

personal best mindset



Your business technologists. Powering progress



Personal best mindset

A study into the psychological make-up of elite athletes and Atos Business Technologists

This pack is designed to show what business and sport can learn from each other, and give a guide to companies looking to improve the performance of their workforce. Within it you will find:

The personal best mindset

A look at the common behavioural traits exhibited by elite athletes and Atos Business Technologists striving to achieve their personal best

Top tips for achieving personal bests within business

Top tips for business people to achieve a personal best in the workplace

What business can learn from sport

A look at how businesses can directly learn from sport to improve performance

Steve Cram on personal bests

Olympic Silver Medallist, Steve Cram, looks at what goes into being able to achieve a personal best



The greatest show on earth demands best in class talent. At London 2012 millions of spectators worldwide will witness the finest athletes of this generation strive to shatter records, while thousands of people behind the scenes ensure the Games' operations run smoothly.

Essential to the smooth running of the Games will be an Atos team of Business Technologists, responsible for delivering the largest sports IT contract of all time.

Like the athletes competing at the Games, Atos Business Technologists will be testing their skills under the intense pressure and scrutiny of the world. This requires a special kind of person, someone with the desire to deliver their personal best day in, day out on the world stage.

In order to achieve this excellence, Atos Business Technologists instil immense trust in one another and seek to improve and innovate every day, not only for the benefit of the Games, but for the benefit of clients around the world. The pro-active mindset I witnessed allows them to power sustainable progress for Atos and its clients.

My aim with this work has been to analyse the similarities and differences between the mindsets of the Business Technologists and Olympic athletes, and to use these learnings to help people in business foster the mindset to deliver personal bests, both individually and collectively.

Together with Atos, I've also called on one of Britain's greatest athletes - Steve Cram - to get his view, experience and tips on the mindset to achieve your personal best.

Amanda Owens, Sports Psychologist

Personal best – the attributes

This section looks at the common attributes exhibited by elite athletes and Atos Business Technologists who constantly strive to achieve their personal best.

accountability

Elite Athletes

Every athlete competing at the Olympics is part of a team. In being part of the team they are accountable and committed to delivering their best results. In a team sport you cannot succeed without the support of your team mates, you are held accountable by them and you are committed to helping them.

Atos Business Technologists

Atos Business Technologists are accountable for the faultless delivery of the Games IT system. Every single one of the 3,500 technologists has an important role to play. As individuals they are accountable for their own individual tasks, each of which are building blocks to help the team perform more effectively. As a team, they are all accountable for processing 30% more information than ever before to make the Games happen.

preparation

Elite Athletes

Olympic athletes prepare for four years in order to take part at the Games. This is four years of physical and mental preparation to achieve their Personal Best. Tailored training programmes allow them to prepare in a way unique to their own needs. Olympic and Paralympic athletes are dedicated and committed to achieving success, and use other events such as World and European Games to be ready for the big event.

Atos Business Technologists

Atos Business Technologists have been involved in every Olympic Games since Salt Lake City 2002. They are able to share their unique experiences within the sports IT sector with newer members of the team in the build up to London 2012, so that the group are better prepared than ever before. With a Winter or Summer Olympics staged every two years, Atos Business Technologists spend considerable time preparing for the different cultures and business conditions which they will be faced with come Games time. By adapting to the local surroundings, they are able to create the perfect work environment so they can achieve Personal Bests when the Games begin.

intensity of focus

Elite Athletes

Keeping their eye on the prize and focussing on the final result is crucial. The ability of the athlete to ensure their concentration is on the Games and not the hype and publicity around the event is key. Techniques such as visualisation can be used by athletes looking to focus on the end goal and block out distractions. The pride they show and feel when chosen to represent their country at their sport is unrivalled. Mental toughness and keeping focus in the face of adversity can be the difference between winning and losing.

