



## Learning from Elite Performers: Creating Your Path of Success

I am lucky enough to work with a wide range of people, from elite athletes, leading executives and everyday people looking for improved health and fitness. It is natural for the elite athletes to act as the beacons of performance, with seemingly untouchable gifts and talents that most of us can hardly aspire to.

*How do they do it?* The common question I get when discussing Chris Lieto's second place at Ironman Hawaii or Tyler Stewart holding down a fulltime job while becoming an Ironman Champion. The athletes take on an awe-inspired mystical role for many, becoming something almost otherworldly. Unfortunately, this "untouchable" vision of an elite athlete prevents you from understanding some key concepts that you can learn from how they approach their sport and life.

So can you really learn from the skill sets that an elite performer has and employ it to your life? *Absolutely!* You might never break records in your sport, but the skill sets of elite athletes can be applied to various aspects in life and health. It is easy to understand the sporting context of the traits, but I encourage you to read on with a dual lens of applying your thoughts toward both your health and life skills.

An elite athlete may exist in a very different arena but they are not as different as you may think. Outlined below are some of the key traits that allow the true champion rise above their competitors:

**Goal Oriented:** Every elite athlete has firmly established and measurable long-term goals with shorter-term goals to provide the essential stepping-stones of success. An athlete's career goals are often planned years in advance, requiring short-term bridges toward these goals.

**Specificity:** The best athletes have great instinct to be able to focus on the important factors that will lead them toward their goals. This targeted approach enables them to ignore variables that can impede progress, act as a distraction from the mission, or are out of their control.

**Resistance to Adversity:** Elite athletes tend to thrive in stressful situations and do not panic when plans go wrong. They remain *solution based* and tend to focus on controllable factors. Adaptability and resilience is key for athletic success

**Assessment:** No athlete can consistently achieve success without a continuous cycle of assessment. This process allows the athlete to stay on track and can act as a roadmap of success. Ignoring this critical element can lead to disastrous consequences and no ability to understand where he went wrong.

**Support:** Behind every successful athlete it is common to have a

team of people that facilitate success. The elite athlete understands his own strengths and weaknesses and is willing to utilize a network, or team, of people that work toward a shared vision or goal.

**Balance:** In the journey toward success there are bound to be peaks and valleys of success and failure. A great athlete will not be too distraught at a short-term failure, but equally will not be over excited by short-term success. Emotional homeostasis, or balance, creates less distraction and a higher likelihood of staying on track toward the long-term goals.

**Risks:** This trait is very difficult to train into someone, but the willingness to take smart and calculated risks is essential for optimal results. Channeled correctly, with a logical approach, risks can lead to great results, but the athlete must be willing to expose themselves without fear of consequence.

**Recovery:** Ultimately, this may be the magical lesson that we can all learn from. Nearly anyone can train hard, but the truly gifted are the ones that understand how to recover and allow the performance to come out. Recovery is central to every training program I create for the elite athlete.

It is easy to apply this list to your own goals in life and fitness. The truth is that you do not have to be an elite athlete to gain the benefits of the list. We are all results driven – even if it is just standing on a scale each morning – and we all want a higher level of performance.

Whether your goal is race specific, you are looking to lose weight or you simply want to have balanced energy in life, consider looking to the methods of elite performance to create your own path of success.

Ironically, if I discussed the characteristics of some of the leading business executives I work with, the list would look rather the same. There is tremendous crossover between sport and business, as the path to performance, whether in the boardroom or on the playing field, maintains the same trend and parameters. How can you apply these traits into your life performance? <<

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