

Brazil vs. Germany – why the recent 7-1 score line shouldn't be that surprising, and the reason England didn't make the knock out stage

A look at whether Talent and Ability or Structure, Culture and Values are more important in sport and what we can learn from top sports teams including the All Blacks, Team Sky and Manchester United to improve the performance of our businesses



TALENT & ABILITY VS. STRUCTURE, CULTURE & VALUES IN BUSINESS & SPORTS:

BY: Robert Rigg
FOUNDER, BAMBOO

Taking lessons from great sports teams and applying them to business isn't new. What business and sport have in common is that they are both dynamic and continually evolving. What I look at in this article is how a number of top sports teams, referencing the New Zealand All Blacks, Sir Alex Ferguson's Manchester United and cycling's Team Sky, react and adapt to changing circumstances, often in response to failure. I will also consider what factors send them back to the top, and keep them there.



Neymar celebrating a goal before the injury during the recent World Cup

As well as looking at how important structure is to get the best out of your talent, I will also look for a greater understanding of how important values are in success – could it be that pure talent, such as the Brazilian striker Neymar, is over-rated, and on-going success is a far less glamorous affair?

I believe these lessons are as relevant for a CEO as they are for someone running a restaurant with 10 staff – the rules and laws of how you get the best out of your people are truly universal. I reach this conclusion by considering the following:

- Destiny and entitlement
- Nurturing talent, compensation and loyalty
- Learning from mistakes and establishing best practice
- Values – easy to define, hard to implement

Those of you pressed for time might wish to skip forward to [the conclusions on page 12](#)



Mario Götze celebrating Germany's winning goal

A photograph of the German national football team celebrating their victory at the 2014 World Cup. The players are wearing white jerseys with red and black accents, and gold medals around their necks. They are holding up the World Cup trophy, and the scene is filled with confetti and a red background.

2014 World Cup
Winners – Germany

DESTINY & ENTITLEMENT – WHY BRAZIL DIDN'T WIN IN RIO

No matter what is stamped on the front of your passport, it was always going to be hard to begrudge the Brazilians doing well in their home World Cup. With apologies to England in the 1996 European Championships, this truly was 'football coming home'. Why then did the team bow out in such a dramatic fashion to Germany in the semi-finals, and again to The Netherlands in the third/fourth place play off?

I believe the principle reason for this defeat was because the players, and most of their fans, started to believe it was their destiny to win. They started to believe their own hype and forgot that to win the Cup, they also had to win 7 matches against the best teams in the world – had they started to think that Brazil 2014 was a coronation and not a competition?

Much has been made of the injury to Neymar as the reason for Brazil's defeat in the semi-final, but the reality is that in the earlier group stages, when Neymar was playing but frequently not at his best, the rest of the team underperformed. In short, the game plan to win the World Cup was simply to rely on Neymar's mercurial brilliance. With the loss of Neymar through injury and the suspension of Brazil's captain Silva for the semi-final, the team fell apart – they simply didn't

have a plan B. Neymar is undoubtedly one of the most gifted footballers of his generation. However, the reliance the team had on one individual who, when he was playing well, meant Brazil were pretty much invincible, allowed other senior team members to hide. It is interesting to note that Portugal and Spain, the two other teams in the competition with the highest profile 'Superstars', never reached the knock out stages.

We hear a lot about entitlement, particularly in relation to GenY, but the truth is that no sports team, individual, or business is entitled to on-going success no matter how much previous success they may have achieved. Companies, and the individuals behind them, who are truly great, are the ones who focus on making incremental advances every day.

Very few business successes come from 'eureka' moments. The iPhone and iPad didn't just happen, they were the result of Steve Jobs' life's work and his relentless pursuit of perfection. It is in the same spirit that we should understand the approach Germany took to this World Cup. Despite having just beaten Brazil 7-1, a member of the German team management was quoted as saying, "*this means nothing, it's just one match, we start from scratch again on Sunday*".



*Like Team Sky and F1,
Larry Ellison's Team Oracle
is the living embodiment of
"aggregation of small difference"*

Of course, Brazil wouldn't be the first team in the world to fall victim to this. Business, like sport, is littered with many examples of hubris giving way to nemesis – please step forward Chuck Prince, Dick Fuld and Fred Goodwin.

What I find fascinating reading the numerous books and articles concerning the collapse of the Royal Bank of Scotland where Fred Goodwin was CEO, is the sense that he feels he is the wronged party and utterly unrepentant about his role in the collapse of one of the UK's oldest financial institutions.

While no one could ever accuse Oracle founder Larry Ellison or Richard Branson of being shrinking violets, is there something in the culture of being an entrepreneur and founder of a business, often having failed a number of times before achieving your breakthrough, that makes them more self aware and responsible for their actions?