Atos Business Technologists

For Atos Business Technologists, endurance is key. Shifts are often long and tiring and maintaining focus at the required level can often be difficult. The Business Technologists work around the clock and need to continually deliver information and results in real-time. The long term objective for Atos Business Technologists is the overall delivery of the IT behind the Games. When the action begins they need to avoid being caught up in the spectacle of the Olympics and focus on their own individual tasks. Focussing as individuals is crucial to team focus.

purpose

Elite Athletes

It is important for the teams to have shared values, vision, team goals and shared beliefs in order to achieve success. In order for the team to succeed they must all be pulling in the same direction and driving towards a shared purpose. This creates the perfect environment for success.

Atos Business Technologists

For Atos Business Technologists, purpose is all about their ability to understand his/her essential role in delivering the Games. This is achieved with regular team meetings and clear leadership from senior members of the Atos team. As lead integrator for London 2012, Atos Business Technologists work closely with each other, as well as LOCOG's other Technology partners to share values, knowledge and expertise to strive for their Personal Best. This collaborative approach allows the Atos Business Technologists to operate more effectively.

emotional control

Elite Athletes

It is important for the teams to have shared values, vision, team goals and shared beliefs in order to achieve success. In order for the team to succeed they must all be pulling in the same direction and driving towards a shared purpose. This creates the perfect environment for success.

Atos Business Technologists

For Atos Business Technologists, purpose is all about their ability to understand his/her essential role in delivering the Games. This is achieved with regular team meetings and clear leadership from senior members of the Atos team As lead integrator for London 2012, Atos Business Technologists work closely with each other, as well as LOCOG's other Technology partners to share values, knowledge and expertise to strive for their Personal Best. This collaborative approach allows the Atos Business Technologists to operate more effectively.

motivation

Elite Athletes

Understanding how an athlete is motivated can be a driver to success. Is the athlete intrinsically motivated or externally motivated? Do they need to be the best they can be? Or do they want to represent their country so the world can see how good they are? Being aware of what drives an athlete to succeed is of huge advantage when it comes to understanding them.

Atos Business Technologists

Atos Business Technologists are motivated as a group by the desire to make every Games the greatest of all time. As individuals they are all experts in their fields and have decided to put their skills under intense pressure and examination. London 2012 is the largest sport IT contract of all time and they are all determined to have their own individual role in making the Games a success. To put the Games operation into perspective, it's the equivalent of six European football finals happening on one day, for 14 consecutive days!

awareness (of self and others)

Elite Athletes

The ability to establish how the individual athlete and how their team mates around them are feeling is crucial. An athlete's understanding of how to address emotions with their team mates is vital: if they are stressed do they need extra attention or to be left alone? If I am stressed do I need to chat or to run around the track? Knowing how to deal with your own emotions and being aware of how others might react can give a team an advantage.

