’s best athletes compete at the Winter Olympics. Olympians from all around the globe spend most of their lives working toward the goal of representing their countries, competing against other top athletes, and putting forth their greatest efforts in the hopes of making it onto the podium. This year, these talented men and women paved their own paths to get to PyeongChang, South Korea through practice, perseverance, preparation, and passion.

Olympians prove that a daily commitment to practicing your skill set is the most effective way to truly master your craft.

Similarly, it takes 10,000 hours of practice before you can claim true proficiency, according to author Malcolm Gladwell in his book Outliers. And just as this rings true in sport, it can also apply to one’s career. For example, the years spent working as a CFM help one ultimately gain the myriad of skills necessary to impactfully lead the financial backbone of a construction company.

Investing time in continuing professional education and taking advantage of industry-specific resources such as CFMA chapter events, monthly webinars, and the many offerings at CFMA’s Annual Conference & Exhibition further bolsters on-the-job “practice” and prepares an individual to face the competition.

Of course, it is inevitable that along the way there will be challenges and setbacks. Success comes from perseverance, meeting challenges head on, and viewing mishaps as learning experiences to become better prepared for the next contest. Success in sport involves taking risks and occasionally operating beyond an athlete’s proven capability. Similarly, construction companies are constantly assessing levels of risk compared to possible rewards.

If a contractor has been in business long enough, it has likely had projects that tested its limits, schedules that might have occasionally slipped, adversarial owners, and budget challenges.

My boss describes these sorts of projects as going through the “annealing process.” This process occurs when metal is heated to such a high degree that it almost melts but, as it cools, the internal stresses are removed, and the resulting product is significantly stronger than before.

Likewise, persevering when things don’t go according to plan, staying the course, facing adversity, and refusing to quit all form the path to greater strength for the future.

Competing at the top level, whether in sport or in business, also requires preparation and planning, followed up with execution. Success in the construction industry is the result of securing work, completing projects, and earning profits.

Developing a strategic plan to guide a company’s operations leads to efforts being focused on the most crucial areas, increasing the likelihood of achieving goals as illustrated in the article, “Strategic Management for Small Contractors” on page 46.

With a solid, research-backed plan in place and an optimistic, hardworking, and forward-thinking team equipped to handle the issues at hand, success becomes attainable.

As Roman philosopher Seneca reminds us, “Luck is what happens when preparation meets opportunity.”
It’s refreshing to witness the grit, determination, and passion demonstrated by every athlete competing in the Olympics. But no matter the playing field, one’s passion determines overall satisfaction and the ability to sustain the effort necessary to achieve goals. Perhaps most impactful, an individual exhibiting great passion can motivate others to join them on the path to greatness.

In closing this final message for my term as CFMA’s Chairman, I want to thank the hardworking staff at CFMA, my fellow officers, and the hundreds of dedicated and passionate volunteers responsible for the work CFMA accomplishes on an annual basis, delivering value to more than 8,200 members across 98 chapters, and making companies and the construction industry stronger.

And just remember – in life, as in the Olympics, with practice, perseverance, preparation, and passion, you, too can achieve your goals and realize success!