

# **The Briere Effect**

**An NHL Coach's Playbook for Business and Life**

**Steve Briere**

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## **Introduction: About Steve Briere**

This book isn't just about hockey—it's about finding success against all odds, no matter where you start or what field you're in.

I'm Steve Briere, goaltending coach for the Seattle Kraken, and my story started in Winnipeg, where I was just a kid with a big dream, a makeshift hockey stick, and the kind of determination that came from a lot of cold winters and even more setbacks. I remember walking the streets, collecting dropped coins to pay for hockey gear—whatever it took to keep the dream alive. From those early days, through my years with the Toronto Maple Leafs, to my current role with the Kraken, my journey has been anything but typical.

I want to take you along for the ride—through all the ups and downs that shaped how I coach today. The lessons I've learned go way beyond the rink. One of the biggest things I've learned is that success starts by helping others succeed. True leadership, to me, is about the impact we have on those around us. I've worked with several of the very best goaltenders in the world including Frederik Andersen, James Reimer, Jack Campbell, Joey Daccord, Philip Grubauer, Martin Jones, Curtis McElhinney, Joe Woll, Jonathan Bernier, Petr Mrazek, Michael Hutchison and others, including my time with Carey Price, Corey Crawford, and Braden Holtby during the 2016 World Cup of Hockey. Their combined professional career earnings easily extends into the hundreds of millions of dollars. And I'm proud to have been a part of each one of their journeys in one way or another. Each one of these guys is human. Each one has struggled at some point in the

areas of physical and mental acuity. Seeing them bounce back and perform at their best is always a reminder of why I do this. It's about lifting others up, pushing them to reach their potential, and watching them achieve things they never thought they could.

An integral part of my approach is having a plan. Setting goals and figuring out how to get there has been huge for me and the players I coach. I remember setting a specific goal with the Toronto Maple Leafs to improve save percentages across the board, and developing a detailed plan involving tailored drills, video analysis, and mental conditioning to achieve it. But, let's be honest—life rarely goes according to plan, and being able to adapt is just as important. In these pages, I'll share stories about how having a plan—and knowing when to pivot—has helped me and others turn obstacles into opportunities.

Leadership isn't just about making decisions—it's about bringing people together, finding common ground, and making sure everyone feels heard. Whether it's managing the goals of players, coaches, management, or fans, I've learned how important it is to align everyone towards a shared vision. Balancing competing interests is something I've faced over and over, and it's just as crucial off the ice as it is on it.

I've learned that communication is an absolute must. I can't overstate how important being clear, honest, and direct has been for my success. Knowing when to listen and when to speak up has made all the difference in my relationships with players, teams, and organizations. Trust is what makes teams work, and I want to share how I've used communication to inspire, motivate, and build that trust.

Professional sports is a volatile journey at the best of times, and I've learned that the path to success is rarely straightforward. I've taken routes that some people thought were risky or even a little crazy. From shadowing legendary coaches to building a hockey academy in an attic with almost no resources—just a few sticks, a net, and a handful of eager young players—I embraced the unconventional and found my own way forward. Those early sessions in that cramped space were where I learned to innovate and adapt, turning limitations into opportunities. Creativity and resilience have been my constant companions, and I hope my experiences encourage you to take that leap, even when the way forward isn't obvious.

This book is for anyone who wants to learn from my journey—whether you're a coach, an athlete, a business leader, or just someone looking to overcome your own challenges. You'll learn how resilience helped me through tough times, and how effective communication can inspire and lead others to success. The lessons here go beyond the technical skills of goaltending; they're about resilience, strategy, and helping others thrive. Whether you're trying to lead a sports team to victory or guide a business to new heights, I believe the principles in these pages can help you get there.

So, let's dive in. I'm excited to share my story—how a determined kid from Winnipeg turned a love for hockey into a career in the NHL, built on perseverance, passion, and a commitment to helping others succeed. I hope it inspires you to keep pushing, no matter what challenges come your way, and to always find a way forward.

## **Foreword by Curtis McElhinney**

I first met Steve Briere during my tenure with the Toronto Maple Leafs, and from our very first interaction, it was clear that Steve was not just another coach. His passion for goaltending, coupled with his deep understanding of the game, made an immediate impact on my career. Steve has an uncanny ability to communicate complex concepts in a simple, relatable way, which not only made me a better goaltender but also a more insightful student of the game.

Steve's journey, as detailed in this book, is a testament to his resilience, dedication, and innovative approach. From his humble beginnings in Manitoba to becoming an influential figure in the NHL, Steve's story is one of relentless pursuit and unwavering commitment. He has faced numerous challenges, both on and off the ice, and has consistently turned these obstacles into opportunities for growth and learning.

One of the most profound lessons I learned from Steve is the importance of preparation and adaptability. He taught me that while technical skills are crucial, the mental and emotional aspects of goaltending are equally important. His innovative training methods and emphasis on mental toughness have been pivotal in my development as a professional athlete.

This book captures the essence of Steve's coaching philosophy and provides valuable insights into what it takes to succeed at the highest levels of hockey. Whether you are a

player, a coach, or simply a fan of the sport, Steve's experiences and wisdom will inspire and educate you.

Steve Briere is more than a coach; he is a mentor, a strategist, and a visionary. His contributions to the game of hockey are immeasurable, and his influence extends far beyond the rink. It is an honor to introduce this book and to share the remarkable story of a man who has dedicated his life to the pursuit of excellence in goaltending and beyond.

- Curtis McElhinney

## **Foreword by Frederik Andersen**

Working with Steve during my time in Toronto was a transformative experience in my career. Steve brought a level of expertise and passion to his coaching that was truly unparalleled. His innovative approach to goaltending, combined with his profound understanding of the game's mental aspects, made a significant impact on my performance and development as a goaltender.

Steve's journey, as chronicled in this book, is nothing short of inspirational. From his early days in Manitoba to his role as a top goaltending coach in the NHL, Steve's story is one of perseverance, innovation, and unwavering dedication. His ability to overcome challenges and continuously strive for excellence is a testament to his character and work ethic.

One of the key lessons I learned from Steve is the importance of a holistic approach to goaltending. He emphasized that success on the ice is not just about physical skills but also about mental fortitude and emotional resilience. Steve's coaching extended beyond the technical aspects of goaltending; he was instrumental in helping me develop a strong mental game, which is crucial for performing at the highest levels.

This book offers a look into Steve's coaching philosophy and provides invaluable insights for anyone involved in the sport. Whether you are a young goalie aspiring to reach the NHL, a coach looking to enhance your training methods, or a hockey

enthusiast eager to learn more about the intricacies of goaltending, Steve's experiences and wisdom will prove to be an invaluable resource.

Steve Briere's influence on my game has been profound, and his legacy as a coach and mentor continues to grow. It is a privilege to introduce this book and to highlight the remarkable contributions of a man who has dedicated his life to advancing the art and science of goaltending.

- Fredrik Andersen

# Chapter 1: The Foundation of Success - Helping Others Succeed

Success in any field, whether it's sports or business, is deeply intertwined with the success of those around you. In this chapter, I will outline the key principles of my coaching philosophy: fostering a supportive environment, building mental resilience, and emphasizing emotional well-being. These elements are crucial for helping others succeed and ultimately achieving your own success. As a coach, I've always believed that my success is measured by the achievements of the players I work with. This chapter is a window into my coaching philosophy, real-life examples that illustrate its impact, and how these principles can be applied to business leadership.

## Coaching Philosophy

The core of my coaching philosophy is simple:

"Your success is my success."

This belief shapes every interaction I have with the players. It's about more than just improving their skills; it's about fostering a supportive environment where they can thrive both mentally and physically.

I didn't realize it at the time but I learned this concept early in life. I remember the summer after my Triple-A Bantam year vividly. It was a time filled with both excitement

and anxiety, as I knew this was a pivotal moment in my hockey journey—one that could shape my future. The Manitoba Mustangs were the only Triple-A summer team in all of Manitoba at the time, essentially serving as Team Manitoba. It comprised the best players from across the province. Making that team was a huge deal for me. I went there knowing to give it everything I had.

I had an incredible tryout and made the team. However, the joy was short-lived when I learned it would cost \$2000 to play, covering expenses like travel, ice, and uniforms. My parents simply couldn't afford it. This was one of the first times in my life where money became a significant barrier. Despite my talent, I was told I couldn't play because we couldn't cover the costs. But I was undeterred. I wrote a letter to Diane Woods, the head of Manitoba Minor Hockey Association, explaining my situation and offering to pay with the money I earned from my paper route. Amazingly, they allowed me to make payments with my earnings, and I received a scholarship to cover the remaining costs. This experience taught me the value of perseverance and finding ways to overcome financial obstacles. But it also taught me the value of helping others succeed. Without having people like Diane in my corner, I would have lost my opportunity. That scholarship later became my responsibility to give out to other kids like me—those with the talent but not the means. It wasn't just about getting to play that year; it was about opening a door for others, a lesson that deeply influenced my approach to coaching even to this day.

Later, when I was drafted by the Tri-City Americans, I faced another significant challenge. I was 15 when I got drafted to the Tri-City Americans in the WHL. I was

young, too young perhaps, but ready to do whatever it took. I took a Greyhound bus from Winnipeg to Edmonton for my first training camp—a 24-hour trip that stopped at every little town along the way. I was just a kid traveling alone, lugging my gear and dreams with me.

Camp was intense. It was my first time in that kind of environment. I ended up rooming with Terry Ryan, who was not only an actor and author but also had a knack for pulling every prank in the book. He got me good—Copenhagen under my pillow, toothpaste on the phone, short-sheeted beds, you name it. I was so naive, but that was the kind of trial by fire that helped shape me. That camp set me up to be scouted by Junior A teams, and it led me to Trail, British Columbia, where I played my first season of Junior A hockey. Despite the pranks, this experience was invaluable as it marked my entry into junior hockey. This journey taught me the importance of resilience and adaptability—qualities that have become fundamental components of my coaching philosophy. What Terry was doing was taking me under his wing. He knew that if I could handle the heat of his pranks, I'd be all the more ready to handle the heat on and off the ice. He knew what he was doing, and he was doing me a huge favour. That was his way of making sure I was ready. His way of helping me succeed.

### **Holistic Approach to Coaching**

My approach to coaching is holistic, meaning it addresses not only the physical skills but also the mental and emotional aspects of a player's development. On my journey to

becoming the goalie coach for the Toronto Maple Leafs, I didn't have NHL connections or an easy pathway. Instead, I volunteered, did unpaid internships, and even shadowed Mitch Korn, a legendary goalie coach, to learn the ropes. It took years of hard work, persistence, and a holistic focus on both technical skills and mental resilience to eventually achieve my goal. This experience shaped my coaching approach, emphasizing that success comes from addressing every aspect of development—mental, physical, and emotional.

It encompasses not just the physical aspects of the game but also the mental and emotional well-being of the players. This comprehensive approach ensures that players are prepared to handle the pressures of the game both on and off the ice. The mental game is just as important, if not more so, than the physical game. Players need to be mentally tough to handle the ups and downs of a season, the pressure of high-stakes games, and the inevitable setbacks.

Building mental resilience involves several techniques:

- **Visualization:** Players mentally rehearse scenarios they might encounter during a game. By imagining themselves successfully navigating these situations, they build confidence and prepare their minds for actual performance.
- **Mindfulness and meditation:** These practices help players stay focused and present in the moment, reducing anxiety and improving concentration. Techniques like deep breathing exercises can be used to calm the mind before and during games.

- **Setting short-term and long-term goals:** This provides players with a clear sense of direction and purpose. Short-term goals help in maintaining motivation and tracking progress, while long-term goals provide an overarching vision.
- **Positive self-talk:** Encouraging players to engage in positive self-talk helps in building their confidence and reducing negative thoughts. This involves replacing self-doubt and criticism with affirmations and constructive feedback.
- **Stress management:** Teaching players how to manage stress effectively is crucial for maintaining mental resilience. This includes techniques such as time management, relaxation exercises, and maintaining a healthy work-life balance. Visualization, for instance, has players mentally rehearse scenarios they might encounter during a game. By imagining themselves successfully navigating these situations, they build confidence and prepare their minds for actual performance. A goalie might visualize making a crucial save during a high-pressure moment, which helps in developing a sense of preparedness and calmness.

These practices help players stay focused and present in the moment, reducing anxiety and improving concentration. One of the goalies I worked with was going through a significant performance slump. His confidence was shaken, and he was struggling to stay focused during games. By implementing visualization techniques and positive self-talk, we worked together to rebuild his confidence. He started visualizing successful plays before games and replaced negative thoughts with affirmations of his skills. Over time, his performance improved, and he regained his consistency on the ice.

Another goalie faced immense pressure during a critical playoff game. We practiced mindfulness and deep breathing exercises to help him stay calm and focused. During the game, he used these techniques to manage his anxiety and stay present in the moment. As a result, he performed exceptionally well, making crucial saves that helped give our team a chance to win.

### **Providing Emotional Support**

Transitioning from building mental resilience, providing emotional support is equally important. Players need to feel that they have someone in their corner, someone who believes in them even when they don't believe in themselves. This support can make all the difference in a player's performance. Regular check-ins are essential, having one-on-one meetings with players to discuss their progress, address any concerns, and provide encouragement. These check-ins offer a safe space for players to express their feelings and receive guidance.

Maintaining open lines of communication, where players feel comfortable sharing their thoughts and concerns without fear of judgment, is crucial. This builds trust and fosters a supportive environment. Offering positive reinforcement and recognizing players' efforts and achievements, no matter how small, boosts their confidence and motivation. Showing empathy and understanding towards players' challenges and struggles involves being a good listener and offering support without judgment.