As managers of companies employing thousands of people, or an individual running a coffee shop, what can we learn from the performance of great sports teams about taking individual responsibility for the way you perform a task? What does it take



to create a culture where everyone in the organisation thinks like an entrepreneur and tries to make a difference each day? How do you stop people from sitting back and expecting someone else to do the heavy lifting?

I will explore these issues in more detail, with specific reference to the New Zealand All Blacks, later in this feature.

For football fans who wish to read more, and want to hear from someone far more qualified to write on the subject than I, below are two articles written by the Brazilian legend Zico where he talks about both entitlement and the importance of having a plan B.

<http://www.theguardian.com/football/blog/2014/jul/09/brazil-germany-zico>

<http://www.theguardian.com/football/blog/2014/jul/14/germany-brazil-world-cup-2014-zico>

NURTURING TALENT, COMPENSATION AND LOYALTY

While it's easy to be wise after the event, and this feature is about "Sport and Management" not the World Cup, I believe there are a number of key factors regarding the structure and approach of the German team that gave them an edge.

In stark contrast to the Brazilians, the German team had few internationally renowned Superstars, and, by Superstars I mean players who were well known outside of the realm of dedicated fans. In management terms you might say that this lack of 'Superstars' gave them a relatively flat organisational structure. I believe this lack of hierarchy gave them more cohesion as a unit.

Part of the reason they were a cohesive unit was that out of a squad of 23, only 7 played their professional football outside of Germany. 7 of the 16 domestic players played for the same club. Why is this, because the players weren't good enough individually to play in the Spanish or British leagues? No, to find the reason for this we have to look back to the failure of the German team to qualify for the knockout stages of the 2000 European Championship.

While wanting to avoid obvious stereotypes, the German's solution to their early exit from the competition was to start from the bottom by developing technically proficient home grown players through the creation of individual academies attached to the top two football leagues. 14 years on from this the results are clear looking at the age of the 2014 squad – around the 25 year old mark.

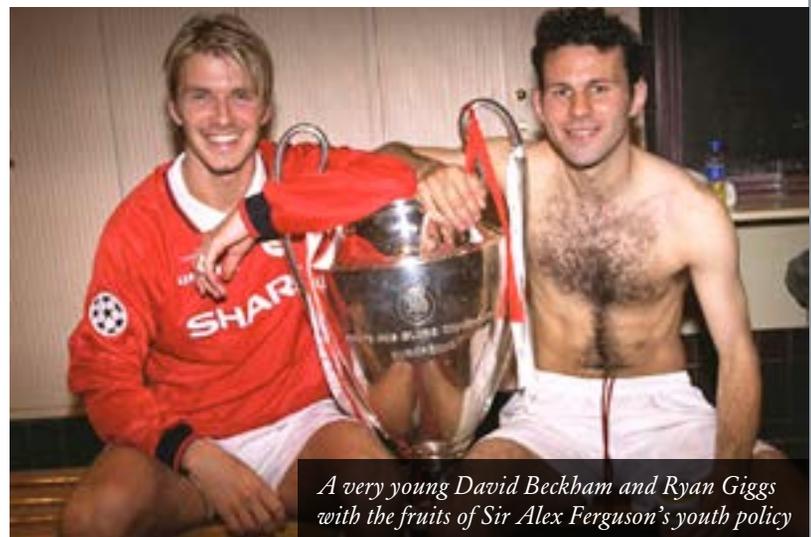
To help deliver this search for, and development of, young talent, the German FA signed up a staggering 1,000 part-time qualified coaches operating across the whole of the country. When one looks at the relative footballing performance of Germany and England over the last 40 years, it should perhaps come as no surprise that the total number of qualified coaches in Germany is 5,500, in England it is 895.

While the FA in the UK is reasonably competent at identifying talent, it doesn't have the framework for developing this talent, it typically leaves this up to the clubs. Unfortunately the incentive structure in English football is skewed in such a way that it actively reduces the chances of England winning major tournaments – in short, the clubs have a very different agenda from the FA.

Clubs owners want to win trophies and have no real interest in the performance of the national team – hardly surprising when the majority of clubs have foreign ownership. In the pursuit of trophies they'd just as happily sign a young Brazilian as they would a young Englishman. As we see below this laissez fair/free market approach to football in the UK, and interventionist approach in Germany, is mirrored in their approaches to ownership and research and development in the industrial sector.

Building from the bottom up isn't unique to Germany. Sir Alex Ferguson pioneered a similar approach when he arrived at Manchester United in 1986 by opening two academies for players as young as nine. While his first batch of recruits took a number of years to develop, the strength of the team from in the mid 90s was solely down to this policy. However, as we'll discover when we look at the All Blacks – Ferguson wasn't just building a team, he was building a club with a distinct set of values and culture.

