

PREFACE

When our consulting team designed our first sports workshop for a national team, we wanted to include competitions with interactive yet powerful messages. We thought that a trivia quiz would stimulate imaginations, especially if it were a competition among smaller teams. So, we compiled a ten-question quiz, and we wanted to introduce the essence of teambuilding with the final question: “What is the strongest animal in the world?” After the question was read aloud, the teams began shouting about lions, tigers, sharks, bears, and other large predators. When the commotion died down a bit, the team captain said to the others “This is a trick question: I read that an ant can carry many times its body weight, but these big animals can’t. Plus, they said that teambuilding is today’s main theme, and ants work together. So, I think ants are the answer”. The captain also happened to be one of the world’s top players. She was almost right, by the way, because the strongest animal is the copepod (a tiny crustacean), but the ant is also near the top of the rankings, and it was the answer with which we were going to launch into teambuilding. Sure, she ruined the punchline, but that’s how it goes sometimes with clever athletes. So how does this story fit into the theme of this book? Mainly, team sports professionals over the past 15-20 years have replaced the “apex predators” with hard-working, team-oriented “ants”, and the results have been remarkable! Of course, this doesn’t mean that you don’t need lions or tigers at times, but you must be careful with them!

The preface of any worthwhile book has a basic duty to introduce its author, especially if it provides deep professional content. At least that’s what experts say. How can we expect anyone to start a book that is well over a hundred pages long if the reader has no professional confidence in the person whose thoughts they will be consuming in the next hours or days? I hope this book doesn’t take months to

finish, because that would mean that I did something totally wrong. Regardless, talking about myself has always been difficult for me. Thankfully, I seldom forced myself to do so, as I always wanted to let my results do the talking.

This book is a deeper reinterpretation of the relationship between sport and psychology, at least that's my goal. It demonstrates how it is valuable for professional coaches to use psychological knowledge and how that knowledge fosters power and success. I'm going to show you, in meticulous detail, how to build a team with a modern mindset, not one that is only forced together by their technical skills, but one that can really function as a team. Furthermore, I will explain why personality types dictate whether a team can function. Teams that run well do so not because they force it, and not because their current behaviour (their "mask") commands it, but because they are programmed like this! The success built on such a method always endures. More and more people sport professionals are already using psychological systems and tests, so I will also point out the misconceptions in this area. But how do I know all this?

I have an Expert-type personality, a statement that will make more sense in the later parts of the book. I build slowly, learn constantly, and uphold an important principle: I only talk about subjects in which I consider myself an authority, i.e., subjects that I know deeply, and about which I have a sufficient amount of quality personal experience. I like to listen to people who are smarter than me, and to me, wisdom does not necessarily correspond to age. Many people around me cannot bear this, but it's how I am. My parents taught me to distinguish between good and bad people. Good people need to be treated with respect and humility regardless of their careers, so it doesn't matter if the "good person" is a maid or a multimillionaire. My other guiding principle is that children are sacred, and it is our responsibility to protect and support children in their development. But it is hardly unique in my business circles that achieving a certain career level leads to the idea of "making the world a better place". I'm so lucky to work with a system and in a field where I can do it day by day, tipping the scale in favour of a few people's fate.

I played competitive sports from an early age. By the time I was 8 years old, I was already a seasoned junior athlete who trained daily and competed often. When I was still quite young, I was forced to choose between a professional sports career and a business career. At age 20, I received an offer from the world's largest bank; this offer was impossible to pass up, especially for someone like me from a small, rural town. I made the right choice; I quickly built an impressive career in business. By 23, I was the top manager of the most profitable media company in Hungary at that time. As a result of my precocious success, I was commissioned as a business development consultant at the early age of 24, and since age 28 I have worked exclusively in the business development field (by foregoing a multi-national corporate career).

A key element of my success was the use of psychological systems that were introduced to me by my French-Canadian co-owner, to whom I am forever grateful. As a person with a controlling and finance degree, I was always a realist, and I didn't really believe in the "mumbo jumbo" before. Perhaps this is why we succeeded in building an effective psychological system, because, at every juncture, there was a real fight with my hefty scepticism. It has also become a favourite saying of my colleagues and business partners that if anything goes through my vetting process, then there shouldn't be a problem. Yes, I can be a "confrontational" figure because I am obsessed with maximalism. It's not a habit that I am going to give up anytime soon, though often it would have been easier to just "look away" and not deal with tiny details. In 21 years of business, I have successfully managed over 500 business development projects, all of which focussed on organisational development, including teambuilding, leadership, and management development. I have always believed that businesses can only be built from people, and if people move in the same direction, then nothing can go wrong.

People find me strange. I don't look like a typical business development professional. I go to the gym religiously because it is the only physical activity that motivates me even at 2 a.m., and not incidentally, it makes my appearance better. The more business development projects I had, the more time I spent on special workout programmes to decompress. During one keynote presentation I gave to a group of

CEOs, many guests were surprised to see me onstage instead of a “normal-looking” businessman who they expected after the MC’s serious introduction. I felt there was the need to release the tension, to stop the shock, so I started my presentation with the following sentence: “Many people have seen me throughout the day, and I think it surprises you that I am not the conference owner’s bodyguard, but his business mentor, and as such, I’m here to talk about strategic changes in business development.” Since then, I have been able to use this to my advantage; I deliberately build on the contrast between appearance and content.

Sports have always been an integral part of my life, so when our psychological system and teambuilding knowledge reached an elite level and we received our first invitation from the world of sport, I happily accepted. Since then, I have been involved directly or indirectly in the development of 64 teams. They have included the world’s elite club teams from the first and second divisions. And of course, there have been many national teams. We have worked with teams from several countries in Europe, USA, South America, and have seen and interpreted the analyses of nearly 10,000 athletes. Our role in sport has helped us quite a bit in developing our system in the business field, because while the accuracy of a complex analysis of a particular business manager is often revealed after months, the results are visible in a few short minutes in sport. That is why I am proud that the business psychology system we have developed has proven itself in sport and through that, we have helped teams obtain outstanding results and titles at the European Championships, the World Championships, and the Olympics.

I’m not a man who seeks the limelight! I never enjoyed the buzz. I have never been interested in widespread recognition; I have always been concerned about satisfying my clients with my work. This is especially true for sports. For me, real human relationships are essential; I don’t even pretend to accept superficial or “fake” contacts. Whether in private or business life, I always demand a sincere, blunt approach, even though it is often painful. I have become a successful business mentor over the years because, through these raw revelations, my business partners receive exactly what they find

difficult to get elsewhere: brutal honesty. This is often hard to accept for the CEO of a multinational or even for a celebrated national team captain, but the criticism has always been constructive and useful.

You will read a lot about the players' private lives and how to manage them, as it is an essential element of success in sport. I personally devote serious energy to make my relationships work as smoothly as possible. In both the private and business spheres, when I establish a relationship with someone, it is forever. This is not too unusual in private, but as a business development consultant and mentor, the fact that I am celebrating the 18th anniversary with my first business client can be considered extraordinary. Sustained professional success can come only from a balanced private life, and I'm fortunate to have found the right partner for it — or maybe they found me, I don't know which is true — with whom I have lived for 14 years in honesty, love, and happiness.

I don't really know whether the content of the preface made you excited or made you lose all interest regarding this book; it's up to you! But to those who honour me their trust, I wish you a valuable read!