Developing strong relationships with players based on trust and mutual respect creates a sense of belonging and support within the team. I remember sitting down with one of my goalies, the rink echoing with the sounds of skates and pucks, as he confided in me about the struggles he was facing off the ice. The weight of his words was evident, and I knew that listening without judgment was the first step. I reassured him, saying, "No matter what happens, I've got your back." This kind of open dialogue helped us build a bond that translated into his performance on the ice—he played with a renewed sense of purpose, knowing that he wasn't alone.

One of my previous coaches understood that value of offering emotional support. After being diagnosed with mono during my time with the Tri-City Americans, my career hit a major roadblock. I couldn't practice with an enlarged spleen, and eventually, they brought in another goalie. I lost my spot before I even really had a chance to prove myself. It felt like everything I'd worked for had slipped away, and I ended up back in Manitoba feeling defeated. However, Frank Porco, my coach with the Selkirk Steelers, took me under his wing. He gave me an opportunity to join the team, a second chance, and although he told me bluntly that I might be better off going to college, it only fueled my determination to prove him wrong. That support and that challenge were what I needed to pick myself up and keep going.

By drawing on that experience as an example, I've made sure to provide the emotional support my guys have needed to overcome their challenges. We've made it standard practice to have regular check-ins where they can talk to me about their concerns. It's a vehicle to offer support and guidance. By maintaining open communication and showing

empathy, I have helped several of my goalies navigate personal challenges and regain focus on the game.

I've had goalies struggle with self-doubt after a series of poor performances. I provided positive reinforcement by highlighting strengths and past successes. I've built back their confidence through regular feedback and support. Over time, they all regain their confidence and start performing at their best again. It's a great feeling for me, and I get great satisfaction from watching it happen.

### **The Birth of the Entrepreneurial Spirit**

Growing up, I was surrounded by hardworking parents, but they weren't entrepreneurs. Their dedication and strong work ethic instilled in me a deep drive to succeed, even though I chose a different path. My dad was practical—get a job, keep your head down, pay your bills, and live within your means. But for some reason, that life never appealed to me. I wanted more. The first job I had that sparked something entrepreneurial in me was working for Canadian Professional Hockey Schools owned by Jake Fleming. Jake was a tough boss but also a successful entrepreneur. He taught me things that went beyond the rink—things about investing, saving, and taking risks. He always pushed me to be prepared, to be on time, and to take notes. He taught me the importance of documenting everything—what you did, why you did it, what went well, and what you'd do differently next time. It was those lessons that gave birth to my first business, Briere's Goalie Schools, while I was still playing in the minors.

When I made that Triple-A team back in bantam, it was one of the biggest accomplishments of my life. It was the culmination of years of hard work, sacrifice, and determination, and it felt like all the struggles I had faced were finally paying off. The pride and joy I felt in that moment were indescribable, knowing that I had taken a big step toward making my dreams a reality. But making that team was just the beginning. I also needed equipment—and that was a whole other financial challenge. My family couldn't afford new goalie gear, and I had to figure out a way to make it happen. That's when I made a deal with Pete at Pete's Pro Shop. He agreed to let me pay in installments for the gear I needed. How I came up with the money was almost ridiculous. I would walk the streets at night looking for money that people dropped. It's incredible how much you could find—\$5 bills, \$20 bills, loonies, toonies, and even quarters. I filled up a jar and brought it to Pete every week until I had enough to pay off the equipment. It was a strange way to fund my gear, but it worked. Pete believed in me and let me make those payments. Every time I stepped on the ice, I remembered how much work had gone into just getting the equipment. That determination to find a way, no matter how unconventional, became a cornerstone of my coaching philosophy and my entrepreneurial business ventures.

### **Mental First Approach**

My “Mental First” approach emphasizes the importance of mental strength and positivity. This approach was influenced significantly by my experience shadowing Mitch Korn, the legendary goalie coach for the Nashville Predators. Mitch taught me the importance of

mental preparation and resilience, and I learned firsthand how crucial it is to develop mental strength to succeed at the highest levels. I've always believed that a positive mindset is crucial for overcoming challenges. This approach has helped many goalies develop the resilience needed to perform under pressure. It's about training the mind to stay focused and positive, no matter the situation.

Building confidence is key in any sport. Players need to believe in their abilities. My approach focuses on building that confidence through positive reinforcement and mental training exercises. Handling pressure is what separates good players from great players. Through visualization techniques, mindfulness exercises, and stress management strategies, I help players build the mental toughness needed to thrive under pressure.

Over the years, I've collected numerous success stories and quotes from the goalies I've coached. Their testimonials highlight the profound impact that a supportive and positive coaching approach can have. These personal accounts provide compelling evidence of the effectiveness of my philosophy.

*"Steve's coaching changed my career. He helped me believe in myself and pushed me to be the best I could be,"*

*"The mental training techniques Steve taught me were invaluable. They helped me stay focused and calm even in the most high-pressure situations."*

[Insert real story of mental toughness here, to illustrate the point]

## **Business Leadership Lessons**

The principles that guide my coaching—fostering a supportive environment, building mental resilience, and emphasizing emotional well-being—can be directly applied to business leadership. Just as a coach supports a player through their challenges, a business leader can mentor an employee facing a difficult project. When one of my goalies was struggling with consistency, I provided regular feedback and tailored drills to help them improve. Similarly, a manager could work closely with an employee, providing them with the necessary tools and feedback to succeed in their role. Both require patience, adaptability, and a clear development plan to foster growth. Just as I focus on helping my goalies succeed, business leaders should prioritize the development and success of their team members. In a business context, this means creating an environment where employees feel supported and valued, and earn recognition for their efforts. Leaders should invest in their team's growth, provide regular feedback, and celebrate individual and team achievements. This approach fosters a positive and productive work environment, leading to overall organizational success.

Investing in development is crucial. Just as I create personalized development plans for my goalies, business leaders should do the same for their employees. Identify their strengths and areas for improvement, and provide the resources they need to grow. Employees need to know that their leaders have their backs. This means offering support during challenging times, providing constructive feedback, and celebrating successes.

Developing individual strengths is a shared goal. Just as a coach identifies and develops the unique strengths of each player, business leaders should recognize the individual talents of their team members. Building a cohesive team is vital. In both sports and business, success relies on a cohesive team. A coach fosters teamwork by creating a supportive environment where players work together towards a common goal.

Effective communication is essential. Clear and effective communication is vital in both coaching and business leadership. Coaches communicate strategies, provide feedback, and motivate players. Business leaders should also prioritize communication, ensuring that team members understand their roles, receive constructive feedback, and are motivated to perform at their best.

Handling pressure and adversity is a critical skill. Coaches teach players to handle pressure and bounce back from setbacks. Business leaders should also equip their teams with the skills to manage stress, remain resilient in the face of challenges, and learn from failures. Strategic planning is necessary. Both coaches and business leaders need to think strategically. Coaches plan game strategies and training programs, while business leaders develop business strategies and project plans. Strategic thinking involves setting clear goals, anticipating challenges, and making informed decisions.

### **Practical Strategies for Business Leaders**

Personalized development plans are crucial.

- Work with team members to create individualized development plans that align with their career goals and the organization's objectives.
- Foster a supportive culture where employees feel valued and encouraged to express their ideas.
- Pair employees with experienced mentors for guidance and career development.
- Promote mental well-being by offering resources for stress management and encouraging work-life balance.
- Recognize and celebrate both individual and team achievements to boost morale. Business leaders should work with their team members to create individualized development plans that align with their career goals and the organization's objectives. Creating a supportive culture is essential. Foster a culture where employees feel supported and valued. Encourage open communication and provide a safe environment for employees to express their ideas and concerns.

Mentorship and coaching programs can support employee development. Pair employees with experienced mentors who can provide guidance, share knowledge, and help them navigate their career paths. Focusing on mental well-being is important. Promote mental well-being by providing resources for stress management, encouraging work-life balance, and fostering a positive work environment. Celebrating success boosts morale. Recognize and celebrate both individual and team achievements.

Implement recognition programs and celebrate milestones to show appreciation for employees' hard work and dedication.

The foundation of success, whether in sports or business, lies in helping others succeed. I encourage you to take these strategies and apply them in your own leadership journey. Whether you're mentoring a colleague, guiding a team through challenges, or striving to create a supportive environment, remember that your success is deeply linked to the growth and achievements of those around you. By adopting a coaching philosophy that prioritizes the development and well-being of team members, leaders can create an environment where everyone thrives. The lessons from my coaching career offer valuable insights for business leaders looking to nurture their teams and drive success. Through empathy, resilience, and strategic thinking, leaders can inspire their teams to achieve greatness. By recognizing individual strengths, fostering teamwork, and providing the necessary support and resources, leaders can create a culture of excellence and drive organizational success.

## **Chapter 2: The Blueprint of Achievement - Importance of a Personal Plan**

Success is not a one-size-fits-all endeavour. It requires a personalized approach that considers individual strengths, weaknesses, and aspirations. In this chapter, we will explore the importance of personalized development plans, how they are created, and how these principles can be applied in both sports and business settings. Real-life examples from my coaching career will illustrate the transformative power of these personalized plans.

Success in any field demands a strategic roadmap designed to guide individuals towards their specific goals. In hockey, personalized development plans are crucial for helping players reach their full potential, regardless of their position on the team, what line they play on, whether they are the starting goalie or the backup, or even a healthy scratch. Everyone has a role, everyone needs a plan. These plans are tailored to address the unique needs of each player, focusing on their strengths, areas for improvement, and long-term objectives.

### **Creating a Personalized Development Plan**

#### **Assessment**

Creating a personalized development plan involves several key steps. Each step builds on the previous one to create a comprehensive path forward. The first step is

conducting a thorough assessment of the player's current abilities. This includes evaluating their technical skills, physical fitness, mental toughness, and game intelligence. Tools such as performance analytics, video reviews, and feedback from coaches and teammates are used to gain a comprehensive understanding of the player's capabilities. For example, performance analytics can track a goalie's save percentages, reaction times, and positioning accuracy. Video reviews allow us to analyze game footage and identify technical flaws and strategic mistakes. Gathering feedback from coaches and even teammates provides a well-rounded view of the player's abilities and areas needing improvement.

During the time I was building Briere's Goalie Schools, I learned firsthand how critical it is to assess both strengths and weaknesses comprehensively. This meant evaluating each goalie's on-ice performance through drills, analyzing their reaction times during key plays, reviewing video footage to identify specific areas of struggle, and gathering direct feedback from each individual about their challenges. These varied assessments provided a complete picture that allowed me to create tailored training plans for each goalie. When I started the camps, I had to constantly assess the effectiveness of the training and the skills of the goalies who attended. It was not enough to simply teach drills—I had to observe each player, understand where they struggled, and adapt my approach to suit their individual needs. This experience underscored the importance of a thorough assessment as the foundation for any personalized development plan, a lesson that continues to shape my approach to coaching.

## **Setting SMART Goals**

Once the assessment is complete, the next step is to set specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound (SMART) goals. These goals provide a clear direction and motivation for the player. They can range from short-term objectives, such as improving a specific skill, to long-term goals, like making it to their next logical level.. Setting goals gives players a clear focus and motivation. By setting SMART goals, players gain a sense of achievement as they progress, helping them build confidence and maintain focus throughout their development journey.

### *Developing One Stop Hockey*

Just as I encourage players to set SMART goals, I remember setting my own goals when I began developing One Stop Hockey. My goal was to create a platform that served the hockey community and provided value through information and resources. This goal was specific, measurable, and achievable, and it pushed me to stay focused even when challenges arose. A \$5,000 advertising deal I secured with CCM was a significant milestone that validated my efforts and showed me that I was on the right track. Similarly, when setting goals for players, it is crucial that these goals are attainable yet challenging enough to inspire growth.

After setting these goals, I developed a detailed action plan. This plan outlined the specific steps and strategies the players needed to take to achieve their goals. It included training schedules, skill development drills, mental conditioning exercises, and recovery protocols. This action plan was designed to be flexible, allowing for

adjustments based on the player's progress and changing needs. Training schedules might include practice sessions, strength and conditioning workouts, and rest days. Skill development drills focus on improving technical skills like reflexes, positioning, and puck handling. Mental conditioning exercises, such as visualization, mindfulness, and positive self-talk, build mental resilience and focus. Recovery protocols ensure adequate rest and recovery, incorporating sleep schedules, nutrition plans, and physiotherapy sessions.

[Insert a real example of a plan for one of your NHL goalies]

When I took over Canadian Professional Goalie Schools, I had to create an action plan that would allow me to scale the business beyond myself. One of the biggest challenges was ensuring that the quality of training remained consistent across all locations, even without my direct involvement. I faced logistical issues like finding and training reliable staff, creating standardized programs, and ensuring all coaches could deliver the same level of expertise. The action plan involved expanding the scope of the camps to include player camps alongside goalie camps, developing training programs that could be taught consistently by other coaches, and building a structured feedback loop to maintain high standards. This experience was invaluable—it taught me that a well-developed action plan is essential not only for growth but also for ensuring sustainable success. The action plan involved expanding the scope of the camps to include player camps alongside goalie camps, developing training programs that could be taught consistently by other coaches, and ensuring the quality of the camps remained high without my direct involvement in every location. Just as I created a plan for scaling my

business, I help players create action plans that consider both their immediate needs and long-term objectives.

The final step is to regularly review and update the development plan. This involves tracking the player's progress, providing feedback, and making necessary adjustments to keep them on track towards their goals. Regular reviews ensure that the plan remains relevant and effective, adapting to the player's evolving needs.