The interesting question is whether or not Ferguson would have been allowed the time to accomplish this feat today. His 'youth' approach took 3 ½ years to yield a trophy and a further 3 years before he won the League – would he have survived that long in the job in the current environment?



A very young David Beckham and Ryan Giggs with the fruits of Sir Alex Ferguson's youth policy



*“Sir Alex Ferguson –
the Warren Buffet of football”*

TAKING THE LONG VIEW & INVESTING FOR THE FUTURE

It is well known that German law makes it difficult for foreign companies to take significant stakes in German companies, and frequently Union representatives actually sit on company boards – football clubs look remarkably similar in terms of ownership, investment in young talent and well as compensation.

In 2001, the German FA drafted the “50% plus 1” rule requiring all Bundesliga clubs to be owned by their members (supporters). By contrast, not a single club in the Premiership is owned by the fans with 11/20 of them 100% owned by foreign nationals or their holding companies. Such localised ownership goes a long way to encourage the development, and retention, of local talent.

As any HR executive will tell you, sourcing and developing your own talent is also considerably cheaper than competing in the job market. For German football clubs their ability to exploit this pool of local talent generated by the youth programme results in considerably lower player costs and a corresponding higher level of profitability. To put this achievement in context, in the Premiership, despite receiving TV revenues of £2.7bn in 2012/13, aggregate losses across the league’s 20 clubs was £291m.

Across the Bundesliga in 2012, clubs wages accounted for 51% of all costs, in the Premiership the figure was

70%, with half the clubs in the league spending more than 75% of revenue on wages. In Germany, an incredibly powerful feedback loop is now in place where lower player wages lead to lower ticket prices (on average 50% lower than the UK), resulting in higher levels of attendance further cementing the clubs position in the local community.

It is a truism that for every business that staff turnover is expensive and de-stabilising, anything that can be done to lower turnover rates is surely desirable. Since records began over 100 years ago, Germany has never once set a world record for a football transfer fee, either as a buyer or seller. The localised nature of German football not only encourages a stronger sense of loyalty but also results in a considerably lower player turnover ratio.

In his approach to talent, Sir Alex Ferguson could be described as the Warren Buffet of football, he was the ultimate value investor. While the academy system gave him a strong pipeline of local talent, he was always on the look out for young talent overseas. With a few notable exceptions, he rarely spent money on established talent and was far more likely to sell established players who had developed under his tutelage at Old Trafford and were at the peak of their careers, and financial value.

As we will discover when we discuss Values, Ferguson was also ruthless with players who he felt thought themselves greater than the Club. This clash of personalities was arguably behind his decision to sell both Ronaldo and Beckham to Real Madrid. It should be noted that the sale of these two players netted the Club a profit of US\$155m – something that might even impress Mr. Buffet.

LEARNING FROM MISTAKES

The list of famous quotes about making mistakes is pretty lengthy, the common thread being that it's not the end of the world if you learn from it, which often takes a degree of self awareness and candour not all of us possess.

Matthew Syed, the former Olympic table tennis player, now sports psychologist and journalist, references the work of Professor Carol Dweck of Stanford when he talks about the ability we have to be self-critical as the Fixed vs. Growth Mindsets. Fixed mindsets are closely correlated to people who believe that talent is everything (the majority of the population), those in the Growth mindset are more able to recognise their shortcomings and make the necessary improvements.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=njae5qGhxEw>

Alongside the German football side, the New Zealand All Blacks perhaps best exemplify this ability to be truly brutal in the post event analysis and put programmes in place to make sure these failures never happen again.

Following back-to-back losses in 2003 and 2007 World Cup, tournaments they went into as firm favourites, the NZRU commissioned a 47-page report on the causes of these failures. A number of conclusions specific to the team, which are also relevant to us, are:

All Blacks 2007 and 2011 – truly great teams are brutal in the analysis of their failings and learn from these mistakes