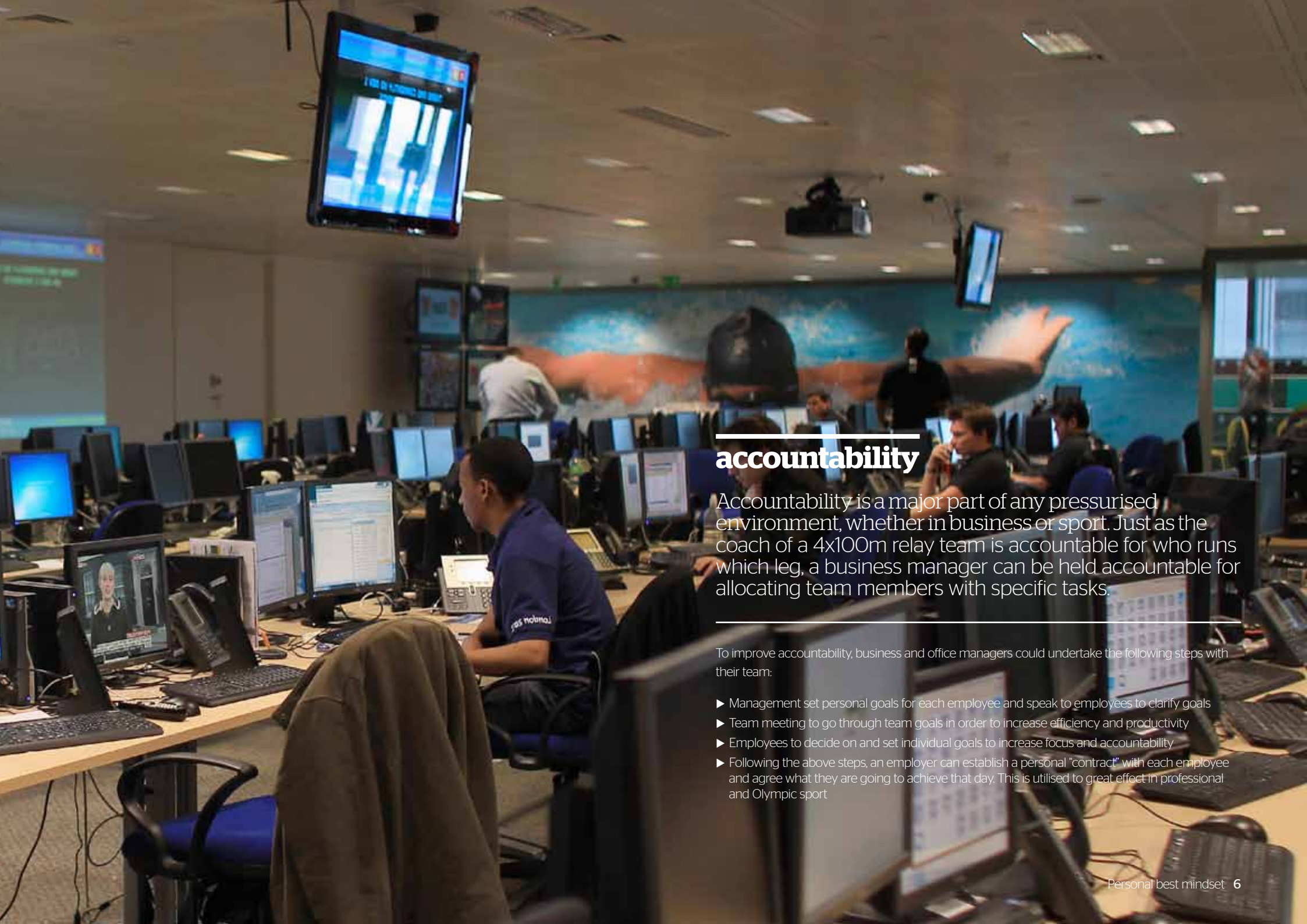
Atos Business Technologists

For Atos Business Technologists, awareness of the role of other team members and technology partners in the flawless delivery of the Games is central to the operation. For example, during the change in shifts, it's vital that the outgoing Business Technologist is aware of who will replace them and can create an environment for them to do the best work possible. Atos Business Technologists are accustomed to performing under pressure and their expertise allows them to help others within the team to do likewise.



Top tips to improve productivity in the workplace

Ultimately, every company wishes to get the best out of its workforce, yet sometimes it can be difficult to address the individual elements that benefit overall productivity and efficiency. The same can be said for any sports team. Here is a list of top tips for businesses wanting to take a step back and work out how, psychologically, to get the best out of the team.



accountability

Accountability is a major part of any pressurised environment, whether in business or sport. Just as the coach of a 4x100m relay team is accountable for who runs which leg, a business manager can be held accountable for allocating team members with specific tasks.