### **Preparedness and Documentation with Jake Fleming**

Preparedness and meticulous documentation became essential to me early on, thanks to my time working with Jake Fleming, a mentor who shaped my life and career. Jake was a successful entrepreneur with an unwavering commitment to preparation and organization. He was hard on me, always pushing me to be on time and be ready for anything. Under his guidance, I learned that success wasn't just about showing up and working hard; it was about having a plan and documenting every step of the process. Those lessons from Jake became a foundation in my life, especially in my coaching career, where I often tell my players that having a plan is just as essential as any skill they bring to the ice.

Jake didn't just tell me to be prepared—he showed me exactly how to do it. He insisted I write everything down: what I did each day, why I did it, and what I planned to accomplish the next day. It wasn't just about tracking my progress; it was about building a mindset that prioritized growth, accountability, and strategic foresight. Each night, I

would spend time analyzing my day and setting my goals for the next. I quickly saw how this organized approach led to tangible results, keeping me focused, adaptable, and always moving forward. Jake taught me that the discipline of writing down every detail was just as important as the work itself.

These lessons in preparedness shaped everything I did later on, especially when I started my goalie schools and other ventures. Knowing the importance of planning and tracking my progress gave me the confidence to handle the demands of running a growing business. I learned that setting goals and adjusting strategies as needed were the keys to staying grounded and clear-headed in both hockey and business. Jake's teachings became a compass, guiding me through challenges and showing me that with a solid plan, I could navigate any uncertainty.

Now, as a coach, I instill these same values in my players. Just as Jake taught me to write things down and approach each day with intention, I encourage my players to take the same approach to their own development. For each of them, we create a unique plan, tailored to their strengths and areas that need improvement. This plan becomes a living document they can look back on, adapt, and rely on as they grow. Because I know, from my own journey, that while talent may bring you into the game, it's the discipline of planning and preparedness that keeps you there and allows you to excel.

## **Application in Business**

The principles of personalized development plans can also be directly applied to the business world. Just as a coach helps an athlete improve by focusing on specific strengths and weaknesses, managers can use personalized development plans to help employees grow and succeed in their roles. For example, a manager can evaluate an employee's performance and craft a personalized growth strategy. In one case, I worked with an employee who needed to improve her project management skills. We set SMART goals, created an action plan that included relevant training courses, and regularly reviewed her progress, much like I would with an athlete striving for peak performance.

My experience at the Small Business Development Center (SBDC) helped me understand the value of personalized plans in a business setting. At the SBDC, I worked with entrepreneurs who needed a roadmap to success, much like athletes do. I remember helping two professors who had developed a new type of polymer but had no idea how to commercialize it. By guiding them in creating a logo, developing a business plan, and finding the right incubator, I helped them take their idea to the next level. This approach—breaking down their larger goal into smaller, actionable steps—parallels how I coach goalies, ensuring they have a clear path to achieve their personal goals.

### **Selling One Stop Hockey for a Down Payment**

Selling One Stop Hockey for \$40,000 was a pivotal moment in my life, a decision that was both practical and deeply emotional. Pam and I were sitting on the couch one

evening when we got a phone call that would change everything. A gentleman, who had recently sold his own company and was looking to build a new business with hockey arenas and pro shops, wanted to buy One Stop Hockey. At first, I wasn't even sure if he was serious. We had poured hours of work and dedication into the platform, which had become more than just a business; it was a personal achievement that represented years of effort, risk-taking, and countless lessons learned. But Pam and I were at a crossroads, dreaming of buying our first home, and we needed exactly \$40,000 for the down payment.

This was one of those moments where the importance of planning really came into play. In building One Stop Hockey, I had set clear goals for what I wanted to achieve, both for the business and for my own development as an entrepreneur. Every decision, from growing our user base to building relationships with advertisers like CCM, was a step in a carefully thought-out strategy. I knew where I wanted the business to go, but I also understood that life sometimes requires adapting to new opportunities. The process of planning, documenting, and revisiting my goals with One Stop Hockey gave me the clarity to make this difficult decision. Because I had a plan in place, I was able to recognize that selling the business, while tough, aligned with a larger goal that would benefit my family in a significant way.

Letting go of One Stop Hockey was bittersweet. I had spent years building it from scratch, meeting with equipment manufacturers across Canada to secure advertising, and even landing a \$5,000 deal with CCM, which had been a huge validation of my efforts. Walking away from something I had invested so much of myself in felt like I was

giving up a part of my identity. But the disciplined approach to planning I had developed with this business made me realize that sacrifices are sometimes necessary to achieve long-term goals. It allowed me to take a step back and focus on the bigger picture, reminding myself that each milestone along the way—like that advertising deal—was a sign I was on the right path.

This experience taught me a profound lesson in balancing ambition with adaptability, something I share often with my players. Just as they set goals for their careers, I encourage them to recognize when sacrifice is necessary to reach those goals.

Planning is not just about creating a roadmap; it's about having the resilience to adjust that plan in real-time, to stay focused on the bigger picture. By seeing this decision as part of a broader life plan, I was able to transform what felt like a loss into a significant achievement for my family. It's a lesson I carry forward, and one I emphasize to those I coach: no matter how valuable something may seem in the moment, staying focused on your long-term goals is what ultimately leads to success.

### **Building a Blueprint for Scalable Success**

Planning played a pivotal role in the growth and scalability of Briere's Goalie Schools, laying the foundation for a sustainable, high-quality training experience that could expand well beyond my direct involvement. To scale the business effectively, I recognized that we needed a clear plan that emphasized consistency and quality across all locations. This began with developing a standardized training curriculum, ensuring

that no matter where a goalie attended our camps, they would receive the same level of expertise and high standards. This curriculum became a blueprint, a meticulously planned framework that removed guesswork, allowed new coaches to align quickly with our training philosophy, and gave each camp a dependable structure.

Another essential component of our plan was the creation of a detailed coaching manual. By documenting specific drills, techniques, and guidelines, I provided a clear, accessible resource that any coach could follow to maintain our training quality. This approach allowed me to transfer knowledge systematically, empowering coaches to independently deliver the standard of excellence I envisioned. This planning didn't just set a direction—it established a self-sustaining structure that could grow and improve even when I wasn't present. As we scaled, I introduced a structured feedback system that gathered input from both coaches and participants. This system allowed us to continuously refine and enhance our curriculum, ensuring we adapted to the evolving needs of our students.

Planning was also crucial when I transitioned Briere's Goalie Schools into Canadian Professional Goalie Schools. As the business grew, I realized that for true scalability, I had to create a model that didn't rely on my presence at every camp. Through carefully thought-out systems, I could ensure that each location maintained the same high standards, and that empowered other coaches to take ownership of the program's quality. My vision for the business could only be achieved by building resilience and scalability into the structure from the start.

In many ways, this approach to planning mirrors what I instill in my players. Just as I built a system that enabled my business to thrive independently, I teach my players to develop skills that allow them to succeed on their own. Planning is not just about setting goals; it's about creating frameworks that support growth and resilience over time.

When we empower others through careful planning, we give them the tools to adapt and succeed, even without constant guidance. This, to me, is the essence of good planning —ensuring that the vision and standards continue, regardless of who is there to oversee them.

### **Working with Limited Resources: A Lesson in Strategic Planning**

The journey of building One Stop Hockey taught me some of the most essential lessons about resourcefulness, perseverance, and the importance of strategic planning. I remember the time I flew to Windsor, rented a car, and drove across Ontario and Quebec to pitch my platform to equipment manufacturers. It was a challenging process —long hours on the road, countless cold pitches, and the uncertainty of whether anyone would recognize the value in what I was building. But each step was calculated, each meeting planned to get closer to my goal of building a network of advertisers who believed in One Stop Hockey.

My goal was to secure advertising deals that would bring in enough revenue to sustain and grow the business. I visited every major equipment manufacturer, from Sherwood to Louisville, and ultimately secured the \$5,000 deal with CCM, one of the industry's

leading brands. This wasn't just a financial win; it was a massive morale boost, validating my vision and showing me that a detailed plan could lead to success, even with limited resources. That deal with CCM, achieved through careful planning and persistence, became a turning point and reinforced the value of setting achievable milestones along the way.

This experience also taught me that planning is more than just a roadmap; it's a foundation that allows you to adapt and respond when resources are tight. Having a clear strategy kept me focused, helping me identify each step and prioritize actions that would bring me closer to my goals, regardless of the challenges. Again, this is a lesson I share with my players: in hockey, just like in life, conditions aren't always perfect, and resources aren't always abundant. But with a well-thought-out plan and the determination to see it through, they can make meaningful progress toward their goals—even under less-than-ideal circumstances.

## **Practical Business Strategies**

Applying personalized development plans to a business setting requires thoughtful planning and adaptability. Just as a coach tailors strategies to a player's strengths and growth areas, business leaders can implement structured development plans for their team members, allowing them to thrive. My journey with Canadian Professional Goalie Schools taught me the importance of building scalable systems—clear frameworks that maintain quality even as the organization expands. This principle applies to business

growth, where effective planning provides the stability needed to scale successfully, empowering others to carry forward the same standards.

Strategic planning was also central to my experience at the Small Business Development Center (SBDC), where breaking down large goals into manageable steps helped budding entrepreneurs turn ideas into viable businesses. Conducting a thorough assessment, setting specific and realistic goals, and developing actionable steps for each objective proved essential for building a roadmap to success. Whether guiding hockey players or entrepreneurs, the key was in documenting every step and revisiting goals to keep progress on track.

The importance of personalized development plans extends beyond sports. In business, these plans serve as blueprints that provide team members with a clear path for growth, resilience, and achievement. Leaders can foster a culture of continuous improvement by conducting assessments, setting SMART goals, building structured action plans, and regularly reviewing progress. By integrating these principles into their organizations, managers can equip their teams to succeed and stay adaptable in changing conditions.

The transformative power of planning, as shown through these real-life examples from my career, highlights a core truth: success is rarely achieved through talent alone.

Whether in sports or business, structured planning equips individuals and teams with the tools to reach their potential, fostering growth and resilience that endure over time.

## **Chapter 3: The Art of Balancing Stakeholder Agreements**

Balancing the interests of various stakeholders is an essential skill for leaders in both sports and business. There have been many occasions when balancing the expectations of different team members, including coaches, players, and management, was crucial to success. By aligning each of their goals, we managed to create a cohesive strategy that led to a breakthrough season. Whether managing a sports team or leading a business, aligning the goals and expectations of different parties requires strategic thinking and effective communication. This chapter explores the concept of stakeholder management, using real-life examples from my coaching career and providing practical strategies that can be applied in a business context. Key strategies include aligning diverse goals, maintaining transparent communication, negotiating compromises, and finding common ground to achieve cohesive outcomes.

### **Managing Stakeholders in Sports**

In sports, managing stakeholders involves aligning the diverse interests of team members, coaches, and management. The "Battle with All" concept captures the ongoing challenge of balancing these varied perspectives, especially in a team environment where each role contributes to the overall success. Balancing the goals and expectations of players, coaches, and organizational leadership requires constant

adaptation and strategic alignment, a lesson I learned firsthand in my coaching career and while growing my goalie schools.

As an NHL goaltending coach, this "Battle with All" mindset is essential. Balancing the expectations of general management, the coaching team, and each goalie's personal development goals requires a structured approach and constant communication. I've found that the principles learned in managing my goalie schools—like creating frameworks that support consistency and focusing on individualized support—are critical in the NHL environment. Each player, especially goalies, brings unique needs and ambitions, and balancing these within the larger team structure allows us to build a cohesive, high-performing unit.

When I transitioned Briere's Goalie Schools into Canadian Professional Goalie Schools, I faced the "Battle with All" head-on. Scaling up meant managing not just the needs of the students and their parents, who expected top-quality training, but also those of my coaches, who required guidance and resources to deliver a consistent experience. To address this, I created a standardized training curriculum and coaching manual, which provided a structured approach for new coaches to quickly align with our methodology. This system ensured that whether I was physically present at a camp location or not, the training quality remained consistent. It was an exercise in balancing individual contributions with collective goals, giving coaches the tools they needed while maintaining the organization's high standards.

Another key example of the "Battle with All" concept occurred within my early coaching experiences. I once worked with a player who struggled to find his role within the team

dynamic, feeling overshadowed and unsure of his place. By identifying his unique strengths, I adjusted his role and dedicated one-on-one training sessions to help him regain confidence. This not only improved his individual performance but also elevated the overall team's cohesion. It became clear to me that when you take the time to understand individual needs and adapt roles accordingly, the results can have a transformative impact on the entire team. This is especially true in hockey, where each player's contributions feed into a larger team dynamic.

Ultimately, the "Battle with All" concept underscores the importance of clear communication, adaptability, and structured planning in balancing stakeholder interests. Whether leading a sports team or managing an organization, aligning individual aspirations with broader team goals creates an environment where each member can contribute their best. This process strengthens the team as a whole, driving it towards a shared objective and fostering a cohesive, unified approach to success.

### **Balancing Team and Individual Goals**

One of the most significant challenges in coaching is aligning each goalie's ambitions with the team's overall strategy. Balancing individual growth with team objectives is essential for creating a unified path forward, where personal development enhances, rather than conflicts with, team success. This balancing act requires managing expectations across management, coaching staff, and players.

In my own career, I encountered challenges that tested my ability to balance personal ambitions with broader goals, especially when I began expanding Briere's Goalie

Schools. Driven by a vision to reach more aspiring players beyond Winnipeg, I sought out a business partner who seemed to share the same energy and drive. He appeared to have the right skills to help take the business to new heights, and I was eager to grow faster. But this decision, made with more ambition than caution, quickly turned into one of my biggest mistakes.