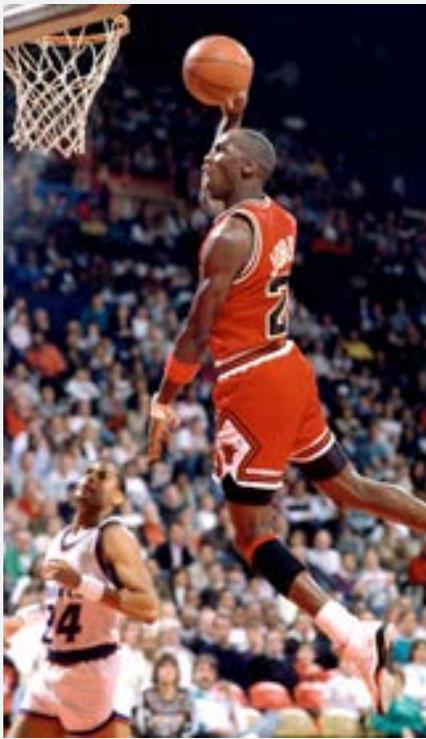
- While all players had sufficient 'game time' before the tournament, it wasn't of sufficient quality to be relevant
- Too many of the management were present at the event. (A similar conclusion was reached after England's disastrous cricket tour of Australia in 2012/13)
- A one size fits all approach to training was taken – this was clearly inappropriate
- A number of factors beyond the team's control impacted on the team's leadership model in a way that failed to deliver its most important objective, - winning the game. The team failed to make the right decisions at critical moments
- The emphasis on winning the RWC in 2007 was too great and very public in its nature (Clearly there are parallels here with Brazil in 2014)

If proof were needed that the lessons learned from 2007 have been actioned, the All Blacks did indeed win the 2011 World Cup. Additionally, in all International matches since 2010, they have a staggering 91% win record. See below:

PLAYED	57
WON	52
LOST	4
DRAWN	1

What relevance is there between these conclusions and our businesses?





*“Talent wins games,
but team work and
intelligence wins
championships”*

– Michael Jordan

MAKE TRAINING RELEVANT FOR EACH INDIVIDUAL:

While training and coaching are clearly important, to achieve maximum effectiveness it has to be relevant for the needs of each individual. The time the squad spent playing rugby before the tournament was clearly important for fitness, it was however less relevant because it didn't adequately prepare them for the task that lay immediately in front of them – winning a World Cup.

When speaking with clients about their experiential learning and team building needs, I frequently come across the issue of cost vs. a programme's specific relevance. There are many high quality vendors of off the shelf team building products who do a great job, at a great price point. However, by spending a little more money could you work with a vendor and create a customised programme that had a higher hit rate in terms of what your staff need? How often do we try to calculate the increased value more focused relevant training will deliver? A customised training programme might cost 50% more than something off the shelf, but this difference may well be insignificant if it delivers a 10% increase in the productivity of a team over a 12 months time horizon.

DON'T MICRO-MANAGE:

It is a frequently reported response in employee surveys that micro-management by bosses demotivates staff as well as making them less likely to be entrepreneurial within a function. If you've got the right team in place, whether you're the All Blacks or front of house in a restaurant, the important thing for a manager is to let your team get on with it.

Yes, it's important to communicate and be there for your team, but managers have to make sure they don't continually interfere in a way that makes employees scared of making their own decisions and bringing a degree of creativity to their role.

CHANGE IS NOT THE ENEMY – TRAIN STAFF TO ADAPT TO CHANGING CIRCUMSTANCES

Analysis of 10 years of premiership matches from 2003-13 shows that when tied at either half time, or with 15 minutes of play left, Manchester United had the best record for winning games of any club in the league. It's known as 'Fergie Time', why?

Sir Alex trained his team to be ready to adapt, to have different games plans; he trained his teams how to win games from a variety of situations. As we've seen above, this failure to adapt, or have a plan B was identified as a key factor in the failure of both the All Blacks and Brazil in the 2007 and 2014 World Cups.

What does this mean for us? I believe this flexibility in the face of changing circumstances is closely tied to the degree of autonomy you give staff. If staff are afraid of getting the small things wrong, and experimenting with new ways of carrying out tasks, they are going to be much less capable of adapting to situations where things might go wrong in a more dramatic fashion as a result of factors completely beyond their control.

While it might seem contradictory, I believe that, as long as lines of communication are strong, individuals within effective teams should all be encouraged to think of themselves as entrepreneurs, continually questioning what they're doing and thinking of new ways of doing each and every task more efficiently – they should be encouraged to take ownership of their role.

In the opening section, I introduced the concept of 'aggregation of marginal gains'. I believe staff are not going to be able to make these small differences unless they are empowered. As a manager who might have to take responsibility for a team member getting something wrong, this might seem like a daunting, and possibly career threatening prospect, but as long as the dialogue, up and down the organisation, is frequent, the chances of things going wrong are limited.

While there isn't space in this paper to explore it, there is no better exponent of the theory of 'aggregation of marginal gains' than the boss of the Team Sky cycling team Dave Brailsford.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uCXz2EAVwd0>



Division of Labour – getting each person doing the task they're most suited to can only improve the performance of the whole team



GETTING THE RIGHT PERSON DOING THE RIGHT JOB:

Every single person from CEO to mail clerk has things they are better at doing, and things they enjoy doing more, than others. As a manager, if you want to get the best out of your team, it's vital to identify these strengths and allocate tasks accordingly.

