



Work On Your Stride

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Everyone knows that the pace of life has changed in recent years. Cell phones have made round-the-clock connection possible—regardless of where you are—so you're never really away from work or loved ones. Now, the BlackBerry ups the pace of daily life even faster. We can not only stay in touch, but we can get downloads and attachments, as well as take that call with an order, a question, a complaint or maybe even a compliment for a job well done.

I recently had an extraordinary experience that helped me regain some insight into not only the pace of life, but really the pace of living. More importantly, I was able to gain some insight into the role that our choices and actions have in choosing that pace.



The Young Presidents Organization held a 3-day coaches clinic for 100 participants from around the world. This clinic was billed as an “immersion of champions,” and the approach was effective in creating a change in my outlook. Perhaps what I have learned will help you to understand the role of the people in your life. Maybe it will help you maintain your attitude and the role you have to set the stage for your success or failure.

Lesson 1: It's what you do with what you hear. This lesson was from Sasho Cirovski, whose current mission is to lead the United States soccer team to its first-ever World Cup Championship. Mr. Cirovski shared this comment with me while we were waiting to hear singer-songwriter John Ondrasik perform.

Lesson 2: Not all champions are athletes. Champions can be found in every field of human endeavor, at every level. Mr. Cirovski's comment was empowering at several levels. It's not about

“what we hear that counts.” Yes, that is important. However, in Mr. Cirovski's world, “it's what we do with what we hear” that has the effect and makes the difference. This is a crucial distinction.

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is the champion's way
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What do *you* do with what you hear? Do you even pay attention? Do you give it quick consideration or just a quick dismissal? Do you use what you hear as a means to further your actions to achieve your personal ambitions? Understanding the difference between “what is heard” and “what we do with what we hear” is the critical step toward greater life effectiveness and personal empowerment.

Lesson 3: Spending time with champions makes you start to think and act like a champion. As you might imagine, with 24 world-class

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athletes elbow-to-elbow, the theme of the clinic was set: “It’s not just the thinking part, but the acting part that determines success.” We can all desire something. We can all want something or think about having it. However, after a few days with 2 dozen accomplished athletes, you quickly come to the conclusion that it isn’t so much about the thinking, as much as it is about the doing.

So what does one do on an immersion experience with champions? Well, if you said early morning jogs, you’d only be half right. Champions don’t jog. They like to do intensive wind sprints. These sessions happened to be led by Eugene Thomas, a former trainer with the Chicago Bears.

The daily exercise sessions were endured by most everyone else, people obviously more fit, more in shape and more athletic than I am. Having learned Lesson 1, I knew that I needed more than a plan; I needed action. So my plan and action were simple: I would run all out as fast as I could to show that I can “push it” and succeed in the presence of these superior athletes.

Those of you that don’t know me are luckier than those that do, as they can probably picture me flailing my arms and gasping for

air like an asthmatic pelican trying to scoop a fish a few sizes too large. My lungs burned; my legs seized up with pain. I was learning that perhaps I need to temper my actions with—well, judgment comes to mind—then my world changed.

It was not a voice from above (although it made the pain much more bearable). It was Ronnie Lott, former first-round NFL draft pick, All-Pro, Hall-of-Fame cornerback and safety offering his guidance and encouragement.

Lesson 4: Work on your stride.

“Work on your stride! Come on now, work on your stride!” That was the wisdom of Mr. Lott. He never said the words, “Improve your process.” He never said, “Son, you’d better stick to making parts.” In the matter-of-fact way that all of those champions dealt with their challenges, Mr. Lott’s words simply acknowledged the reality and fine-tuned the resulting actions. “Focus on the process” is the champion’s way of getting to the goal.

So I worked on my stride, aligning my will to stay up with those well-trained athletes. My body’s awkward and unpracticed attempts to metabolize sugars into energy moved me rapidly in a forward direction. I am sure that it was not

a pretty sight. But, as I worked on my stride, my running became smoother and breathing became a lot easier.

This was my takeaway, my life lesson courtesy of Ronnie Lott: I am going to work on my stride. I am going to understand that running as fast as I can isn’t a sustainable plan and doesn’t respect the reality of my situation. I am looking at many things a little differently now, including professional, personal and community goals that I would like to accomplish.

I am working on my stride, reaching according to and perhaps a bit beyond my current abilities. Running fast without efficiency doesn’t get you to where you want to go. Without efficiency, there is no grace. It’s hard to be an effective leader without the grace that is possible.

Lesson 5: The final lesson.

With a little bit of coaching and a little bit of positive support, you can act on your desires to achieve far beyond what you would normally expect. That is the lesson for all of us who sprint blindly through our days, hurtling from one crisis to the next. I’m working on my stride thanks to Ronnie Lott, and I hope you act on your stride thanks to this article.

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