The partnership began to unravel almost as soon as we got started. Financial issues surfaced early on, and the pressure to expand rapidly led to a series of decisions that I hadn't anticipated. My partner and I began to clash over operational details and, ultimately, over our visions for the future of the school. Trust between us deteriorated as I began to see the partnership wasn't going to be sustainable or beneficial in the long term. I soon found myself facing the consequences of these rushed decisions. By the time I was able to step back and reassess, I realized I was left with \$30,000 in debt—an immense financial burden that put a strain not just on the business but on my personal life as well.

To recover from this setback, I had to make immediate, difficult decisions. I dissolved the partnership, effectively taking back full control of the school. Next, I tackled the financial strain head-on, restructuring the school's finances and planning a repayment strategy to cover the debt out of my own pocket over time. This was a hard-earned lesson in financial accountability and the importance of exercising caution and rigor when choosing partners. For months, I was working not only to keep the business afloat but also to pay down the debt that was a constant reminder of that challenging period.

Despite the difficulties, this experience taught me invaluable lessons about balancing individual ambitions with collective goals. The consequences of a rushed decision had forced me to confront the need for careful planning, thoughtful partnership selection, and maintaining control over the vision I had worked so hard to establish. Over time, I was able to refocus on my original goals, rebuild the school on my terms, and eventually make Briere's Goalie Schools a success. This experience reinforced my commitment to strategic growth and showed me that, sometimes, setbacks can serve as pivotal lessons in resilience and leadership.

Developing a goalie, professional or amateur, requires a thorough assessment of their skills and potential, encompassing technical evaluations, mental toughness, and discussions with other coaches and the GM. Setting complementary individual and team goals ensures that a goalie's development aligns with the team's broader strategic objectives. For instance, an individual goal might be to improve glove hand reaction time by 15% over the season, while a team goal could involve reducing overall goals conceded by strengthening defensive strategies. By setting these mutually supportive goals, we prioritize both individual performance and team success. Detailed action plans—including technical training, mental conditioning, and regular feedback—allow for ongoing progress tracking and adjustments as needed. Throughout this process, open communication with the GM, other coaches, and the goalie ensures that everyone's interests are aligned and actively supported.

The principles of stakeholder management in sports translate directly to the business world, where balancing the interests of diverse stakeholders is key to achieving

organizational success. The following real-world examples illustrate how these principles come to life in both sports and business.

### **Long Island Arena Project**

One of my most memorable experiences in balancing diverse objectives came when I became involved in the development of a new arena project in Long Island. My role centered on connecting the project's various stakeholders—each with unique focuses and goals—to create a cohesive and functional facility. I was tasked with finding and coordinating contractors, including framers, ice specialists, and a geothermal refrigeration provider, ensuring each contributor's work aligned with the larger vision for the arena.

Balancing the interests of these different parties was no easy task. The framers and contractors were focused on meeting structural specifications and timelines, while the ice specialists were invested in ensuring optimal conditions for the rink. Meanwhile, the geothermal refrigeration team played a critical role, bringing a system designed to maintain consistent ice quality while offering an energy-efficient solution for the arena. Each group had distinct priorities—whether it was meeting technical specifications, managing resources, or adhering to environmental standards. My responsibility was to bridge these perspectives, ensuring that each stakeholder's goals were addressed while we collectively worked towards the shared objective of a successful arena.

Ultimately, I made the decision to step back from the project, but the experience reinforced the value of structured planning and communication in managing stakeholder objectives. Providing a forum where each stakeholder could discuss their needs and address potential conflicts fostered a collaborative environment. Each group felt their expertise and goals were valued and aligned with the broader vision.

This experience highlighted the importance of balancing diverse goals in any venture. It taught me lessons that extend into both coaching and business: by integrating varied perspectives and establishing open communication, even the most complex objectives can come together to achieve a common goal.

### **Pillars of Goaltending: Balancing Individual Development with Team Success**

In goaltending, the development process requires a careful balance between nurturing individual skills and aligning these improvements with the team's overarching goals. To support this balance, I focus on four pillars of goaltending: technical skills, mental toughness, physical fitness, and emotional support. Each pillar not only enhances individual performance but also contributes to the team's collective success. Managing these aspects requires engaging multiple stakeholders—including the player, coaching staff, and management—whose interests must be aligned to create a cohesive development plan.

- **Technical Skills:** Developing a goalie's technical abilities is crucial for ensuring they can perform consistently within the team's defensive framework. This

involves regular drills, video analysis, and feedback sessions that allow both the player and the coaching staff to identify areas for improvement. For instance, during one feedback session, I used video analysis to break down a goalie's stance frame by frame, revealing how it affected his lateral movement. Adjusting his stance led to significant progress in his agility, which directly contributed to the team's goal of reducing conceded goals. Technical drills, such as the glove hand speed drill and lateral movement exercises, are chosen based on individual needs and team objectives. By refining these skills, the goalie becomes a more effective part of the team's defensive strategy, demonstrating how individual development strengthens overall team performance.

- **Mental Toughness:** Building mental resilience is essential, not just for the individual's growth but for their role as a stable presence within the team. Mental conditioning exercises like visualization, mindfulness, and positive self-talk are key for goalies facing high-pressure situations. Reflecting on my own journey to the NHL, where mental toughness helped me overcome numerous setbacks, I share techniques like guided imagery and relaxation exercises with my players. These tools help them stay composed, even when faced with unexpected challenges that may affect team morale. As stakeholders, coaches and teammates rely on the goalie to maintain confidence, especially during crucial moments in a game. Strengthening mental resilience in the goalie ultimately supports the team's stability and focus.

- **Physical Fitness:** Physical fitness is another pillar that requires alignment between individual and team goals. A well-rounded fitness program—encompassing strength training, cardiovascular exercises, flexibility routines, and proper nutrition—ensures that goalies are prepared to meet the physical demands of the game. Plyometric exercises and agility drills enhance reaction time and overall athleticism, allowing the goalie to respond more effectively to in-game situations. The coaching staff, as stakeholders in the player’s development, also plays a role in supporting and guiding these fitness routines. Maintaining peak physical condition means that the goalie can keep up with the team’s pace, contributing to both their personal endurance and the team’s competitive edge.
- **Emotional Support:** Emotional support is a foundational element that connects individual well-being with team cohesion. Regular check-ins, open communication, and a supportive environment help goalies navigate the challenges of the season. Reflecting on my own experiences, like when I was building a hockey academy and found myself living in an attic, I remember how crucial emotional support was to staying motivated. Encouragement from friends and mentors kept me going through difficult times, and I strive to provide the same for my players. One-on-one meetings to discuss progress, address concerns, and celebrate successes not only boost individual morale but also build trust within the team. When goalies feel emotionally supported, they’re more likely to perform at their best, directly impacting the team’s success.

By focusing on these pillars of goaltending, we create a balanced approach that supports both individual development and team objectives. This holistic focus on skills, mental toughness, physical conditioning, and emotional well-being helps goalies fulfill their roles effectively within the team, enhancing overall cohesion and performance. Balancing the needs of each stakeholder—from the goalie’s personal development to the team’s strategic goals—ensures that all interests are aligned and contributes to a unified pursuit of success.

### **Strategies for Aligning Stakeholder Expectations**

Successfully balancing the diverse expectations of stakeholders requires a thoughtful approach that fosters collaboration and shared purpose. By employing strategies like active listening, transparent communication, and compromise, leaders can create an environment where individual interests align seamlessly with collective goals.

[the following sub-sections could be more engaging by sharing some personal stories and anecdotes while with the Leafs]

#### *Active Listening*

Active listening is foundational in balancing the diverse expectations of stakeholders. By truly understanding the concerns, needs, and goals of each stakeholder, leaders can more effectively align their interests. This requires patience, empathy, and open-mindedness. Regular one-on-one and group engagements allow leaders to gather insights into each stakeholder’s perspective, creating a clearer understanding of their

priorities and how they relate to the team's goals. Summarizing and reflecting back what you've heard not only ensures mutual understanding but also builds trust by validating each person's input. When stakeholders feel heard and valued, they're more likely to engage collaboratively, setting the stage for a unified direction.

### *Transparent Communication*

Transparent communication is vital for balancing stakeholder expectations, especially when navigating complex goals. Providing regular updates on progress, challenges, and decisions keeps stakeholders informed and reinforces trust. Establishing open channels for feedback encourages stakeholders to share concerns, ensuring that no one feels left out of the process. Being honest about setbacks and explaining how challenges are being addressed is crucial in maintaining confidence and engagement. Transparency creates a supportive environment where stakeholders feel respected and are more willing to work through differences, making the "Battle With All" more manageable.

### *Negotiation and Compromise*

Balancing stakeholder interests often requires skilled negotiation and compromise to create win-win solutions. Leaders must look for common ground to build a shared sense of purpose among stakeholders with differing priorities. Identifying overlapping goals can foster collaboration and a sense of shared investment in the outcome. This may require flexibility, creativity, and a willingness to adapt plans to meet various needs. Compromise, in this context, becomes a strategic tool for finding a balance that

supports the goals of the whole team, allowing each stakeholder to see how their contributions are integral to the larger mission.

### *Harmonizing Team and Stakeholder Needs*

Balancing the needs of a team is much like conducting an orchestra: each player and each section has a unique role, and only when all are in harmony can something remarkable emerge. A leader, like a conductor, must understand the strengths, needs, and timing of each stakeholder, balancing these factors to create seamless cooperation. By recognizing and valuing the unique contributions of each stakeholder, leaders ensure that everyone's role supports the collective vision, transforming potential conflicts into aligned progress. This harmonious balance fosters an environment where individual goals support the greater purpose, creating an extraordinary outcome.

### *Building Cohesive and Successful Teams Through Stakeholder Balance*

Balancing stakeholder interests is a critical skill for leaders across both sports and business. By aligning stakeholder needs, communicating transparently, and finding common ground, leaders can unify diverse perspectives to create strong, cohesive teams. Successfully managing the "Battle With All" means turning individual ambitions and expectations into a shared vision, allowing every stakeholder to feel part of the journey. This skillful alignment lays the foundation for achieving exceptional outcomes, with each stakeholder invested in the team's success.

## **Conclusion**

In the art of balancing stakeholder agreements, leaders must navigate a complex landscape of expectations, ambitions, and goals to build a unified team or organization. This chapter illustrated that balancing diverse interests is rarely a straightforward task. It requires active listening, transparent communication, and the flexibility to negotiate and compromise. From my experience as an NHL goaltending coach to developing Briere's Goalie Schools, the "Battle with All" emerges as an ongoing challenge in aligning unique perspectives with a shared vision. By recognizing individual goals and aligning them with team objectives, a leader creates the foundation for mutual success, ensuring that every stakeholder feels valued and engaged.

Each story in this chapter underscores the importance of adaptability, clear communication, and strategic foresight in managing stakeholder dynamics. Whether in sports or business, balancing personal growth with collective progress is central to creating a cohesive and high-performing environment. Strategies like active listening and open dialogue build trust, allowing stakeholders to bring their strengths into play while supporting a broader vision. These principles encourage collaboration, even among stakeholders with competing priorities, transforming potential conflicts into opportunities for shared success.

Ultimately, the art of balancing stakeholder agreements lies in cultivating a culture of alignment and cooperation. Leaders who skillfully manage diverse expectations foster resilient, unified teams capable of navigating challenges together. By embracing these principles, leaders in both sports and business can not only guide their teams to achieve exceptional results but also create an environment where individual contributions

amplify the collective success, strengthening the team's ability to reach its highest potential.

## **Chapter 4: Communication as a Leadership Tool**

For me, communication isn't just a tool in leadership—it's the backbone of it. Over the years, I've seen how being able to connect, listen, and convey the right message can make or break a team's success. It's how I build trust, create a sense of unity, and push everyone to reach new heights. In this chapter, I'll share what I've learned about the power of communication, from finding the right words in high-stakes moments to navigating tough conversations. Through stories from my coaching journey, you'll see how clear, honest communication can elevate each player—and, ultimately, the entire team.

### **The Power of Communication**

Communication goes beyond simply exchanging information; it's about understanding the emotions, intentions, and motivations that drive each player. In the world of hockey, clear, effective communication between a coach and their players can be the deciding factor between a win and a loss. It ensures that every player is on the same page, aligned in pursuit of a common goal. In business, too, effective communication paves the way for better decision-making, increased productivity, and a more positive work environment.

Trust is the backbone of any successful team, and it's built on consistent, honest, and transparent communication. When players trust their coach, they're more willing to

listen, learn, and commit fully to the strategies put in place. This trust is fostered over time through actions and behaviors that reinforce support, such as staying consistent in messaging, holding everyone accountable, and showing transparency in every interaction. By ensuring that players feel heard, valued, and understood, a coach establishes a foundation where everyone can perform to their fullest.

As a coach, I prioritize open communication with my players, whether we're discussing individual performance, team strategies, or areas for growth. Every player has their unique approach, strengths, and challenges, and it's my responsibility to adapt my communication to bring out the best in each one. For example, with one of my goaltenders, **[INSERT PERSONAL STORY ABOUT A SPECIFIC GOALIE HERE]**... This deeper level of communication created a positive ripple effect across his performance, benefiting the entire team.

I also learned a great deal from observing fellow coaches who demonstrated exceptional communication skills. During my time with **[Toronto Maple Leafs/Seattle Kraken]**, I watched **[INSERT STORY ABOUT ANOTHER COACH HERE]** communicate with a player ... His approach—tailored, insightful, and deeply respectful of the player's perspective—showed me how effective communication can inspire players to rise above challenges and perform with confidence. It was a reminder that the power of communication lies not only in what we say but in how well we listen and respond.