There are people who are natural 'Generalists' but the truth is the vast majority of people will add more to a business when they are given a role that fits their ability and one that they enjoy. Adam Smith spends a considerable amount of time discussing something very similar in his 1776 book *The Wealth of Nations*.

Cricket is probably the only sport that requires the same players to perform a number of different roles – batsman, bowler, fielder, keeper and captain. It is extremely rare that any player can play more than two of these functions without their performance suffering. Frequently, the ability to perform the role that got them selected in the first place is the one that suffers. Examples of this are legend, particularly when it comes to the role of England Captain, but one of the clearest recent examples concerns the Sri Lankan, Kumar Sangakkara.

Not only was Sangakkara selected for the Sri Lankan team as a specialist batsman, he was also the team's wicket keeper and, for a period, its captain. For the early part of his career when he was performing two, sometimes three roles, as a batsman he was ranked 9th in the world. Looking at his record after he stopped keeping wicket and focused solely on his batting, he rose to be the 2nd highest ranked batsman in the game's history.

It goes without saying that this individual improvement had a corresponding effect on the overall performance of the team.

VALUES – CHOOSING A FEW ADJECTIVES IS EASY, DEFINING AND IMPLEMENTING THEM IS WHAT MAKES THE DIFFERENCE

Every company in the world talks about values, be they integrity, sustainability, client focus, creativity etc – in fact, I wouldn't imagine there is a single company in the world who wouldn't list the adherence to these four in their mission statement. The question is how many companies, and their staff, actually understand what these values mean in relation to each company, industry sector and geography.

Last year, I met with a multi-international JV to discuss their leadership development programme. At the meeting they were quite insistent that before we could work together I had to understand their key corporate values. To emphasise this they produced a laminated wallet sized card with 10 adjectives. These values were exactly what you would expect, including the four listed above. When I asked if they could share the research and information that underpinned these values and how they were specifically relevant for that company, I was met with a blank stare. It turns out that the core values were just these 10 buzzwords without context or interpretation.

Understanding what underpins values is crucially important for any company, but the communication of what these values mean, and how to interpret them, is even more important for companies that operate across different cultures. Having a clear-cut policy on graft is one thing, but how is this to be interpreted in relation to client entertainment in a business that has operations in Delaware, Delhi and Dublin?

Perhaps the clearest statement of values in sport, and understanding what these values mean, comes from New Zealand's All Blacks. For any company looking to reiterate their values to their staff and clients, I think the five core values listed below take a lot of beating for both their relevance, as well as their clarity of interpretation:

SWEEPING THE SHED

While this turn of phrase may be particular to New Zealand, it simply means that no person is bigger than the team. No matter who they were, the biggest names in the game would be expected to clean up the changing room after a game.

This approach is central to the cardinal All Black value of humility and the belief that it's impossible to achieve supreme success without having your feet planted firmly on the ground and respecting where you've come from.

FOLLOW THE SPEARHEAD

In the Maori language 'whanau' means extended family and is symbolised by the spearhead, and to be effective, all the components of the spearhead must move as one.

In keeping with this sense of unity, the All Blacks select on character as well as talent. Just being good is not a sufficient criteria to pull on the jersey, an individual must commit to put the team before himself before being invited to be an All Black.



The All Blacks doing the Haka

*Lang Lang and Roger Federer –
The 10,000 hour rule, is quality
practice more important than talent*

CHAMPIONS GO THE EXTRA MILE

Whether in training or in a World Cup final, true champions are always able to go the extra mile and find ways of making a series of small incremental gains - success doesn't just come from out of the blue, or is due to talent alone.

Anyone who thinks Usain Bolt, Steve Jobs, Lang Lang or Roger Federer were 'born to be great' might enjoy Matthew Syed's development of the theory of the "10,000 hour rule" in his superb book 'Bounce' where, in an unintentional nod to the All Blacks, he talks not only about the quantity of practice, but also it's quality and relevance.