To improve accountability, business and office managers could undertake the following steps with their team:

- ▶ Management set personal goals for each employee and speak to employees to clarify goals
- ▶ Team meeting to go through team goals in order to increase efficiency and productivity
- ▶ Employees to decide on and set individual goals to increase focus and accountability
- ▶ Following the above steps, an employer can establish a personal "contract" with each employee and agree what they are going to achieve that day. This is utilised to great effect in professional and Olympic sport



preparation

It's all about establishing a routine and rhythm in the same way as athletes build up to a big event or competition.

To make sure that employees undertake the best possible preparation ahead of a big event or in day-to-day operations, the below steps should be adopted:

- ▶ Team meetings at the start of the day to improve team unity and tune into the job at hand, both from a personal and team point of view
- ▶ Management to outline the agenda for the day and ensure employee tasks are communicated clearly and are understood.
- ▶ Preparing the venue/work environment – as a group, employees can warm up for the day by creating the perfect work environment (e.g. organising equipment and clearing up mess which allows them to perform at their best)
- ▶ Preparing themselves – as a group, the employees need to re-iterate the end goal for their company amongst themselves, as well as confirming their own individual roles before the start of the day
- ▶ Visualisation exercises to imagine what they want to see/hear/feel/imagine to perform at their best



intensity of focus

By asking employees to rate what they think their level of intensity is from 0-7, managers can ascertain the varying levels of intensity on certain tasks, as well as being mindful of when a lesser focus and intensity is required by individuals to perform better.

This allows employees to be able to appreciate how they can get into their own bubble to perform at their best.

A similar approach has been adopted by coaches of sports teams, who will have varying methods to help them keep their focus, yet which will benefit the team as a unit overall. It allows the team coach or senior manager to be aware of where their team members are on the scale during their shift, and the subsequent impact that has on their work.



purpose

In regular team meetings role clarification should be established. In sport and business, roles can change depending upon the situation so it is suggested that the manager holds a short meeting (20-30 minutes) ahead of the shift to go around the group of employees and to communicate this.

This is important as their roles may change and team members need to be flexible.

Ensuring the team is clear with their roles and how they are expected to respond aids overall efficiency. If one employee can't help on his or her task then they could let the whole team down. If this is the case, then these messages need to be transferred across to relevant parties so that the team can act upon it.

In a team sport environment this change in situation can manifest itself as a substitution, where a player with a more appropriate skill-set can be brought in to play.



emotional control

In sport and in business it is important to understand the difference between helpful and unhelpful emotions. Understanding how to change and manage emotions for optimal performance state is crucial in a stressful environment. Being able to change thoughts, feelings, and behaviour towards a task can assist with project development.

An exercise to improve the emotional control of employees would involve changing three unhelpful emotions (e.g. hate, anger etc.) into three helpful emotions (e.g. joy, happiness etc.). The change could be brought about as a result of a team exercise or outing lead by managers and is particularly successful when outside of the workplace. The change in behaviour can develop good relationships with team members and can create the perfect environment to achieve a personal best.



motivation

Motivation exists in two forms: Internal motivation (existing within oneself) and external motivation (as a result of rewards and feedback). To motivate employees, it's crucial that the manager understands the team and individual.

On the field of play, the captain has a crucial role in driving his teammates forward, so needs to know how best to motivate each individual. This can be achieved by regular team meetings to ascertain what it is that motivates the employees (both as a team and individuals). In order to get the best out of the team, managers could have a 20–30 minute meeting to ask their employees what it means to them to work for the company.

Everyone can then share their thoughts within an open session and be inspired by the positive responses. In doing this, the managers will have an understanding of what working for the company means for each employee and how it motivates them to perform at their best.



awareness (of self and others)

To improve awareness within the team, the sharing of knowledge and expertise within the group is beneficial. This can be developed through bite-sized team meetings, utilising the expertise and knowledge of a senior member of staff to share within the team and therefore enable a better awareness of oneself and others.

The implementation of a buddy scheme would greatly improve awareness as it would allow employees to see, at close quarters, just how someone in a similar situation reacts to various occurrences.

