



February, 2010 - Lessons from Olympians

## Lessons from Olympic Athletes

Watching the Olympic Games is always fun. Besides enjoying the competition, we can also learn a few things that we can apply in our own endeavors.

The motto of the Games is *Citius, Altius, Fortius*, a Latin expression meaning faster, higher, stronger. There's definitely some inspiration there, even if you've never played a sport in your life. The lessons these athletes have about preparation, discipline, and always moving forward, can help us, no matter what industry we're in.



Here are a few inspiring examples!

### *Make high performance routine*

Lindsey Vonn is the gold medal favorite in three of the five Alpine racing events in Vancouver, and has won the last two World Cup overall titles. Last week *Sports Illustrated* featured her on the cover and explained one of Vonn's regular workouts. She balances on two nylon slack lines suspended three feet off the floor as she gets into that skier's crouch, and visualizes the course she'll be skiing. "Once I visualize a course, I never forget it. I get

on those lines and go through exactly the run that I want to have. I control my emotions **and just make it routine.**"



That was 8 months before the Olympics. It takes a while to make excellence routine.

How often do we look at preventative maintenance as something that's not really part of our routine? PM would be nice, but it's a cost, right? What if we look at PM as an investment, something that can make our plant routinely more efficient and trouble-free? That's when we start thinking more like a champion.

## *Learn from little things*

Dorothy Hamil is one of the most famous Olympic skaters. Her focus on learning from "the small stuff" is insightful:

"Every time you go out on the ice, there are slight flaws. You can always think of something you should have done better. These are the things you must work on."

We all get caught up in the daily grind and miss small, but important, signs about a process or system we're responsible for. There's too much to do, too little time, too many details to watch on a daily basis. Fixing the small flaws -the sediment collecting the bottom of a reservoir we can't see, not enough attention to lubrication technique and schedules, not tracking down an air leak that contributes to wasting 50% of compressed air (the amount the average plant is losing right now) -that's where big time improvements are found.



Sometimes it pays to think small.

## *Spend your time with professionals*

Olympic athletes work with the best professional coaches, trainers, and advisors they can find. They associate with people who do what they want to do, and do it at a very high

level, and that gives them a greater chance of success.



The Olympic Training Center brings together world-class competitors, gold medalists, and support staff. Surrounded by other top flight professionals with a wealth of knowledge, you can't help but improve.

It's the same in this business. Who are you working with? They're either helping you achieve your best or holding you back.

## *Look Next Door*

**Where do U.S. Winter Olympics athletes come from?** You'd expect most of them to come from cold weather states, and they do. These are the top ten states, by birthplace, and the number of athletes from each state:

- Minnesota (23)
- New York (18)
- California (137)
- Colorado (13)
- Michigan (13)**
- Utah (13)
- Massachusetts (11)
- Illinois (10)
- Wisconsin (10)
- Washington (7)

With Michigan ranking 5th, and 4 of the 10 states in the Midwest, we think it shows you **can find talented high achievers right here at home.**

If you're looking for someone with certain skills, whether it's machine repair, heavy moving, highly specialized electrical work, or any kind of plant maintenance expertise, you can find it in West Michigan. We've even got a helpful list of key questions you should ask to determine the best resource for your job. Great resources are a lot closer than you think.

## *Keep Reinventing*

Snowboarding is a relatively recent addition to the Winter Games, but these young athletes have a strategy worth emulating: keep trying new things.

For example, this year's halfpipe walls are 22 feet high, four feet higher than in Turin, site of the last Winter Games. The defending champ is Shaun White (the guy with long red hair), and **his new move is something called a double McTwist**





**1260.** We're not sure what that is, but we love the attitude -and we'll be watching!

Olympians know their competitive careers are short. They can't afford to waste time and hope the competition slips. They keep reinventing themselves, pushing themselves faster, higher, stronger.

Does the recession have you waiting -or taking the initiative? Are there things you could be doing in your plant to make it faster, higher producing, and stronger in terms of quality, efficiency, or sustainability?



## A final thought...

As you watch the Olympic athletes this month, consider how their key strategies apply to our own work:

- Setting goals
- Hard work
- A passion for what we do
- Performance under pressure
- Being graceful in defeat
- Learning from mistakes
- Overcoming setbacks
- Focusing on our long-term goals

**May your own Team USA have a great month!**

And one last suggestion: while you're watching the Vancouver games on TV, how about taking a tip from our Canadian neighbors by enjoying some grilled salmon, a local favorite in that great city?

Here's a recipe we think you'll enjoy:

[Cedar Planked Salmon](#)