KEEP A BLUE HEAD

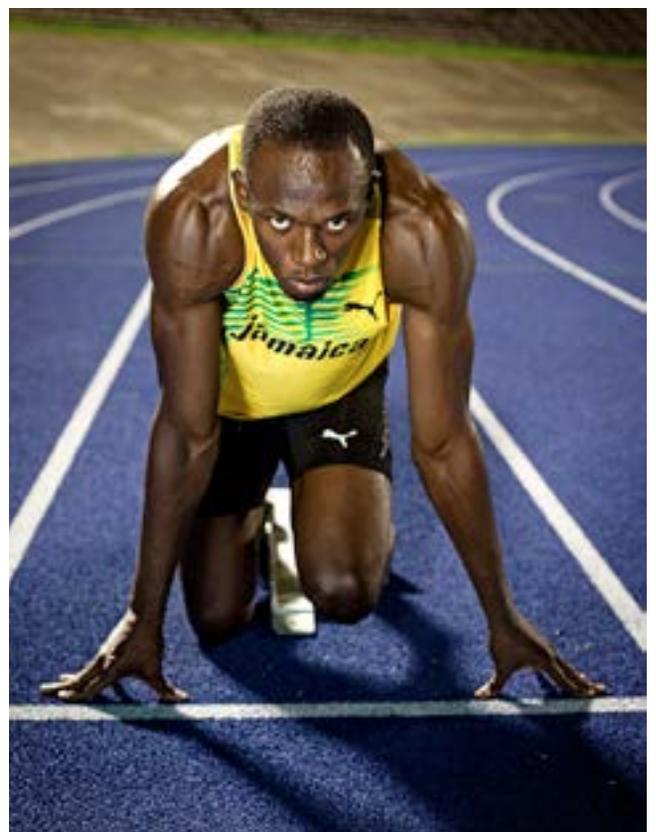
Part of their failure in the 2003 World Cup came down to an unexpected change in circumstances and a resulting inability to execute a plan B.

When the brain goes into a 'red head' situation, better known as panicking, decision-making often becomes irrational. It is of course unrealistic to expect that any of us will never to go into a 'red head' situation. What is key is to have the self-awareness to acknowledge this transition to red, and be equipped with the tools necessary to navigate back to 'blue', a place of clarity and accuracy where better decisions are made.

LEAVE THE JERSEY IN A BETTER PLACE

Essentially a Kiwi take on a quote attributed to Sir Isaac Newton who wrote in 1676 *"If I have seen a little further, it is by standing on the shoulders of Giants (who went before me)"*. Entirely consistent with the opening two values, it acknowledges a debt any current All Black has to all those who went before him, and the responsibility he has to set an example for those who follow.

*All these key values and more are explored in James Kerr's book
Legacy: What the All Blacks Can Teach Us About the Business
of Life. 15 Lessons In Leadership*



Usain Bolt – "The lightning Bolt"

CONCLUSIONS:

The article's opening question is possibly a bit misleading. Taken in isolation, neither talent and ability or structure, culture and values are sufficient conditions for success; success requires a dedication to all these attributes, and probably many more.

So, what are the lessons we can take away from the above analysis that will make us more effective at work, both as managers of those who work for us, as well as employees reporting to those above us.

Our analysis focuses on three teams, Manchester United under Sir Alex Ferguson, the New Zealand All Blacks and the German National Team, but many other examples could be cited. I believe it's possible to identify three key themes that link all great teams, be it in business, or sport, these are:

- A strong and easily communicated sense of culture and values
- A focus on development, retention and empowerment of young talent
- An understanding that it's an honour and privilege, not a right, to be in a role

These key themes can be developed to be relevant in our working lives along the following lines:

1

Identifying and recruiting talent is not enough; what is vital is creating the platform that enables you to get the most out of your talent, and continually monitoring this to ensure it is appropriate and relevant

2

There is no entitlement to success, and previous success doesn't have any influence on future success – each incremental gain has to be earned

3

A well communicated internal culture and sense of belonging is as, if not more, important than pure financial compensation when it comes to employee retention, performance and loyalty

4

The performance of an individual might be important in individual scenarios, however over the long run is it the performance and coherence of the team that delivers long run success

5

Encourage every member of staff to think like an entrepreneur. If everyone makes a small improvement to their function every day or every week, the cumulative effects for an organisation over a 12 month period will be enormous

6

One size does not fit all – to be effective, management, training and allocation of tasks is more effective when it is fitted to the individual

7

We can only truly learn from our mistakes if we are brutally self aware and honest with ourselves about the reasons for our mistakes. People should be encouraged to think with a Growth rather than Fixed Mindset

8

Be aware that business, life and sport are dynamic – prepare and educate staff to identify and respond to changing circumstance

9

Values must be clearly stated and relevant. Generic adjectives are important, but each adjective must be underpinned by an interpretation that is relevant and applicable for each company

10

Identifying, then getting the right person doing the right task is vital – maximising the performance of each individual within the team will significantly improve the team's aggregate performance



Robert Rigg

FOUNDER

bamboo

About Robert Rigg

Robert Rigg is founder of Bamboo, an experiential learning and leadership development boutique. Robert has a wide range of leadership experience in both business and sport. He represented Cambridge University five times against Oxford and captained the golf team in his final year. As a director at Credit Suisse he built a trading team of 6 covering EMEA, with assets under management of US\$750m, and net revenue of US\$130m for the period 1996-1998.

