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REVIEW



Sport

EDITORIAL



After years of preparation, the Olympic and Paralympic Games are taking place this summer in Paris. There's been ample discussion about how the Games will impact daily life in Île-de-France - the region in which ESSEC Business School is located. People are looking forward to the Games with a mix of trepidation and excitement, curious about how it will impact them personally. How will it all play out?

This edition of ESSEC Knowledge Review is all about sports, including a behind-the-scenes look at how the Olympic Games have been organized and the impact of major sport events on the Île-de-France region. Ten ESSEC professors in accounting and management control, marketing, public and private policy, and management have shared their expertise and research in this special issue. They explore a wide array of topics, including how major sport events can provide a marketing boost, the importance of interpersonal dynamics in sports, the link between philosophy and sports, and why we accept violence in sports. ESSEC professors also shed light on behaviors related to sports, like motivation, effort, and how having a hobby can benefit one's professional life. The variety of research featured in this special issue is representative of the diversity of our faculty's work.

At ESSEC, we have a long tradition of sports in campus life, pedagogy, and of course, research. From 2001 to 2015, the ESSEC International Sports Marketing Chair, launched by professor Thierry Lardinois, was known for its expertise in sports business. Now, ESSEC is home to the ESSEC Sports Chair, our new Bachelor HEPTA program for top athletes, and the European Sports Business Program. A revamped Sports & Recreation Center opened in 2023, the ideal setting for our numerous student clubs and events dedicated to sports. In May 2024, ESSEC signed a new academic partnership with Prépa Diagonale and CY Cergy-Paris University, opening a new path to the Grande Ecole program for student athletes. ESSEC also has the Génération 2024 label from the Ministries of Education and Youth and of Higher Education and Research, highlighting our dedication to developing links between the academic world and sport to encourage young people to be physically active. This selection of sports-related research conducted by ESSEC professors underscores our commitment to integrating sports into education.

Sport can offer us invaluable lessons, whether we're professional athletes, regular runners, or just getting back on the bike. This special issue aims to provide insight into these lessons.

Let the Games begin!

Julia Smith, Editor-in-Chief, ESSEC Knowledge

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GO FOR GOLD: WHAT IT TAKES TO PLAN THE OLYMPIC AND PARALYMPIC GAMES



Stefan Gröschl is Professor of Management. Stefan is known for his expertise in responsible leadership, sustainable business practices, diversity and inclusion, international human resources management, and organizational behavior. His research has been published in textbooks, book chapters and articles in both the international trade and academic press. He is an editorial board member and reviewer for international academic management journals. Stefan has conducted company training programs and consultancies for firms in France and abroad. He has worked with think tanks in Europe and as an expert consultant for UN's International Organization for Migration. Stefan has served as an external examiner to the European Regional Development Fund, and various other governmental research grant programs in Europe and North America.

When you think of the Olympics and the Paralympics, you probably think of the glitz and glamour of the Opening and Closing ceremonies, the stunning physical feats of athletes at the top of their field, planning your calendar to catch your favourite events... in short, the events of the Games themselves, not so much about the planning that leads to them. Stefan Gröschl, Professor of Management, explored what goes into the planning of the Olympics and Paralympics to provide a better understanding of the managerial and organizational challenges and identify key competencies that come in handy when organizing major sporting events. The lessons learned here can be applied to other work contexts as well.

There are a few factors that make the Olympics and Paralympics so unique: the amount of visitors they attract, the media coverage, the high cost, the impact on the local community, and the time involved. When you add the bid process for potential host cities and the general preparation time, you're looking at a preparation process of eight to nine years. The situation gets increasingly complex and increasingly uncertain, as shown by the challenge of organizing

the Japan 2021 Olympic and Paralympic Games during a pandemic. This complexity and uncertainty distinguish the Olympics and Paralympics from other large-scale events.

Dr. Gröschl explored what it takes to be up to the challenge of organizing the Games and the managerial takeaways we can learn from the process. He interviewed Ricardo Leyser Gonçalves, one of the key organizers of the Rio de Janeiro Games as head of the Rio Olympic Committee in 2016, inquiring about key competencies, priorities, crisis management, and more.

What it takes to be an Olympian (organizer, that is)

There are a number of important skills that Leyser Gonçalves identified in his interview with Dr. Gröschl.

