

The 'Olympic' approach to setting and achieving Courageous Goals

By Ian Day



What could your coachees achieve if they had the courage of an Olympian? The word 'Olympian' comes from Greek mythology and the majestic beings from Mount Olympus with superior skills to surpass all

others. Olympic medallists are often introduced to business leaders in order to inspire them with their stories and anecdotes. I have noticed that a key area which sets elite athletes apart from others is their ability to set truly courageous goals.

"I want to win an Olympic gold medal". These were the words spoken by a novice rower with a clumsy technique in 2003. At the time this was a truly outrageous statement as it was made without any supporting evidence. These words were spoken to Bill Barry, himself an Olympic silver medallist and now a GB rowing coach. However, Bill saw determination, drive and potential in this raw novice so he agreed to work with this youngster. The novice was Alan Campbell and this turned out to be a very courageous goal as Alan has now been GB's number one sculler for 8 years, has won three world championship medals and is a hot prospect for the London 2012 Olympics!

One way of achieving courageous goals in business is to look at goal setting processes that go beyond the traditional methods such as SMART, offering higher levels of inspiration and tapping into an individual's full potential.

What would they look like? Well, courageous goals are transformational; they instil excitement, imagination, and maybe even fear.

Compare the goal below written in two ways and think which excites you the most:

"As a team we will increase our sales by 10% in the next quarter." (SMART)

OR

"As a team we will close the largest deal we have ever done in the next quarter." (courageous)

As coaches we can help individuals move beyond SMART to set courageous goals through three simple and practical stages known as **dream**, **share**, and **start**.

Stage one: Dream

Encourage the coachee to forget the constraints of the present moment and to dream about what 'could be'. For example the coach may ask:

- "What would be your equivalent of winning a gold medal?"
- "If you believed that anything is possible, what would you want to achieve?"
- "If you had all the support and resources you needed, what would be possible?"
- "What level of excitement does this goal conjure up for you?"
- "What level of fear does this goal evoke in you?"
- "What inspires you about this goal?"

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Stage Two: Share

The next stage is to **share** the goal. Sharing is a public declaration which creates accountability and commits the coachee to their path. The coach asks:

- “Who could help you if you shared this goal with them?”
- “If you were at your most courageous, who else would you share this goal with?”

Stage three: Start

The final stage is to **start** and this is when the dream becomes real and no longer a fantasy. The coach helps to reduce the fear of the unknown by

being supportive, while challenging the coachee to step forward with confidence. For example the coach will ask:

- “What is the smallest tangible step you could make next week towards this goal?”
- “What step would an Olympian take to start this journey?”

*What are your experiences of coaching to achieve bold and courageous goals? ... I would be interested to hear from you. **Ian Day** is contactable at ian@FACTScoaching.com. For more information visit www.challengingcoaching.co.uk. Ian's book “Challenging Coaching– Going beyond traditional coaching to face the FACTS” co-authored with John Blakey and published by Nicholas Brealey Publishing is available on Amazon.*

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