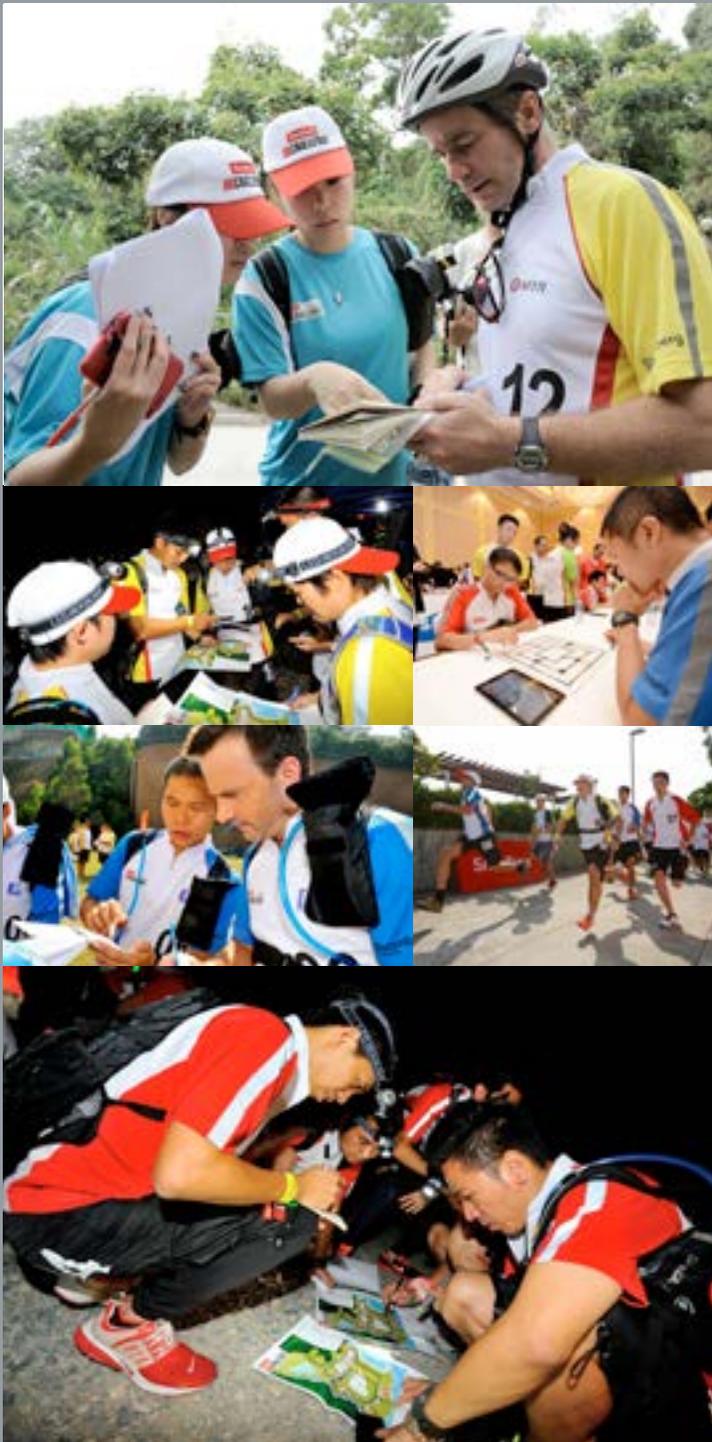
Founded in 2009, Bamboo created the SmarTone HK Challenge, Hong Kong's leading experiential leadership development programme, and work as consultants with some of Asia's top companies to help them develop their next generation of leaders.

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I believe the competitive sporting experience, whether in the World Cup or in a kick around Sunday League, and events like the SmarTone HK Challenge, are the perfect development ground for talent and leadership experience because of the immediacy and transparency of the outcome. In business the outcomes of our decisions can take months or years to become clear, by testing leadership and decision making in more immediate scenarios, we become better equipped to face the challenges of our working life.

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To find out more about Bamboo's approach to leadership and executive education you can contact Robert at robert@bam-boo.com.sg or on +852 9682 8832



7TH SmarTone NOVEMBER 2014 HK CHALLENGE year

The event, now in its 7TH year is widely acknowledged to be Hong Kong's most challenging experiential staff development programme. Staged over 2 days and nights, the event sees up to 40 teams of 5 compete head to head in a series of strategic, physical and mental challenges.

The purpose of the event is to test strategic decision making and communication abilities under extreme time pressure, and help individuals better understand the dynamics of working within a team under stress.

Since 2007 more than 50 different companies have taken part in the Singapore and Hong Kong stagings of the event. Companies take part for a wide range of reasons, the most common are:

- To develop leadership skills for HiPos or top talent
- To breakdown silos and improve working relationship between staff in different divisions
- To improve client/partner relationships
- To help a senior manager identify future leaders or get to know key reports better
- As the end goal or 'prize' in a company wide engagement programme

“There are definitely rules and lessons here you can take back to the workplace. It's about getting the right people doing the right tasks, that's critically important.”

