

The Olympic Challenge!

Every two years we have the chance to witness the Olympic Games. The 2008 Summer Olympics and Para Olympics in Beijing were an extraordinary example of what is possible when humans decide to bring out their best. If you had the chance to watch the opening ceremonies and the incredible human stories that come from dreams, dedication and athleticism there is a good chance you were moved or inspired.

I was watching these games very closely because the 2010 Winter Olympics will be hosted where I live, in Vancouver. I am especially excited because my friend and former Club Management colleague John Furlong is the C.E.O. of Vancouver Olympic Organizing Committee.

I don't know how many of you reading this article have participated in the Olympic Games as an athlete, a coach, a commentator or a volunteer but the reality is that most of us have not. Most of us have participated with great interest as a spectator. Regardless of what level you have participated in the games I would love to hear from you about what that participation did for you. What did you get from it? What did you give to it? How did it impact other parts of your life?

During the Opening Ceremonies just before the Games were officially opened the I.O.C. President talked about the Olympic Values. The three simple values that the games strive to live to are **Excellence, Friendship and Respect**.

Many of us might think it is only about being the best in the world or seeing how our country ranks with other countries in the world. It is clearly about a lot more than that.

It is about love of sport. It is about showing what the years of dedication, discipline and sacrifice have allowed you to do. It is about competing with the best in the world in your particular discipline. It is about learning from and gaining inspiration from those who excel at other disciplines. It is about being in community. It is about coming together with people from around the world to find out that we are as similar as we are different. It is about bringing your best at the moment that counts. It is about being your best in victory and defeat. It is about representing your country. It is about pride. It is about connection and bringing the world together.

If you were inspired by the games or some of the individuals or teams that you saw competing I would like to challenge you to adopt these Olympic values and Olympic possibilities into your life. What would your life be like if you simply adopted the values of Excellence, Friendship and Respect?

Many would argue that in the competitive world of business there is no room for friendship and respect. The same people might make the same point for competitive athletics at the highest level. The Olympic Movement disagrees. In the world of clubs

every member and every staff member deserves an organization that embodies those values.

It starts with the leadership. It starts with you!

At the Olympics most athletes find one thing they can focus on in order to be world class. They don't try to do all sports or even all events in the sport they do. What sport and what events will you play? Perhaps you will be an Olympic Club Manager, an Olympic Parent, an Olympic Spouse or an Olympic Community Leader. Maybe it will be more specialized than those things. Perhaps you will be an Olympic Listener, an Olympic Visionary, an Olympic Strategist or an Olympic Guardian of High Standards and Powerful Execution.

But I am a club manager! I have to be world class at all of those things. It makes me wonder how many gold medals Michael Phelps would have won if he participated in all sports, or just half a dozen beyond swimming. I am quite sure he wouldn't have won eight. He is an extraordinary athlete but if his focus was not on swimming he might not have won any.

Here is my challenge for you. Decide on the "sport" you want to play and find one discipline in that "sport" that you can focus on for the next three months. For instance if you decide to be an Olympic Parent you may focus for three months on being an Olympic Acknowledger of the people in your home.

Olympians focus on their goal constantly. They have a plan. It is intentional. They practice. They get coaching. They learn about their discipline. They become authorities. They use any tools and strategies that are within the rules to help them perform at their best. They think like they have already won. They expect a lot from themselves. They go beyond what is comfortable and easy. They ritualize their behaviors. They replace the harmful habits with habits that move them toward success. If they understand the Olympic vision they adopt the values of Excellence, Friendship and Respect. They are passionate about their sport and being the best they can be at it.

It is possible to adopt an Olympic mindset. It is possible to be a leader that can see the Olympic potential in all of the people they lead. It is possible to get them to see that potential in what they do or some aspect of what they do.

Whether you decide to take it on yourself or inspire others to take it on be aware that there may be some resistance. Being an Olympian is not without discomfort and sacrifice. Please know for them and for you that there are many pay offs when you take it on and the biggest ones may be the internal satisfaction you get from just playing at a world class level.