

Game On: How To Apply An Athlete's Mindset To Franchise Leadership



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As the CEO of a leading franchise marketing agency, I've had the pleasure of working with many successful franchise executives across the country. What's interesting is that many of these top performers share a common background: They were athletes in high school or college. Franchising is a popular business avenue for professional athletes as well —Shaquille O'Neal, LeBron James and Drew Brees own multiple franchise locations.

In fact, there is [research](#) suggesting that former athletes tend to be more successful in their careers than non-athletes. This appears to be because participating in sports teaches valuable skills such as teamwork, communication, leadership and resilience, which are essential in the business world.

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Build Resilience

Athletes constantly face adversity and setbacks. They learn how to bounce back from competitive and personal challenges, come back stronger and never give up. This is the kind of resilience that can lead to a successful career in franchising, where executives are constantly challenged to award more franchises, ensure their franchisees are profitable and maximize shareholder value.

Learning from your own failures, and those of your peers, can help you build resilience. I recommend collaborating, sharing and getting affirmation from others in your field. Franchising is a competitive space for sure, yet competitors share ideas and recommend marketing partners all the time. They can be almost like trusted coaches who give you the perspective and the knowledge you need to bounce back from adversity.

One way to collaborate and build a strong support network is by attending franchise industry conferences. Building your own team of colleagues, mentors, service providers and other industry thought leaders can help you stay motivated and overcome challenges.

Play To Win

Athletes are highly competitive and play to win. They play to their strengths and work to improve their weaknesses. They constantly strive to be the best they can be. You can apply this same mindset to franchise leadership. Being laser-focused on winning will enable you to develop bold strategies, take calculated risks and outperform the competition.

However, it's hard to know if you've won if you don't have a clearly defined vision of what success looks like. Set specific, measurable goals—as many athletes do—to achieve your desired outcome.

But Don't Be Afraid To Lose

Athletes know that losing is part of the game. They don't let the fear of losing hold them back. Instead, they learn from their mistakes and use them as motivation to do better next time. You can apply this attitude to franchising. Don't be afraid to take risks and try new things, even if they don't always work out. You'll likely be more successful than those who play it safe all the time. In the fast-paced and ever-changing world of franchise sales, being open to taking risks and learning from failure is crucial for staying ahead of the curve.

Be A Team Player

Athletes understand the value of teamwork. They know that they can't win games alone and that everyone on the team has a role to play. This same mentality can help you succeed in franchising. Be a team player—collaborate well with your agency partners and be open to feedback and ideas from others rather than making decisions unilaterally.

Hone Your Skills

The best athletes never rest on their laurels. They have an insatiable desire to stay ahead of the competition. As a result, they are constantly finding ways to get better every day. They learn from the success of their top competitors, seek out the best coaches and mentors, and put in the time it takes to be the best. Similarly, most top franchise executives have the right combination of humility, passion, competitiveness and drive needed to become true subject matter experts. To that end, they constantly explore new frontiers like predictive marketing analytics and how to leverage cognitive dissonance in the sales process.

There are many ways to up your game as a franchise executive, including becoming a Certified Franchise Executive through the International Franchise Association. The IFA's CFE program covers various areas of franchising including financial and operational management and leadership.

Whether you are a former athlete or not, you can apply these skills and qualities to win big at franchising. Building resilience, playing to win, embracing failure, working collaboratively and continuously honing your skills are all critical to thriving in the competitive world of franchising. By attending industry events, collaborating with partners and seeking out educational opportunities like the CFE program, you can become a franchising rock star.

Remember, success in franchising is not just about hard work; it's also about having the right mindset and approach. So take these lessons from sports and apply them to your career in franchising.