By investing in these personal connections and maintaining clear, honest communication, a coach can build strong, trusting relationships that motivate players to push beyond their limits and foster a sense of unity that benefits the entire team.

## **Fostering Teamwork**

Effective communication is crucial for fostering teamwork. It ensures that all team members are aligned with the team's goals and understand their roles and responsibilities. Different players respond to different communication styles; some need direct, firm instructions, while others need encouragement and positive reinforcement. For example, I once worked with a player who thrived on clear, no-nonsense feedback, while another needed a more supportive approach that emphasized their progress and small victories. Adapting my communication style to each of my goalie's needs helped foster a stronger, more cohesive team dynamic. In hockey, this means players must communicate on the ice, anticipating and supporting each other. Off the ice, it involves team meetings and one-on-one discussions to ensure everyone is aligned.

In a business context, fostering teamwork through communication involves regular team meetings, clear delegation of tasks, and open forums for feedback and discussion. Leaders should encourage an environment where team members feel comfortable voicing their opinions and ideas. This not only improves team cohesion but also leads to innovative solutions and improved performance.

During my time coaching, I worked with a team that was struggling with communication on and off the ice. Players were unclear about their roles, leading to confusion and poor performance. To address this, we implemented regular team meetings and one-on-one discussions. We also encouraged players to communicate more during games and

practices. Over time, these efforts paid off. The team became more cohesive, players understood their roles better, and our performance improved significantly.

During my time with the Leafs, I had the privilege of working with two exceptional goaltenders, Frederik Andersen and Curtis McElhinney. Together, we formed a close-knit group with a shared goal of elevating each other's performance to keep the team competitive. The dynamic between the three of us became something special, a true example of how effective communication, mutual respect, and a commitment to teamwork can lead to success.

Freddie and Mac had distinct roles and personalities. Freddie was the primary starter, calm under pressure and laser-focused, while Curtis, known for his work ethic and dependability, was the backup who kept himself ready to perform at any moment. Despite their differing roles, Freddie and Mac shared a deep respect for each other's skills and value to the team. Our daily routines revolved around each goalie's needs while also fostering an environment where they could learn from and support one another.

The "goalie island" mentality became a way for us to form our own small, unique team within the larger organization. Each practice, we'd work on specific drills, analyze plays, and address areas to work on. I knew Freddie was most responsive to direct, tactical feedback, so I'd break down his movements, offering targeted adjustments to maximize his efficiency in the crease. Mac, on the other hand, benefited from positive reinforcement and acknowledgment of the progress he was making. By tailoring my

approach to each goalie, we were able to create a harmonious atmosphere where each felt supported and motivated.

Both Freddie and Mac were true pros, often encouraged each other, exchanging tips on movement, positioning, and reading plays, which only deepened their camaraderie. Even though they were competing for the same net, they celebrated each other's successes and challenged each other to keep improving. They knew their roles and respected each other's contributions, creating a strong, collaborative foundation that ultimately benefited the whole team.

By the end of our time together, we had fostered an environment where both Freddie and Mac felt like equally valuable members of not only "goalie island" but of the Leafs as a whole. It was a powerful reminder of how personal connection, clear communication, and mutual respect can bring out the best in everyone, even in roles that can sometimes feel isolated.

### **Driving Performance**

Clear and effective communication drives performance by setting clear expectations and providing regular feedback. During my early entrepreneurial ventures, I found that clear communication of expectations was crucial in rallying my small team towards our shared goals. This transparency allowed us to stay focused and motivated, ultimately leading to our success. In my coaching career, I've seen firsthand how important it is to communicate performance expectations clearly. Players need to know what is expected

of them and how they can achieve those expectations. Regular feedback helps them stay on track and continuously improve.

In business, leaders can drive performance by setting clear goals and providing regular feedback. This involves one-on-one meetings, performance reviews, and informal check-ins to discuss progress and address any challenges. By maintaining open lines of communication, leaders can ensure that their team members are always aware of their performance and how they can improve.

## **Learning Sales with Hockey Equipment Manufacturers**

Previously, I shared my experience of learning sales while pitching to hockey equipment manufacturers for my venture, One Stop Hockey. This journey provided me with invaluable lessons about effective communication, particularly the importance of tailoring your message to your audience and demonstrating the value of your proposition in a way that resonates with their needs.

Reflecting on that experience, it reinforced that communication in sales—and in any leadership context—is about much more than the pitch itself. This understanding influenced my approach to coaching, where I began focusing more on understanding my players' needs, listening actively, and adapting my communication style to suit each individual's situation. It is about listening, understanding the other party's perspective, and adapting accordingly. In those meetings, I learned that success was not just about what I said, but about how well I understood each manufacturer's goals and how effectively I could align my vision with theirs.

## **Practical Strategies for Effective Communication**

Effective communication involves several key strategies. I've already talked a little about this, but it's worth repeating... Active listening is one of the most important aspects. To practice active listening effectively, start by giving the speaker your full attention, avoid interrupting, and show that you are engaged through nodding or verbal acknowledgments. Reflect on what is being said by summarizing or paraphrasing key points, and ask clarifying questions when necessary. This approach not only shows respect but also ensures a deeper understanding of the speaker's message.

During the arena project in Long Island, listening to different stakeholders—from city officials to contractors—was crucial to successfully navigating the complexities of building the arena. City officials were concerned about zoning and environmental impact, while contractors faced logistical challenges with materials and deadlines. By actively listening to these concerns and incorporating their input into our planning, we were able to make informed decisions that satisfied all parties involved, ultimately ensuring the project was completed on time and within budget. By understanding the needs and concerns of everyone involved, we were able to move forward smoothly and complete the project on time. Likewise as a coach, it's crucial to listen to your players, understand their concerns, and address them appropriately. In business, active listening involves paying full attention to the speaker, acknowledging their message, and responding thoughtfully.

Communication also requires clarity and conciseness. Whether giving instructions on the ice or providing feedback in a business setting, it's important to be clear and to the

point. This ensures that the message is understood and reduces the risk of miscommunication. Non-verbal communication plays a significant role as well. Body language, facial expressions, and tone of voice can convey confidence and calmness, which helps reassure your team. **[Insert a personal story where poor communication had bad results]**

Providing regular feedback and recognition is essential for motivating and guiding team members. Constructive feedback helps individuals understand what they need to improve, while praise and recognition for their achievements boost morale and motivation. Constructive feedback helps individuals understand what they need to improve, while recognition for their achievements boosts morale and motivation. Being open and transparent with your communication helps build trust and foster a positive environment. In my coaching career, I've found that being honest with players about their performance and the team's strategy helps build a more cohesive and motivated team. In business, transparency from leadership builds trust and encourages a culture of openness. **[Insert a personal story where your open-door and honesty policy allowed goalie to make course corrections]**

## **Building Emotional Intelligence**

Emotional intelligence is one of the most powerful tools a leader can develop. Communication isn't just about what we say; it's also about understanding the emotions behind what we say—and behind what others say to us. For me, being emotionally intelligent means I have to be aware of my own feelings and recognize how they might affect my responses. It's about staying grounded and not letting frustration or

excitement cloud my communication. As a goaltending coach, I've learned that if I'm not managing my emotions, I'm not giving my guys or those around me my best.

One thing I always tell my goalies is to get comfortable with their emotions, even the tough ones. When you're aware of how you're feeling, you can manage it rather than letting it manage you. This helps me keep my responses calm and focused, which is especially useful during high-stress moments on the ice. When players see that you're steady, they trust you more and feel like they can rely on you.

Another key part of emotional intelligence is empathy—putting yourself in someone else's shoes. As a coach, empathy is what allows me to connect with each goalie, to understand where they're coming from and what they're experiencing. This doesn't mean coddling them but knowing when to push, when to encourage, and when to just listen. I've found that when players feel understood, they're more open to feedback and more motivated to improve.

Building strong relationships takes practice. Conflict will come up, and that's okay—it's part of any team environment. But if you approach it with emotional intelligence, you can turn potential issues into opportunities for growth. As a leader, showing patience and understanding during these times strengthens the team. It's these moments that create trust, build a sense of unity, and foster teamwork that lasts.

### **Developing Communication Skills in Teams**

Building communication skills within a team requires deliberate practice and training.

During my time as a rookie in Junior A, I quickly learned the importance of

communication in building trust and understanding within a team. Initially, I struggled to find my voice, but through deliberate practice and by observing senior players, I developed the communication skills that later shaped my coaching style. This experience taught me that even the youngest or newest members can grow into effective communicators with the right guidance and opportunities. Role-playing scenarios can help team members understand different perspectives and improve their communication techniques. Workshops focused on communication skills, such as active listening, feedback techniques, and conflict resolution, are beneficial. Regular check-ins with team members to discuss their progress, address any issues, and provide support foster open communication and ensure that everyone is on the same page. Engaging in team-building activities that promote collaboration and communication helps build trust and improve team dynamics.

As a coach, I worked with players that have struggled with communication on and off the ice. They're not necessarily built for that. Often hockey is a cut-throat world. I've had goalies who were unclear about their roles, leading to confusion and poor performance. To address this, I implemented regular goalie island meetings and one-on-one discussions. I also encouraged players to communicate more during games and practices. Over time, these efforts paid off. The team around them became more cohesive, players understood their roles better, and our performance improved.

## **Lessons For Business Leaders**

Communication is a powerful tool for any leader. It builds trust, fosters teamwork, and drives performance. To improve your communication skills, consider the following steps:

- Focus on active listening
- Adapt your communication style to fit your audience
- Provide regular and constructive feedback
- Maintain transparency

These actionable steps can help you connect more effectively with your team, inspire confidence, and achieve shared goals. Whether in sports or business, effective communication is essential for success. By implementing the strategies discussed in this chapter, leaders can enhance their communication skills and create a more positive and productive environment. The real-life examples from my coaching career demonstrate the transformative power of strong communication and offer valuable insights for leaders looking to improve their communication practices.

Through active listening, clear and concise messaging, emotional intelligence, and regular feedback, leaders can build stronger, more cohesive teams. By fostering an environment of openness and transparency, they can drive performance and achieve greater success. Effective communication is not just about exchanging information; it's about connecting with people, understanding their needs, and working together towards common goals.

## **Chapter 5: Unconventional Routes to Success**

Success can take unexpected turns, requiring resilience and creativity. This chapter explores the unconventional routes that can lead to success, both in sports and in business. By embracing unique approaches, taking calculated risks, and learning from failure, leaders can foster innovation and drive remarkable achievements. Drawing on my personal journey and experiences, this chapter offers insights and strategies such as embracing challenges, fostering innovation, and cultivating resilience, aimed at helping business leaders inspire their teams and achieve extraordinary results.

### **My Personal Journey**

My journey to the NHL was anything but traditional. Challenges, creative problem-solving, and a commitment to keep moving forward, no matter the obstacles, defined my path as a coach. Looking back, each experience—whether in hockey, business, or personal life—reinforced resilience, adaptability, and the ability to see obstacles as opportunities.

My early days with the Manitoba Mustangs taught me invaluable lessons in persistence. As you might remember, paying the \$2,000 fee was a barrier that required some serious ingenuity to overcome. The experience drove home the lesson that when resources aren't there, creativity has to fill the gaps. A similar situation unfolded with my first set of goalie equipment. The journey to gather enough change to make partial payments at

Pete's Pro Shop was tough, but it instilled a resourcefulness I would rely on in both hockey and business. These moments of "making it work" were about more than just survival; they were foundational in teaching me how to move forward with limited resources.

Those long, exhausting Greyhound bus trips across Canada for junior hockey tryouts weren't easy, either. Hours on the road with barely enough money for a meal made me question what I was doing. But every mile reinforced my commitment to making it in hockey. When illness forced me out of the WHL and I found myself at Crookston, I had to adapt again. Crookston wasn't part of the plan, but being there taught me to make the most of what I had. When I eventually found my way to UAH, it felt like a full-circle moment, as if the unexpected journey had been part of the plan all along.

My entrepreneurial venture, One Stop Hockey, offered another twist. Building a company from the ground up taught me about resourcefulness and the value of creating something with heart. You'll recall the story of selling it for a down payment on my first home, a decision that was both practical and bittersweet. And through that, I found myself connected to Stellar Management, working on a geothermal arena project in Long Island—a completely new challenge. The skills I'd developed in hockey translated surprisingly well. Problem-solving, teamwork, and executing a shared vision turned out to be universal principles, and this venture broadened my perspective on what "coaching" could mean outside the rink.

Building my coaching career meant juggling multiple jobs to make ends meet. Working junior teams, giving private lessons, and dedicating myself to improving as a coach

reinforced for me that every experience was a stepping stone, even if the progress was hard to see at the time. Every hour coaching, studying footage, and attending clinics was shaping the coach I would become. This journey showed me that success doesn't happen all at once; it builds slowly, piece by piece.

At one point, I took on an academic role at a Small Business Development Center, teaching entrepreneurs about resilience and growth. Unexpectedly, losing that position was the final push I needed to commit fully to coaching. What felt like a setback became a turning point, setting me on the course to the NHL. I realized then that the journey hadn't been about following a standard route; it had been about seizing the opportunities in every challenge.

Each step, from financial obstacles to professional pivots, shaped the philosophy I bring to coaching today. This path has taught me that unconventional routes, no matter how difficult or unexpected, often bring the most valuable lessons. With resilience, adaptability, and a readiness to face the unknown, even the hardest challenges can open doors to remarkable outcomes. It's the unconventional that often leads to something extraordinary.

