

Is Business the Next Olympic Sport? By Kathi Guiney SPHR, GPHR, President of **YES!** Your Human Resources Solution

From biathlon to bobsled, cross-country to curling, the Winter Olympic Games is a sporting event so significant it happens only once every four years. This gives the athletes time to rigorously train to compete for top honors: that's their job those four years. What if, here in the business world, we built employees like athletes training for the Olympics? After all, employees are really business athletes playing a year-round competitive sport. The language is already there; just look at these sports parallels that describe business activities.

Companies have **competitors**. They also have a **team** of employees, who work to beat their competitors to the top spot in the industry. Companies strive to make **goals**, and they keep corporate **scorecards** to track their progress. They even hire executive **coaches** to keep their teams in tip-top shape. Those teams bring their **A game** for important clients. When in jeopardy of losing a client, the company **rallies the team and goes for it**, sometimes with a **Hail Mary pass**. But if these business athletes have any hope of catching that Hail Mary, they must get the training they need to succeed.

Like all athletes, business athletes get better with practice and training. Ensure a stellar presentation from business athletes by training them in what constitutes a **home-run** presentation, and also including time to practice in front of others. Knowing what to expect and having practiced the necessary skills will help keep stress and nerves at bay.

New employees, or **rookies**, may need more practice than corporate veterans. Rookies can earn **playing time in the game** by shadowing and learning from mentors. Rookies will learn faster by creating their own mistakes and successes, instead of just being instructed. Plus every team can benefit from **bench strength** and building skilled resources to assign to projects.

Another way to keep the team ready for action is to offer ongoing back-to-basics training: **conditioning drills** for the business athlete. A firm grip on the basics provides a solid foundation to support more complex skills. Regular refresher courses in teambuilding, active listening, and goal setting will help keep the team in prime condition year after year.

We in the business world can use the similarities between sports and business to our advantage. When we think of employees as business athletes, we remember to sharpen their skills through practice and training, to push the team to the top. Every athlete on the team was **drafted** for a reason, and that set of talented individuals can work together to produce results no one person could. So let's update the corporate **playbook** to include ongoing, targeted training and show that employees are valuable business athletes competing for gold not every four years, but every day.