The best example of this in a sport environment can be seen with the varying levels of experience within a squad at a major tournament. The older players need to be comfortable with their own roles within the squad, yet aware of the younger, less experienced players and the need to help them adapt to the big stage.

What business can learn from sport

Team work and mentality

The ability to work towards a common goal, irrespective of how that relates to your own personal goals and beliefs. To achieve this, it is important for the team leaders to set out the projects in line with individual beliefs and mentalities, as it is difficult to put personal goals aside and strive towards a greater goal. The team can then take ownership of that goal collectively. In the sporting world for example, a rugby coach will sit down with his team at the beginning of the season and outline his plans and goals for the next six months. It's up to how the individual members of the team operate in order to realise the team objectives.

Dealing with pressure

This is related to your decision-making under pressure. In the sporting world this often happens in full view of the public but it is just as important in the workplace. Are you able to control your emotions, as well as understand how stress affects you? What is your perception of stress in a pressurised situation? Is this positive or negative, do you and your team strive under pressure? Or do you crumble? Understanding your behaviours and emotional responses under pressure and that of your team's is crucial to company development. It is the responsibility of every individual to understand their boundaries, and for each manager to create the right environment to help their team handle pressure.

Mental toughness

The ability to succeed despite the setbacks is crucial. Sportsmen and women experienced high and lows throughout their career but it's how they bounce-back in their next performance which counts. The same can be said in business; how can companies bounce back from losing business, particularly in the current climate? The ability to deal with adversity in tough economic times is required in order to survive yet another dip in the economy. Being able to adapt to change in any climate can and will allow the business to continue to develop and progress. Mental Toughness is required to be able to make critical decisions under pressure. Athletes do this in an instant on a daily basis, it can be taught but it is required by everyone in order to succeed.



Focus and discipline

Both of these are crucial in order to attain any goal. Ensuring the end goal is always in sight and not straying from it requires discipline. If businesses are aware that putting in the hours will allow them to develop further trade, the current worries can fade to the background and the task at hand can be completed. Being able to focus on the task at hand, complete projects and put in the extra mile to ensure things get done. On the sports field focus is crucial. A loss of focus can lead to ill-discipline which can ultimately cost your team. In many sports, ill-discipline can lead to the loss of a player, which often leads to a negative result.

Motivation and goal setting

Having an end goal is required in any form of business or sport in order to succeed. You often see in sport that motivation and drive for athletes and teams prevails over talent. The drive to achieve this is crucial. Determining if you become motivated by external factors (rankings, pay-cheques, level of success) or internal factors (pride in work, joy or success) can allow you to determine how you and your staff can continue towards a set goal.

Preparations and “what ifs”

The scouts are right, the mantra “Be prepared” is essential in business and sport. A football team will go through countless practice scenarios in both defence and attack, businesses should be no different. Discussing difficult scenarios with staff and colleagues can ease the pressure when it comes to admitting you or someone else made a mistake. Trial-runs of difficult scenarios will ensure that every team member knows how to react and take responsibility, leading to maximum efficiency and minimum stress.





Steve Cram on personal bests

In this section, **Steve Cram**, Atos UK ambassador for London 2012, looks at the personal bests attributes highlighted by psychologist Amanda Owens and assesses how he has achieved personal bests during his career both on the track and in his role as a commentator.

My take on the seven attributes

Accountability

"Accountability in my mind is best described as taking responsibility for the situation around you, as well as the actions you employ when you find yourself in a certain environment. Whether in business or sport, finding excuses for you or your team's performance is detrimental and can often have longer-lasting effects on relationships."

Preparation

"The most important part of any race for me was always the build-up to it. Once you arrive at the start line, the weeks and months you've spent working up to that moment should have given you the confidence you need to complete the perfect race. I used to go over and over how I thought the race would pan out before arriving at the start line. With that in mind, the race itself would almost become second nature to me."