### **Embrace Challenges and Sacrifices**

Success often requires overcoming significant challenges and making sacrifices. Whether it's investing time in skill development, taking financial risks, or navigating difficult market conditions, the willingness to face these obstacles head-on is crucial.

During the early days of building my hockey academy, I lived in an attic with limited resources, making significant personal sacrifices to pursue my vision. This experience taught me that embracing discomfort and taking risks are often necessary steps on the path to success. Business leaders should view challenges as opportunities for growth and innovation, rather than as setbacks.

When launching a new product, a company might face initial resistance and financial strain. By persevering through these challenges and continuously refining the product based on feedback, the company can eventually achieve success. This resilience and commitment to innovation are key drivers of long-term success.

Additionally, embracing challenges often means stepping out of one's comfort zone. A marketing executive might need to learn new digital marketing skills to stay relevant in a rapidly evolving industry. This willingness to continuously learn and adapt is essential for long-term success. By embracing the discomfort of learning new skills or adopting new technologies, leaders can drive their organizations forward and stay competitive in an ever-changing market.

### **Innovative Thinking and Risk-Taking**

Embracing innovative thinking and taking calculated risks can lead to remarkable achievements. In my coaching career, I have often experimented with new training techniques and strategies, which sometimes involved stepping outside traditional coaching norms. These unconventional approaches often yielded significant improvements in player performance and team dynamics.

In the business world, innovation is equally important. Companies that are willing to explore new ideas, invest in research and development, and take calculated risks are often the ones that achieve industry leadership. When I moved to the University of Alabama in Huntsville (UAH), I found an incredible opportunity to play Division I hockey. Despite the challenges of my height, I continued to pursue my dream by sending game tapes to NHL teams and eventually found my way to the Memphis RiverKings. The team had lost 21 games in a row, but they gave me a chance, and that was all I needed. This kind of persistence and risk-taking is vital for achieving success, whether in sports or in business.

During the development of the geothermal arena in Long Island, we took a significant risk by incorporating geothermal technology to heat and cool the facility. This innovative approach, though unconventional at the time, resulted in substantial long-term cost savings and environmental benefits, demonstrating how calculated risks with new technologies can lead to industry leadership. Encouraging a culture of innovation and supporting creative thinking can drive significant advancements and competitive advantages.

### **How To Encourage Risk-Taking**

Risk-taking as you can see is an essential component of success. However, it is important to approach risk in a calculated and strategic manner. Here are some strategies for encouraging risk-taking in business:

### *Foster a Supportive Environment*

Creating a supportive environment where team members feel safe to take risks is crucial. This can be achieved through open communication, providing resources for experimentation, and recognizing efforts even when they do not lead to immediate success. As I mentioned earlier, I was given a second chance by a coach who believed in me, despite my struggles early on. This coach took the time to understand my challenges and offered me the guidance I needed, which not only improved my performance but also bolstered my confidence. This kind of supportive leadership had a lasting impact on me, and I strive to provide the same environment for those I coach, emphasizing the importance of psychological safety in fostering growth and resilience. This supportive leadership allowed me to grow, learn from my mistakes, and ultimately succeed. By fostering a culture of psychological safety, leaders can provide similar opportunities for their team members, encouraging them to take risks without fear of failure. This involves encouraging experimentation, celebrating failures as learning opportunities, and providing the necessary resources and support for innovative projects. When employees feel supported, they are more likely to take bold steps and pursue ambitious goals.

A tech company might create a “sandbox” environment where employees can test new ideas and technologies without the fear of failure. By providing the freedom to experiment and the resources to support these efforts, the company can foster a culture of innovation and continuous improvement.

Additionally, fostering a supportive environment means providing psychological safety. Leaders should encourage open dialogue and ensure that team members feel comfortable sharing their ideas without fear of judgment. This can be achieved by recognizing and rewarding innovative ideas, even if they do not always lead to immediate success. Creating a culture where experimentation is valued can drive continuous improvement and breakthrough innovations.

### *Lead by Example*

Leaders play a pivotal role in encouraging risk-taking by leading by instance. When leaders demonstrate their willingness to take risks and embrace unconventional approaches, it sets a powerful precedent for the rest of the team. Sharing stories of personal and professional risks that led to success can inspire others to step outside their comfort zones.

A CEO might share their journey of launching a startup, highlighting the risks and challenges faced along the way. By showcasing the positive outcomes of taking calculated risks, the CEO can inspire employees to adopt a similar mindset and pursue innovative ideas.

Furthermore, leaders can actively participate in innovative projects and be visibly involved in the risk-taking process. By showing that they are willing to invest time and resources in new initiatives, leaders can reinforce the importance of innovation and risk-taking. This hands-on approach can motivate employees to take similar risks and contribute to the organization's growth.

## *Strategic Risk Management*

While taking risks is important, it is equally crucial to manage these risks strategically. This involves conducting thorough research, analyzing potential outcomes, and developing contingency plans. By approaching risk-taking in a structured and strategic manner, businesses can maximize the potential for success while minimizing potential downsides.

A company considering entering a new market might conduct extensive market research, develop a detailed business plan, and identify potential challenges and solutions. By taking a strategic approach to risk management, the company can confidently pursue new opportunities while being prepared to navigate any obstacles that arise.

Additionally, using a phased approach to risk management can be beneficial. This involves breaking down larger risks into smaller, manageable steps, allowing for iterative progress and continuous learning. By monitoring progress and adjusting strategies as needed, businesses can effectively manage risks and increase the likelihood of success.

## *Learning From Failure*

Failure is an inevitable part of any journey, and it's especially common on unconventional paths. Each setback offers lessons that fuel growth and development, shaping us into better leaders, coaches, and innovators.

Early in my coaching career, I made plenty of strategic errors that cost us wins, leaving me frustrated. Rather than letting these failures shake my confidence, I decided to treat each mistake as a lesson. I would sit down, break down the game footage, and analyze exactly where things went wrong. This rigorous process of learning from my mistakes made me a better coach. Each loss, each error refined my approach and ultimately contributed to our team's success.

In my business ventures, the same principle applied. For instance, when I was building Briere's Goalie Schools, there were several missteps—financial setbacks, partnership issues, and even mistakes in how we structured the camps. Each stumble was a learning opportunity, and I made a habit of pausing to analyze what went wrong and to make the necessary adjustments. As I discussed earlier, when a business partnership put me deep into debt, it forced me to re-evaluate how I ran the school and managed partnerships. Facing these issues head-on allowed me to emerge stronger and more resilient, ultimately leading to a successful and sustainable coaching business.

This approach—embracing failure as a stepping stone to success—became a cornerstone of both my coaching and business philosophies. Each setback taught me something valuable about resilience, adaptability, and the importance of continuous learning.

## **Inspiring Future Leaders**

Inspiring future leaders involves more than just imparting knowledge and skills; it requires fostering a mindset of resilience, innovation, and continuous learning. Here are some strategies for inspiring the next generation of leaders:

### *Mentorship and Coaching*

Providing mentorship and coaching can have a profound impact on the development of future leaders. In the early days of building Unlock Goaltending, I realized the importance of structured mentorship and coaching. By creating a program focused on individualized training and consistent feedback, I saw firsthand how goalies flourished under this approach. Many of them went on to have successful careers, and the philosophy of personalized development became a cornerstone of my coaching methodology. Sharing experiences, offering guidance, and providing constructive feedback can help emerging leaders navigate their career paths and develop essential skills. Mentorship programs can also create a supportive environment where individuals feel empowered to take risks and pursue their goals.

A senior executive might mentor a junior manager, offering insights into strategic decision-making, leadership, and career development. This mentorship relationship can help the junior manager build confidence, develop new skills, and gain valuable perspectives on leadership.

Additionally, structured mentorship programs can include regular check-ins, goal-setting sessions, and opportunities for mentees to lead projects. By providing a framework for

growth and development, these programs can help future leaders build the skills and confidence needed to succeed in their roles.

### *Encouraging Continuous Learning*

Promoting a culture of continuous learning is essential for developing future leaders. This involves providing opportunities for professional development, encouraging curiosity and exploration, and supporting ongoing education and training. When individuals are encouraged to continuously expand their knowledge and skills, they are better equipped to lead and innovate.

A company might offer workshops, training programs, and access to online courses to support employee development. By investing in continuous learning, the company can cultivate a talented and capable leadership pipeline.

Moreover, encouraging cross-functional learning can broaden employees' perspectives and enhance their problem-solving abilities. Providing opportunities for employees to rotate through different departments or participate in interdisciplinary projects can help them develop a well-rounded skill set and a deeper understanding of the organization.

### **Conclusion**

Success rarely follows a straight line, and the unconventional routes I've taken have shaped me into the coach and leader I am today. Facing setbacks, taking calculated risks, and embracing challenges have taught me resilience and adaptability, and those

lessons have become the foundation of my approach to coaching and business. Every twist in the path reinforced the importance of flexibility, innovation, and a willingness to learn from failure. These aren't just tools for survival; they're essential elements for thriving in any field.

The principles in this chapter serve as a guide for leaders who want to build teams that are resilient and adaptive. Embracing risks and creating an environment where learning from failure is encouraged empowers teams to innovate without fear of setbacks.

Building a culture that values curiosity and continuous improvement opens the door to breakthroughs that are often hidden along unconventional paths.

By fostering resilience, supporting risk-taking, and nurturing a commitment to growth, leaders can unlock extraordinary potential in themselves and their teams. Whether on the ice, in the boardroom, or in any challenging environment, these strategies provide a strong foundation for navigating the unknown and achieving remarkable results.

Embracing the unconventional can often lead to the most transformative successes, allowing leaders and their teams to rise to new heights and exceed their greatest ambitions.

## **Chapter 6: Motivation and Manifestation**

Motivation is the engine of success, and learning how to manifest your goals requires both focus and hard work. In my own life, staying motivated has never been about an endless supply of positivity—it's about grit, discipline, and building the right habits that keep me moving forward. Manifesting goals isn't just about wishful thinking, either. It's about being intentional, setting clear steps, and tackling each day with purpose. In this chapter, I'll walk you through how I bring motivation and manifestation into my coaching and my life, using the routines and techniques that have helped me through the toughest challenges. I'll share some real moments from my time on the ice and in the locker room, working with goalies through slumps or with teams rallying to turn a season around. Motivation, to me, is about showing up with clarity and determination, ready to make progress toward what matters most.

### **Routine and Motivation**

In professional hockey, routines aren't just beneficial—they're essential. These routines are so ingrained in daily life that many players become, in a way, institutionalized by them. It's a rhythm that keeps them physically and mentally ready for the intensity of the sport but can also have its downsides. On one hand, these structured routines build discipline, foster resilience, and allow players to be their best. On the other, the rigidity

of the schedule can make it hard for players to adapt when they eventually leave the game or experience major life changes.

A typical week for a pro hockey player is a carefully orchestrated series of routines. Training days start early, often with morning skate, a short on-ice practice session focused on refining skills and staying sharp. This is followed by an off-ice workout that emphasizes strength, conditioning, and mobility. After lunch, players review video footage, analyzing recent games or opponents' tendencies with the coaching staff. They dive into the details, constantly adjusting their game to match team goals. Most days end with physical therapy or sessions with trainers to manage any ongoing recovery needs. Then, it's rest, recharge, and back at it the next day. Game days follow their own rituals, from pre-game meals to equipment prep to visualizing every save or play they're about to make on the ice. Every element of this schedule is meticulously planned for consistency and focus, with little room for variation. It's a system that keeps players at their peak but can also feel constricting.

For me, routine is just as powerful, although I've tried to keep it flexible. My day begins with some personal rituals that keep me grounded: positive affirmations, a bit of visualization, and goal-setting. Listening to a podcast from someone in the sports or business world helps me keep perspective and brings new insights I can apply in my coaching. Just as I ask my players to focus on their own growth, I make time each day to reflect and set intentions for what I want to accomplish.

Motivation, though, goes beyond routines. It's about having a vision—a sense of where you're heading—and taking the daily steps to get there. In both sports and business, it's

critical to break down big goals into achievable steps, creating clear action plans and keeping track of progress along the way. For athletes and leaders alike, this daily commitment to routine and vision keeps us focused, energized, and moving toward our goals, no matter how challenging the journey becomes.

### **Applying Motivation in Business**

Translating these motivational practices into the business world can help leaders and employees maintain focus and drive. For example, daily goal-setting meetings, visualization of successful project outcomes, and using positive affirmations can foster a productive and motivated workplace environment. Establishing this sort of daily routine can significantly enhance productivity and job satisfaction.

Business leaders can foster a motivational environment by encouraging open communication, recognizing achievements, and providing opportunities for professional development. Regularly celebrating small wins and milestones keeps the team engaged and motivated.

Setting clear, achievable goals and providing the necessary resources and support to accomplish them is crucial. By breaking down larger goals into manageable tasks, employees can see their progress and stay motivated to reach the next milestone.

### **The Birth of Unlock Goaltending**

Another significant turning point in my journey came with the birth of Unlock Goaltending. It was a project born out of both necessity and passion—a way to take my experiences, my struggles, and my successes, and use them to help the next generation of goalies unlock their potential. Unlock Goaltending wasn't just a business idea; it was a manifestation of everything I had learned about perseverance, motivation, and resilience.

When I was living in an attic in Minneapolis, working tirelessly to build a goalie academy from scratch, I had no salary, no guarantees, and was far away from my family. I woke up at 6 AM every day, giving private lessons and coaching junior teams at night. It was during this time that I realized there was a gap—something that I could fill with my unique experience. Unlock Goaltending started with the idea that goalies needed more than just drills and training; they needed to understand their own "why" and learn how to manifest their goals into reality. They needed motivation.

