

Leadership lessons from ironman

[Business](#), [Management](#)



While it's one of the hardest things I have done, it's also one of the most rewarding one and it gives you enough leadership lesson that happens as a result. Finding your Purpose One of the key reasons one does an Ironman or any other Endurance Sport is a sense of achievement and a desire to do something bigger than one's self. When you are preparing for 4-6 months for a race, waking up at crazy hours, with 12-14 hours of weekly preparation, and time away from family, the blood (yes blood !!) sweat and constant pain, it's that purpose that keeps you going. In business also there needs to be a Purpose (a Why?) that keeps you and your teams going, which is more than just making money.

Maybe its family, recognition, growth, team success or whatever is the purpose, keep it close to your heart and top of your mind and most importantly hold yourself responsible to the accomplishment of that purpose. Hard work is more important than talent Finishing an Ironman is tough and some athletes are naturally talented (I am not), however no matter what your build and shape, crossing the finish line is about much more than just natural ability, it's about how hard you train, and how much you're willing to push yourself. In business, we sometimes overemphasize natural talent, however we overlook that it's the hard work and persistence that eventually brings success. Natural talent is good, however in business, it's just the head start and the rest is the effort you're willing to put in. It's the to-do attitude which is more important than the aptitude, Leaders create work cultures that promote hard work and perseverance rather than just talent.

Learnings from failures. Endeavor's like competing in an Ironman or leading a business and a team will test you, there will be obstacles, failures

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(injuries), you will be questioned and sometimes challenged. You will stumble and fall (I had so many J) and some of your failures might embarrass and frustrate, however you will learn from these mistakes and failures and try to do things differently. You will attack with even more energy, courage and your determination will make you better, faster, stronger. You will be defined not by how you fell down, but rather how you stood up (cliché J)!!

Measuring your performance. Ironman makes you data junkie, you want to analyze and measure every run or ride or swim you did, measuring training in specific heart rate zones, checking your VO2 max, lactate threshold, running cadence, biking power watts etc. In business and in sports, being data-driven in your goals is the best way to measure your progress and improve performance. Leaders and athletes are experts in setting these goals, measuring results and achieving specific performance metrics. It's the Team. One of the most critical lesson I learned while training was to rely on and to be grateful for my support team, my wife, my boys and my friends who supported me throughout my training.

My family patiently accepted my crazy weekend schedule, my overall state of fatigue, my cranky mood and my anti-social behaviour and then supporting me in 12-13 hours on the race day, giving support, encouragement, clicking me, I would not be able to cross the finish line without their support and it makes me realize it's not about my individual performance, it's the Team!! Same way for Leaders, it's the team that matters the most, not you, not individuals but the Team!! The journey is more important than the destination. Although crossing that finish line gives you a sense of achievement and you get emotional (I did), however for me

the most amazing and worthwhile part of Ironman was the journey; the training itself!! Now, when I think about my business and working as a team, I have a new mindset: The goal is to inspire day-to-day fulfillment, a commitment to professional improvement to your customer and your team and a pride in what we have achieved. The effort, commitment, time management, and dedication required to train and complete an Ironman are the same personality traits leading to success in your professional life. The end-game (crossing the finish line/meeting quota) is just part of that journey. It humbles you.

Ironman Training makes you realize the amount of hard work it takes to each milestone, nothing comes easy be it an Ironman finish or running a business. And when you understand the efforts, it's not just you putting in the long hours, you learn to respect that each person who has gotten somewhere has put in efforts that you probably don't know of. Each success story, be it fellow athlete or a colleague comes with an untold story of determination, hard work and passion, this helps you shed your ego, be humble and respect the efforts of others too. A sense of Gratitude... Be it Ironman or leading a business, be thankful and have gratitude in your hearts to enjoy the journey. Be thankful to your family, your friends, your organization and your team. Be fortunate and happy that we have been given this opportunity and strength in our legs to run an Ironman, or lead a business. We should have a sense of gratitude and appreciation for the opportunity we have been given to prove ourselves, to build something, to learn and to share and we should do everything possible to be successful, and also inspire others to do the same.