– Jerry Pearce
GLOBAL HEAD
OF TRANSACTION BANKING
STANDARD BANK



The event is typically a combination of at least 5 stages which could last anything from 1.5 to 3 hours. Each stage is non-linear in nature, and combines multiple disciplines such as code cracking and kayaking, or night navigation and construction tasks. Success in each stage is determined by a team's capacity for working out the right strategy on each stage given their ability to solve complex mental problems, think laterally, or complete a number of physical activities – the skills tested on each stage will be different.

While there are a number of physical activities, the balance of the event is 60% mental, 40% physical. Teams are always encouraged to remember it's very unlikely that they'll be able to complete each task on each stage, and should plan their strategy within the limits of their abilities.

Depending on the goals each organisation has for taking part in the event, we recommend that teams are selected 2 months in advance of the Challenge. Not only does this give teams time to work on the physical training, it gives them time to get to know each other and understand their strengths and weaknesses. In many ways, this pre-event connection is as important as participation in the event. Additionally, a number of companies found great benefit from taking advantage of the free pre-event on-line psychometric evaluation offered by the organisers, which can be used in conjunction with our pre-event training guide.

To ensure the lessons learned from participation are taken back to the work place, we strongly suggest that a post-event de-brief takes place. The event organisers are happy to help facilitate this process.



Top photo – A clear head is more important than fit legs – in the last 3 years more than 50% of the top 5 teams had an average age of 40+.

Bottom photo – The construction stage is designed to test lateral thinking and adaptive decision make

THE FOLLOWING ARE THE SKILLS AND DISCIPLINES TESTED IN EACH STAGE:

COMMUNICATION:

How effectively can you communicate ideas to each other – listening is often more important than speaking

GOAL SETTING:

With a time deadline, it's vital to set goals that are realistic given the strengths and weaknesses of your team

STRATEGY AND PLANNING:

This is vital to your success in the event, put simply, without a plan, you won't succeed!

TEAM PRODUCTIVITY:

With limited assets, your 5 team members, it's vital to identify key strengths and allocate tasks accordingly

LATERAL THINKING:

More often than not, the right solution is not to run quicker!

CONFLICT RESOLUTION:

All teams will have conflict during the event, the strongest ones find a way to resolve it quickly and effectively

CHANGE MANAGEMENT:

The event is dynamic and the right strategy at the start of the stage might not necessarily be the right one half way through.

TIME MANAGEMENT:

This is also dynamic, your time management needs to be continually evaluated as the stage progresses

RISK MANAGEMENT:

Always be aware of the worst case scenario of your particular strategy, might you have been too optimistic? Pre-event preparation and post event de-briefing

Charity

SMARTONE AYP INTERNATIONAL EXCHANGE PROGRAMME FUND

In addition to the many business benefits, by taking part you'll also be raising a significant amount of money for the event charity, the SmarTone AYP International Exchange Programme Fund. HK\$10,000 from your entry fee is donated direct to the event charity meaning that over the last 5 years we have raised over HK\$2,000,000 for the programme, giving over 400 of Hong Kong's underprivileged children a unique opportunity to develop interpersonal and life skills via visits to overseas community projects.

TESTIMONIALS

The SmarTone HK Challenge is a tremendous development programme for our colleagues, especially for our HiPos and young talent. It provides an opportunity to develop their strategic planning, decision-making, problem solving and communications skills. In addition, our participants enjoy networking with other team members from different business functions across the CLP Group, as well as the opportunity to network with participants from other top companies in the Asia-Pacific region.

Cynthia Lam

Group Human Resources Manager
CLP Group Holdings

As MD, taking part in the event was a fantastic way for me to observe how my team responded to new challenges in a pressured environment. In fact, I learned more about my team that weekend than I did over the previous 2 years in the office.

With two teams of 5 made up of 8 different nationalities, communication was always going to be challenging, but when it works it's even more rewarding. This experience has given us an extraordinary platform to build on when it comes to face the challenges of business when we return to the office.

Tim Peach

MD Asia-Pac
Man Investments

Entering a joint client team creates a bond which is not solely based on professional issues, you build a bond based on personal issues, and get to know them much much better. The most important thing we learned was our approach to solving problems, not only internally, but together with the client. We ended up approaching problems in a different fashion, not just trying to run faster, but by smart tactics, strategies and better planning.

These experiences have significantly improved the quality of the relationship we have with our client, problems get solved quicker, conflict arises less, and if it does, we can address it more effectively.

Hakan Cervell

MD Hong Kong
Ericsson