Intensity of focus

"Focus is absolutely crucial in enabling you to perform at your best. Distractions always exist, no matter what walk of life or work you are in, and it's important to be able to remain focused on the job in hand. In my role as a commentator there are always plenty of distractions, whether it's a television director barking instruction into my ear, or a member of the crowd jumping up and down in front of me. Focus doesn't mean that you should be unaware of what's around you because you need to react to certain situations. Having said that, you can't allow your eyes to wander too far, because as soon as you do, you risk the chance of achieving a personal best."

Purpose

"If you don't have a strong sense of purpose, you will find it hard to motivate yourself to want to do your personal best. Purpose is part of the sporting territory and is very similar in business. Purpose tends to be highly goal-orientated and in my experience, if you don't care then it's impossible to serve your purpose."



“I’ve seen plenty of athletes arrive at an Olympics and get carried away in the moment by starting off at a quicker pace than usual and implode before the finish line. It’s about keeping your emotional energy at the right level in order to run the perfect race or, in the case of Atos’ business technologists, complete a faultless shift.”

Emotional control

“Emotional control is a key element in being able to achieve a personal best. You don’t want to be too excited, too aggressive or too nervous. If you can channel the correct emotions so that you have them in the right amount, and at the desired time, then that is when you’ll be able to perform at your best. I’ve seen plenty of athletes arrive at an Olympics and get carried away in the moment by starting off at a quicker pace than usual and implode before the finish line. It’s about keeping your emotional energy at the right level in order to run the perfect race or, in the case of Atos’ business technologists, complete a faultless shift.”

Motivation

“In my opinion, motivation goes hand in hand with purpose. Purpose is the reason for action and motivation is a way of propelling yourself to that objective. Without motivation, there’s very little chance of being able to achieve a personal best. I’ve never heard an athlete use lack of motivation as an excuse for a poor performance.”

Awareness

“It’s important to be aware of your own role, as well as the roles that team members play in your performance. If you’re not aware of what is required and the processes that help deliver a role then it’s often tricky to understand how something went right and replicate it again (or indeed wrong and make sure that it isn’t replicated). In my role as a commentator, if I hear in my ear that the VT operator isn’t quite ready to run a film, I’m aware of what that means and can keep the viewer entertained until it is ready.”

Steve Cram: my experience of personal bests

Achieving my personal best on the track

"In my mind there were always two ways in which I could achieve a personal best when I was competing. The first was to run a quicker time than ever before, and the second was to win a medal I had never won before. No matter which goal I was aiming for, the most important element of both objectives was always preparation. A personal best is often the culmination of all the training and fitness work you put in ahead of the race, which gives you the confidence you need to have in order for you to deliver when the starting gun goes.

During the race itself, the worst thing you can do is over-analyze. Once you're at the start line there's no time to have any doubts. Keeping the focus required to get to the end will see you through. If everything goes to plan you will be in with a shout of achieving that personal best you are striving for."

Similarities between personal bests on the track and in the commentary box

"Whether you're about to take part in the 100m final, or start commentating on it, it's important to remember that you are in that position because you've done something right to be there. Once you're in that position,

it's vital not to try anything different to what you did to get yourself there in the first place. Deviating from your principles will make it much harder to achieve a personal best.

As an athlete and as a commentator it's important for me to go through the same preparation that I always go through, no matter whether it's an Olympic or World final, or the heats of a regional UK athletics meeting. You need to maximize your efforts in knowing every minute detail about the competitors taking part, from their fitness record and form, to the more random facts such as nicknames and family background when commentating. Once the race starts I am confident I won't make any mistakes, safe in the knowledge that I've put in the preparation required to perform at my best.

As a commentator, the one thing I can't predict ahead of London 2012 is the outcome of any race and therefore can't write a commentary line in advance. If I suddenly tried to do that ahead of the Games, it would be different to what I've done previously and most likely effect the way I call a race."





“If you stick to your principles and go through the processes you have been refining in preparation for London then you’ve got every chance of being able to lift yourself to a level where you can achieve a personal best.”