The academy grew, starting with just a handful of students, but soon expanding as word spread about the difference my coaching was making. I used the same principles of motivation and manifestation that had helped me get through my own challenges. Each goalie that came through Unlock Goaltending learned to visualize their success, set clear goals, and break down barriers that stood in their way. My attic in Minneapolis transformed from a cramped living space into the birthplace of a movement that helped goalies everywhere.

Many of my goalies through Unlock Goaltending have struggled with confidence. They have the talent, but they are often overwhelmed by the pressure and expectations. We

always begin by setting small, achievable goals, integrating visualization techniques into our goalies' daily routines, which help them steadily build confidence and regain focus. Slowly, they start to believe in themselves again. This transformation isn't just about physical training; it has always been about changing mindsets, teaching them to manifest their own success.

### **Overcoming Personal Struggles**

Motivation and manifestation are not only applicable to success in hockey but also crucial in overcoming personal challenges. By applying these principles, I've managed to navigate through some of the most difficult periods of my life, both personally and professionally.

Personal struggles and the mental strain of maintaining motivation are challenges faced by everyone, including leaders. For example, during my early coaching years, I often faced financial instability and self-doubt, which made it difficult to stay motivated. However, by focusing on my long-term vision and staying committed to my daily motivational practices, I was able to overcome these struggles and keep moving forward. Sharing my own experiences with overcoming adversity helps my players and colleagues understand that setbacks are a natural part of the journey to success.

I've faced other non-hockey challenges involving self-doubt and external criticism. One particular instance involved a difficult business partnership. You'll recall that I partnered with someone to expand my goalie school, but it quickly became evident that my

partner's reckless financial decisions were putting us in jeopardy. He spent money without consulting me, booked ice time without checking the costs, and ran up significant debts on my credit card without permission. I returned from Europe to find \$30,000 in unexpected debt, jerseys covered in cat hair, and a partner who had no real understanding of how to run the business. It was an incredibly challenging time, but it taught me the importance of choosing the right partners and always protecting myself financially. By staying committed to my motivational practices and maintaining a positive outlook, I was able to overcome these obstacles, rebuild my business, and continue progressing in my career.

### **Encouraging Motivation in Teams**

Fostering a culture of motivation within a team requires deliberate effort. Leaders can encourage motivation by:

- Setting clear and achievable goals.
- Providing regular feedback and recognition.
- Creating opportunities for professional growth.
- Promoting a positive and supportive work environment.
- Encouraging open communication and team collaboration.

By implementing these strategies, leaders can inspire their teams to stay motivated and focused on achieving their goals.

[Insert a story of an NHL coach you've worked for who did this well]

## **The Power of Manifestation**

Manifestation involves bringing your goals to reality through intentional focus and effort. When I decided to expand my goalie schools, I focused every day on what that expansion would look like—how I could create a scalable program that reached beyond just me. This clear vision helped me take the necessary actions, from hiring the right people to establishing new locations, ultimately turning that dream into a successful, multi-location operation. I started with one camp in Winnipeg, but I wanted to create a scalable program that could grow across North America. I designed the training curriculum, hired and trained instructors, and established a consistent coaching philosophy that could be replicated at different locations. I handled logistics, from arranging venues to organizing promotional efforts, while continually refining the quality of the program. It took a tremendous amount of strategic planning, dedication, and the willingness to overcome many obstacles along the way—like managing staff, handling cancellations, and ensuring consistent quality. Ultimately, my vision became a reality, with multiple camps running simultaneously across North America, allowing me to reach more aspiring goalies than I ever could on my own. It's about visualizing success, believing in your capabilities, and taking actionable steps towards achieving your

dreams. This concept has been a cornerstone of my coaching philosophy and personal life.

Visualization is a powerful tool for manifestation. By vividly imagining your success, you create a mental blueprint that guides your actions and decisions. In coaching, I encourage players to visualize their performance, whether it's making a crucial save or winning a championship. This mental rehearsal builds confidence and prepares them for real-life scenarios.

Positive thinking and self-belief are critical components of manifestation. Believing in your potential and maintaining a positive attitude, even in the face of adversity, can significantly influence your outcomes. I teach my players to replace negative thoughts with positive affirmations, reinforcing their confidence and determination.

### **Practical Strategies for Manifestation**

To effectively manifest your goals, it's essential to integrate visualization and positive thinking into your daily routine. Here are some practical strategies:

*Set Clear Intentions:* Define what you want to achieve and be specific about your goals. Write them down and review them regularly.

*Visualize Success:* Spend a few minutes each day visualizing yourself achieving your goals. Imagine the details, emotions, and sensations associated with your success.

*Use Positive Affirmations:* Develop a list of positive affirmations that reinforce your goals and self-belief. Repeat them daily to cultivate a positive mindset.

*Take Action:* Manifestation requires more than just positive thinking; it involves taking consistent, purposeful actions towards your goals. Break down your goals into actionable steps and work towards them every day.

*Reflect and Adjust:* Regularly review your progress, celebrate your successes, and adjust your strategies as needed. Reflecting on your journey helps you stay focused and motivated.

### **Real-Life Example of Motivation and Manifestation**

One of the most pivotal moments in my journey as a player, and later as a coach, was a game against St. John's while I was playing at Crookston, a small Division III college. Playing in Crookston had its challenges; it wasn't the kind of program I had once envisioned myself in, but I remained committed to my goals, doing whatever I could to keep advancing in the game. Then, during this particular game, a coach from St. Cloud State was in the stands. Afterward, he pulled me aside and said, "You have the skills to make it at the Division I level, but to get there, you'll need to play in the USHL first."

At that moment, something clicked. Here was a real chance, a path I hadn't thought would be possible. It required me to leave Crookston and head back to juniors, putting my dream of a college scholarship on the line, but I knew this was the kind of opportunity that doesn't come along often.

I took his advice and moved back to juniors, where I gave everything I had, working to prove to myself and everyone watching that I could make it to Division I. That leap of faith led to a full scholarship offer from the University of Alabama in Huntsville (UAH), an opportunity that felt like the culmination of all those years of visualizing, persevering, and refusing to settle. But even after making it to UAH, the journey was far from smooth. Every season brought new obstacles—setbacks, trades, injuries, and moments of doubt that forced me to dig deep, keep visualizing the bigger picture, and stay focused on the long-term goal.

Looking back, this journey to UAH is a story I share with players because it illustrates what motivation and manifestation are truly about. It's easy to lose focus when the path is unpredictable or when setbacks make you question your abilities. But by consistently visualizing successful outcomes, believing in myself even when the odds were stacked against me, I was able to turn a Division III experience into a Division I opportunity. Today, when I work with players struggling with confidence or finding their footing, I remind them that the path to success is rarely straightforward. The important part is seeing the goal, staying motivated, and committing to the journey, no matter the twists and turns.

## **Conclusion**

Motivation and manifestation are more than just ideas—they're powerful tools that shape the journey to success. For me, they're about committing to the vision, embracing

routines that build resilience, and taking deliberate steps forward, even when the path isn't straightforward. The experiences shared in this chapter—from creating Unlock Goaltending to navigating my own setbacks—reinforce that achieving anything worthwhile requires grit, intentionality, and belief in the end goal.

For leaders, fostering this mindset in teams can mean the difference between good and great. By cultivating a culture of motivation, setting clear and actionable goals, and encouraging visualization and daily discipline, leaders can empower their teams to push past limits and find strength in the challenges they face. Whether it's an athlete fighting through a slump or a business team working to achieve ambitious goals, motivation and manifestation help transform obstacles into opportunities for growth.

Manifesting success is about more than a daily routine—it's about building an inner resilience that guides every action and decision, keeping you focused and ready, no matter what comes your way. When paired with purpose and hard work, motivation and manifestation lay the groundwork for lasting achievement, allowing you to turn visions into reality and inspire those around you to do the same.

## **Chapter 7: Strategy and Execution in Coaching**

Success in sports and business depends on developing and executing a strong strategy. Let me take you back to one of the most memorable moments in my career: it was my first game as the Toronto Maple Leafs' goalie coach. Walking down the hallways of the Air Canada Centre, surrounded by photos of legends like Darryl Sittler and Johnny Bower, I felt the weight of history and expectations. It was in that moment that I realized the importance of a clear strategy, not just for my goalies but for myself as a coach. This chapter will explore how strategic thinking and execution are critical components of effective coaching and leadership. Drawing from my experiences as a goaltending coach, this chapter will delve into the analytical approaches I use to tailor strategies to individual goalies.

### **The Reality of Coaching in the NHL**

People often ask me what it's like to coach in the NHL, especially for a team like the Toronto Maple Leafs. The truth is, it's intense, exhilarating, and sometimes terrifying. Walking down the hallways of the Air Canada Centre, surrounded by photos of legends like Darryl Sittler, Johnny Bower, and Punch Imlach, I feel the weight of history pressing down with each step. When my goalie has a rough game, those pictures remind me of the high expectations on our shoulders. We're not just playing for ourselves or even for

the team; we're representing a legacy, and every mistake feels amplified by that responsibility.

Every day, I felt like I had to prove myself—not just to the players, who needed to trust and respect me, but also to the higher-ups watching closely. Mike Babcock, our head coach at the time, had a way of keeping the pressure on. My first year, he used to put another goalie coach's resume on my desk weekly. It was his way of reminding me that I was replaceable, that someone else was out there, ready to take my spot. That kind of pressure might be tough for some, but I thrived on it. Knowing there was always someone watching, someone waiting, pushed me to be relentless. I analyzed every game as if it were the playoffs, broke down each goal, scrutinized every movement my goalies made, and stayed one step ahead.

Coaching in the NHL taught me the importance of what I call “living scared.” It's not about fear in the traditional sense; it's about using that sense of urgency to fuel your performance. When you live scared, you never get complacent. You don't take anything for granted, and you're always prepared to go the extra mile. This mindset became a core part of my approach. I knew the stakes were high, and that drove me to constantly push myself beyond my comfort zone.

I remember one particular mid-season stretch when one of our goalies was struggling. His confidence was shaken, and every game seemed to bring another challenge. As his coach, I knew I couldn't just stand by and watch—it was up to me to find a way to help him reset and get back on track. We so very badly needed him to perform. So, I dove deep into the footage, watching every shot, every save, every goal he let in. I looked for

patterns, analyzed his positioning, and sought out any minor adjustment that might make a difference. There were a lot of sleepless nights, but I was determined to find a solution. I designed specific drills targeting his weak points, drilled him on technique and positioning, and built up his confidence one save at a time. That pressure—knowing that his performance and, in some ways, my career were on the line—fueled me to work harder than ever. I wasn't just living scared; I was thriving on it, using every ounce of pressure as motivation to succeed.

In the NHL, there's an unspoken rule: adapt quickly, or you'll be left behind. You can't dwell on past success or failure. Every game brings new tests, and the margin for error is slim. Working with top-level athletes means facing scrutiny from all sides—coaches, media, fans, and even the players themselves. It's a place where only the strongest survive, and every day is a test of resilience, adaptability, and strategic thinking.

## **The Analytical Approach to Coaching**

Coaching is not just about motivation and support; it's also about strategy. Every goalie has unique strengths and weaknesses, and understanding these nuances is crucial for developing effective game plans. My approach involves detailed game analysis, where I analyze game footage in detail to identify areas for improvement and craft strategies that play to each goalie's strengths.

Recognizing each goalie's unique abilities—such as quick reflexes or superior positioning—is crucial to tailoring effective coaching strategies. By connecting these individual strengths with specific strategic plans, we can create a more cohesive and effective approach to both player development and game performance.

I remember working with [name the goalie], despite not being the fastest, had exceptional positional play. He had an incredible ability to read the game, anticipate plays, and position himself accordingly. During practices, we focused on drills that emphasized his positional awareness—getting him to track the puck and move efficiently while conserving energy. We also worked on enhancing his mental game, using visualization techniques to help him stay calm under pressure and make smart decisions in high-stress situations. By focusing on this strength and developing strategies that maximized his ability to stay in the right place at the right time, he eventually became one of the most dependable goalies in the league. Despite facing faster and more aggressive opponents, his ability to read the game and maintain strong positioning made him an essential part of our defense. This approach allowed him to succeed at a high level and stand out despite his physical limitations. By understanding these differences, I can tailor my coaching to focus on enhancing each goalie's specific skill set. This personalized approach ensures that each player is well-prepared to face the challenges of the game.

This approach focuses on leveraging each goalie's unique attributes to maximize performance. For example, a goalie with exceptional lateral movement might benefit

from a strategy that emphasizes quick shifts and positional play, while a goalie with a powerful glove hand might focus on shutting down high shots.

In business, this analytical approach can be applied to problem-solving and strategic planning. Leaders must understand their team members' unique abilities and create strategies that utilize these strengths effectively. Just as I analyze game footage to improve performance, business leaders can analyze data and performance metrics to identify areas for improvement and develop strategies that drive success. In this context, analyzing “game footage” might mean reviewing sales data, assessing client feedback, or breaking down project timelines to uncover patterns and optimize workflows. The same attention to individual strengths—whether in technical expertise, creativity, or interpersonal skills—can help create a more cohesive, high-performing team.

Think about this from a leadership perspective: just as a goalie with exceptional lateral movement thrives on strategies that play to that strength, a team member who excels in client relationships might benefit from being the “point guard” in client interactions. Conversely, an employee known for meticulous attention to detail could be invaluable for quality control or project finalization. By intentionally aligning each team member’s core strengths with the demands of their roles, leaders can build a balanced, interdependent team that maximizes each person's value to the organization. It also gives employees a sense of purpose and alignment, boosting motivation and ownership.