Examples of my personal bests on the track

“When I broke the World Record for the fastest mile in Oslo in 1985 I felt very different. It seems ridiculous to say, but that race felt much easier than ever before. I had prepared in just the right way and played the race through in my mind that once the gun went it came as second nature. There are little periods in your career where everything just clicks into place and when that happens you’re able to find that extra level. It’s hard to explain why it happens but when it does it’s important to take advantage.

There are of course times where it doesn’t quite go to plan no matter how meticulous you prepare. In the 1984 Olympics I lost out to Seb Coe but I did everything I could do to win that race. I ran to my best ability but Seb was better. Obviously it’s disappointing but it’s something you can’t do anything about. In London, Jamaican sprinter Yohan Blake (100m World Champion) might run faster than he ever has done yet still be beaten by Usain Bolt. There’s no shame in losing in that manner but sometimes you just have to accept that you did the best you could do. Unfortunately it doesn’t always guarantee the result you want but that is the beauty of sport.”

Advice for athletes and businesses striving for personal bests during London 2012

“If you do the preparation and go in feeling confident then it’s up to you to execute your personal best. If you can take that platform to the Games, the stage is likely to lift you an extra level. Just make sure you don’t get carried away in the moment and stay true to how you want to perform going into it. You need to deliver the performance that you went through all those times in your head and not have any regrets when you get back to the changing room.

When it comes to business, London 2012 gives companies and employees exposure on a global level. Performing under intense pressure can be intimidating but if you stick to your principles and go through the processes you have been refining in preparation for London then you’ve got every chance of being able to lift yourself to a level where you can achieve a personal best.

As a commentator at London 2012, I rely on systems such as the Commentator Information System Atos has developed to provide me with the facts and figures I need to call the action. Behind the scenes, there are thousands of Atos business technologists giving their personal bests in order for me to achieve mine.”

About Atos

Atos is an international information technology services company with annual 2011 proforma revenue of EUR 8.5 billion and 74,000 employees in 42 countries. Serving a global client base, it delivers hi-tech transactional services, consulting and technology services, systems integration and managed services.

With its deep technology expertise and industry knowledge, it works with clients across the following market sectors: Manufacturing, Retail, Services, Public, Health & Transports, Financial Services, Telecoms, Media & Technology, Energy & Utilities. Atos is focused on business technology that powers progress and helps organizations to create their firm of the future. It is the Worldwide Information Technology Partner for the Olympic

and Paralympic Games and is quoted on the Paris Eurolist Market. Atos operates under the brands Atos, Atos Consulting & Technology Services, Atos Worldline and Atos Worldgrid.

For more information, visit: atos.net

Copyright Atos. Group Talents & Communications
– May 2012

Atos, the Atos logo, Atos Consulting, Atos Worldline, Atos Sphere, Atos Cloud, Atos Healthcare (in the UK) and Atos Worldgrid are registered trademarks of Atos SA. ©2012 Atos.

atos.net/london2012



“The success of the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games relies on the thousands of people behind the scenes, making the Games happen, providing expertise and tireless endeavour.”

“The Atos Business Technologists, a key part of our IT operation, are prime examples of this: a desire to prove themselves on the biggest stage available and aim for their personal bests day after day. It's important they prepare themselves mentally for the intensity and pressure of this challenge, both individually and collectively, in the same way as the athletes they are supporting.

The flawless delivery of the technology at London 2012, the largest sports-related IT contract of all time, requires the best talent in the industry. The proven track record of business technologists across a number of Olympic Games and Paralympic Games

combined with their industry leading skills, and focus on delivering personal bests, make Atos an integral component of our technology team.

The skills and experience they offer, alongside LOCOG's technology team and the other technology partners, will help us deliver a fitting Games-time experience for athletes, spectators and fans watching at home.”

Lord Seb Coe (London 2012 Chairman)
on the personal best mindset