Adopting this analytical approach does more than optimize team performance; it builds a culture of continuous improvement and adaptation. When leaders regularly assess performance metrics and align strategies with individual capabilities, they foster an environment where data drives decisions and team members feel valued for their unique contributions. This approach isn't static; it's a continuous process of refinement that not only addresses present needs but also anticipates future challenges. In the same way that a goalie adjusts their positioning based on their opponent's moves, a business team can adapt its approach based on market trends, customer feedback, and performance insights. By investing in this kind of nuanced strategy and execution, leaders ensure their team is always prepared, adaptive, and focused on achieving collective goals, even in the face of unexpected obstacles.

## **Strategic Thinking in Business**

Strategic thinking in business involves the ability to anticipate challenges, recognize opportunities, and develop plans that align with the organization's goals. This type of thinking is crucial for long-term success, as it enables leaders to navigate complex environments and make informed decisions.

In coaching, strategic thinking often means anticipating the opposing team's tactics and preparing my goalies accordingly. An important part of my pre-game preparation involves doing a pre-scout, not only on the opposing team's key players but also on their goalie. By studying their offensive and defensive systems, top players, and

understanding the styles of their goalies, I can build a comprehensive plan to give my goalies and the rest of my team the best chance to succeed. If I see that an opponent's goalie is weaker on high shots from the left side, for example, I'll share that insight with our players. Similarly, if an opposing player consistently shoots glove-side on a breakaway, I make sure my goalies are prepared to anticipate that move.

This pre-scouting strategy also applies to my own team's strengths. I always review footage to identify moments when our goalies are tested, analyze the types of shots they handle best, and help them prepare for the challenges that specific opponents present. This kind of preparation is both physical and mental—visualizing different scenarios, discussing potential game plans, and mentally rehearsing responses to various situations. Going into a game prepared with these insights not only boosts confidence but also ensures that we are equipped to adapt as the game unfolds.

Success in high-stakes games is often determined by these marginal advantages, the ones that come from anticipating what's next rather than simply reacting to the present.

Similarly, in business, strategic thinking involves understanding the competitive landscape, recognizing market trends, and anticipating customer needs. Leaders who think strategically are better equipped to develop innovative solutions, seize opportunities, and stay ahead of the competition. Just as a goaltending coach preps players with insights on their competition, business leaders can gain a strong edge by analyzing competitors, understanding industry trends, and recognizing shifts in customer expectations.

In a business setting, this might mean conducting thorough research on competitors to identify where they might be vulnerable or where they are gaining ground. Knowing a competitor's strengths can help you anticipate their moves, while understanding their weaknesses can uncover opportunities for your team to excel. By analyzing customer behavior and forecasting trends, businesses can stay aligned with what customers want next—not just what they want now. This involves planning for the future and aligning resources toward sustainable goals, ensuring that the entire organization is focused on long-term objectives rather than short-term gains.

To apply these concepts in business, leaders can also adopt a proactive mindset that extends beyond the tactical. It's about cultivating a culture where preparation, adaptability, and innovation are the foundations of daily operations. When businesses operate with strategic foresight, they're better able to handle unexpected challenges, take calculated risks, and maintain a vision that everyone on the team understands and supports. Leaders can ensure that teams are mentally prepared for the unexpected and agile in their response by creating systems that encourage constant learning, adaptation, and alignment with long-term goals. Just as a goalie adjusts positioning based on the opposing team's style, a business team can adjust strategy based on new market data, evolving customer needs, and shifts within the industry.

In the end, strategic thinking is about staying one step ahead, equipping your team with the insights they need to make informed decisions, and fostering a culture that values preparation and adaptability. When business leaders embrace this kind of analytical, forward-thinking approach, they create resilient organizations that are not only prepared

for current demands but are also primed to capture future opportunities. By proactively managing resources, aligning team strengths with the right opportunities, and keeping a close eye on external factors, leaders set the foundation for sustainable growth and success.

## **Execution: The Bridge Between Strategy and Success**

While developing a strategy is essential, executing it effectively is what ultimately leads to success. In my coaching career, I've seen many well-crafted strategies fail due to poor execution. Execution involves not only implementing the strategy but also making real-time adjustments based on feedback and changing circumstances. During the growth of Canadian Professional Goalie Schools, I had to constantly make real-time adjustments—whether it was managing unexpected staffing issues, dealing with cancellations, or adjusting the curriculum based on feedback from participants. For instance, there was a time when we faced a sudden shortage of qualified instructors just before a major camp. I quickly reorganized the staff schedule, brought in additional support from my network, and personally took on extra sessions to ensure that the camp ran smoothly. Additionally, we received feedback from parents that certain drills were too advanced for younger participants. Based on this, I adjusted the curriculum on the spot, introducing tiered drills that catered to different skill levels. These real-time changes were crucial in scaling the business effectively and ensuring its long-term success.

During a game, the opposing team might alter their tactics, requiring quick adjustments to our game plan. As a coach, it's my responsibility to recognize these changes and communicate the necessary adjustments to my goalies. This real-time execution ensures that our strategy remains effective despite the dynamic nature of the game.

Execution is the true test of any strategy. It is often challenging because it requires both precision and adaptability, especially under pressure. A well-developed strategy is worthless without the ability to execute it under pressure. This requires not just physical preparation but also mental resilience. I train my goalies to stay focused and composed, even in high-pressure situations, which is a skill that can be applied to any high-stakes environment, including business.

In business, execution is equally important. A well-developed business strategy is only as good as its implementation. Leaders must ensure that their teams are aligned with the strategy, that resources are allocated effectively, and that progress is continuously monitored. Execution also requires flexibility; leaders must be willing to make adjustments as new information becomes available or as circumstances change.

## **Problem-Solving Techniques for Leaders**

Effective leaders are also effective problem-solvers. For instance, effective leaders break down problems into smaller parts, analyze each aspect, and develop targeted solutions. This systematic approach helps in addressing both immediate challenges and

preventing future issues. One of the challenges I previously discussed involved a business partnership that went awry. My partner's reckless spending habits were threatening to sink our venture, and it became clear that quick, decisive action was necessary. I had to meticulously review our financials, restructure our agreements, and ultimately make the difficult decision to end the partnership. Through careful problem-solving, I was able to salvage the business, rebuild its foundation, and steer it back towards success. This experience taught me that effective problem-solving involves not only addressing the immediate issue but also making strategic decisions that prevent future setbacks. In both sports and business, unexpected challenges can arise at any moment, and the ability to address these challenges swiftly and effectively is critical. My approach to problem-solving in coaching involves breaking down the problem into manageable components, analyzing each part, and developing a solution that addresses the root cause.

For example, if a goalie is struggling with a particular type of shot, I break down the mechanics of their movements, analyze where the breakdown is occurring, and develop drills to correct the issue. This systematic approach ensures that we address the problem at its core, leading to long-term improvement.

In business, leaders can adopt a similar approach to problem-solving. By breaking down complex problems into smaller, more manageable parts, leaders can better understand the issue and develop targeted solutions. For example, during a major project, our team faced significant setbacks due to resource constraints. By breaking down the problem, we identified specific areas where resources were being misallocated and restructured

our plan accordingly, which ultimately led to a successful completion of the project. This approach not only resolves the immediate problem but also strengthens the organization's overall problem-solving capabilities.

## **Conclusion**

Strategy and execution are critical components of success in both sports and business. While developing a well-thought-out strategy is essential, the ability to execute that strategy effectively is what ultimately determines success. Through careful analysis, strategic thinking, and real-time execution, leaders can navigate challenges, capitalize on opportunities, and achieve their goals.

The lessons from my coaching career demonstrate the power of strategic thinking and execution in achieving success. By applying these principles to business, leaders can enhance their decision-making, problem-solving, and overall leadership effectiveness. Whether on the ice or in the boardroom, the ability to think strategically and execute effectively is key to long-term success. By understanding the unique strengths of your team, preparing thoroughly, and executing effectively, you can overcome challenges and achieve your goals with precision and confidence.

## **Conclusion: Integrating Sports Principles into Business Leadership**

As we reach the conclusion of this exploration into the intersection between sports and business, it is evident that the principles driving success in athletics are not confined to the ice rink or the field. They are universal, deeply ingrained in the fabric of leadership, teamwork, and personal development. The lessons learned from my coaching career offer valuable insights for business leaders who are striving to lead their teams to new heights of success.

### **The Essence of Leadership: Empowering Others**

One of the core themes throughout this book is the belief that true leadership is about empowering others. Success is not an isolated achievement; it is a collective effort that depends on the growth and development of everyone involved. This philosophy has guided my approach as a coach, where the success of each goalie reflects the success of the team. In business, the same holds true—leaders who focus on developing their employees, fostering their talents, and supporting their ambitions will see those efforts reflected in the overall success of their organization.

Empowering others requires more than just providing resources or setting goals. It involves a deep understanding of each individual's strengths, weaknesses, and aspirations. As leaders, it is our responsibility to create an environment where everyone can thrive, where their unique contributions are recognized and valued, and where they feel supported in their pursuit of excellence.

## **The Role of Strategy in Leadership**

Strategy is another critical component of leadership, whether on the ice or in the boardroom. The ability to think strategically, to anticipate challenges, and to develop a clear plan for achieving goals is what separates good leaders from great ones.

However, as I've emphasized throughout this book, strategy alone is not enough—it must be coupled with flawless execution.

In both sports and business, the best-laid plans can quickly fall apart if not executed effectively. This is why execution is just as important as strategy. Leaders must be prepared to make real-time adjustments, to adapt to changing circumstances, and to keep their teams aligned and focused on the ultimate goal. This requires a combination of clear communication, strong problem-solving skills, and the ability to remain calm and composed under pressure.

## **Communication: The Glue that Binds Teams Together**

Effective communication is the foundation of any successful team. Throughout my coaching career, I have learned that the way we communicate with our players, our colleagues, and our teams can have a profound impact on performance.

Communication is not just about conveying information—it's about building relationships, fostering trust, and creating an environment where everyone feels heard and understood.

In business, the importance of communication cannot be overstated. Leaders who communicate clearly and consistently are better able to align their teams, drive performance, and achieve their goals. Moreover, effective communication is essential for navigating difficult conversations, managing conflicts, and ensuring that everyone is working towards the same objectives.

### **Embracing Unconventional Paths**

One of the key lessons I've learned in my career is the value of embracing unconventional paths. My own journey into coaching was anything but traditional, and it was this unconventional route that allowed me to develop a unique coaching philosophy. In both sports and business, leaders who are willing to think outside the box, to take risks, and to challenge the status quo are often the ones who achieve the most remarkable results.

Encouraging innovation and creativity within a team can lead to breakthroughs that might otherwise have been missed. It's important for leaders to create a culture where unconventional ideas are welcomed, where calculated risks are encouraged, and where failure is seen as an opportunity to learn and grow.

### **Motivation and Resilience: Keys to Sustained Success**

Motivation and resilience are essential for achieving long-term success. Throughout my coaching career, I have emphasized the importance of staying motivated, maintaining a positive outlook, and building resilience in the face of challenges. These qualities are

not only important for individual players but also for teams and organizations as a whole.

In business, leaders play a crucial role in fostering motivation and resilience within their teams. By setting clear goals, providing regular feedback, and creating an environment where employees feel supported and valued, leaders can help their teams stay motivated and focused on achieving their best. Moreover, building resilience—both individually and collectively—ensures that teams can overcome setbacks and continue striving towards their goals.

### **Next Steps for Business Leaders**

As you reflect on the lessons and insights shared in this book, consider how you can apply these principles to your own leadership approach. Here are some next steps to consider:

- 1. Empower Your Team:** Focus on developing your team members, understanding their unique strengths and weaknesses, and providing the support they need to succeed. Create a culture where everyone feels valued and empowered to contribute to the team's success.
- 2. Develop a Strategic Mindset:** Take the time to think strategically about your goals, anticipate challenges, and develop a clear plan for achieving them. Ensure that your strategy is aligned with the broader goals of your organization and that

you have the resources and support needed to execute it effectively.

- 3. Communicate Clearly and Consistently:** Make communication a priority in your leadership approach. Ensure that your team members understand their roles, responsibilities, and goals, and that they feel comfortable sharing their ideas and feedback. Use communication as a tool to build trust, foster collaboration, and drive performance.
  
- 4. Encourage Innovation:** Embrace unconventional ideas and encourage your team to think outside the box. Create an environment where calculated risks are supported, where failure is seen as a learning opportunity, and where innovation is celebrated.
  
- 5. Foster Motivation and Resilience:** Help your team stay motivated by setting clear goals, providing regular feedback, and recognizing their achievements. Build resilience by creating a supportive environment where challenges are seen as opportunities for growth.

## **Final Reflections**

As I reflect on my journey as a coach, I am reminded of the many lessons I've learned along the way—lessons that are just as relevant in the business world as they are in sports. Leadership is about more than just achieving personal success; it's about

helping others succeed, about creating a vision and a plan, and about staying motivated and resilient in the face of challenges.

I hope that the insights shared in this book will inspire you to embrace these principles in your own leadership journey. Whether you are leading a team on the ice or in the boardroom, the qualities that define great leaders—empathy, strategic thinking, communication, innovation, and resilience—are universal. By integrating these principles into your leadership approach, you can build stronger teams, drive innovation, and achieve lasting success.

In closing, I leave you with a thought that has guided me throughout my career: Success is not just about what you accomplish; it's about what you inspire others to achieve. As a leader, your greatest legacy will be the impact you have on those you lead, the opportunities you create for them, and the success they achieve because of your guidance and support. Thank you for joining me on this journey, and I wish you continued success in your leadership endeavours.