These are:

Operational knowledge: One needs a thorough understanding of what the event entails, its history, and the different players involved, especially of the political relationships and interpersonal conflicts in play. It is important to



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understand the different motivations and interests of decision-makers to be able to collaborate.

Soft skills: This leads us to the next skill: it's important to have strong interpersonal skills to be able to mediate between different groups, communicate and collaborate effectively, and be a good team player. Negotiation and persuasion skills are also key to coordinate work with different task forces.

Team coordination: With so many different groups involved, it is critical to coordinate the work of different task forces, even when they are not directly under your control. For example, Leyser Gonçalves identifies airports as a key operational element: he had to make sure they were accessible for wheelchair users, but had no direct control over technical staff who could do this, so had to motivate the different teams with their shared goal of hosting the first Olympic and Paralympic Games in South America.

Goal-setting: It was also important to set goals small and large, short, mid, and long term, and to make sure these goals aligned with the ultimate goal of delivering the Olympics and

Paralympics. In addition to setting goals, Leyser Gonçalves was also faced with the challenge of aligning teams to shared goals; no small feat given the shifting goalposts in the form of temporary teams and changing goals. He also notes the necessity of always keeping your goal(s) in mind, even under high uncertainty and complexity.

Resilience: Remember the time frame involved - organizing the Olympics and Paralympics is a long game, taking place over the span of several years. This means that a lot can change: staff, directives, economic situation... This means one must be able to roll with the punches and adapt to a changing environment.

Project management: Of course, there are more technical skills involved, such as acquisition, budgeting, and meeting deadlines, which fall under the more general project management umbrella.

Prioritizing tasks: A related skill is being able to prioritize tasks. Leyser Gonçalves notes that on a strategic level, the key priorities and timetable are established by the International Olympic Committee and International Paralympic Committee. They set key milestones

along the way. On an operational level, he brought up the importance of having clear objectives as to be able to organize priorities and tasks. In his case, objective #1 was to "deliver the Games". Objective #2 was "this delivery is not at all costs". Keeping these in mind allowed him to stay focused and get creative with how to accomplish Objective #1 while still respecting Objective #2.

Key challenges of a mega sport event

With so many balls in the air (pun intended), there's going to be some challenges.

Communication: This is both a competency and a challenge. Leyser Gonçalves explains that a main challenge is establishing a single communication channel to streamline communications so wires don't get crossed. He also reiterated the importance of establishing strong relationships with the different players, like the IOC, IPC, local governments, etc. This is beneficial for understanding the politics of the different organizations and anticipating and managing conflict.

Sharing knowledge: Since the Olympics and Paralympics are such a massive, historical undertaking, Leyser Gonçalves also explains that one of his biggest challenges was in truly understanding the Games: the different preparation and planning stages, the players involved, the federations, the governmental public sector roles... and making sure that all team members shared this knowledge and built relationships with their counterparts on other teams.

Planning: Another key lesson was the importance of planning right from Day 1, which Leyser Gonçalves notes was a problem his team experienced. Since there is so much to be done, there is no time to waste, and contracts and operational structures need to be established in advance.

Key managerial takeaways

While being an organizer for the Olympics and Paralympics does require some specific skills, there are managerial lessons to be learned for leaders in other areas, too. Leyser Gonçalves highlights the importance of focus, trusting your team, and time management.

Focus on your goal: Identify your key objective (in this case, delivering the Games) and stay focused on that, even when faced with challenges that threaten to derail the objective.

Trust your team and delegate: It is impossible to work by yourself, especially when working on a mega sport event or even a large project. It's critical to build teams that you empower and trust, and delegate tasks to them. This helps keep your eye on the prize.

Time management: The importance of planning and prioritization comes up again here. Time is a finite resource and can't be bought once gone, making effective time management an essential skill.

Contributions

When we watch the Olympics and Paralympics this year, we can now do so with an insider's perspective on all that goes into the Games. The qualitative approach employed by Dr. Gröschl gives us rich, detailed insight, a unique quality in a field dominated by quantitative research.



While most of us are not organizers of the Olympics or even a mega sporting event, the managerial lessons learned here can be applied to many situations and emphasize the need for soft skills in addition to technical skills. Communication, creativity, time management, resilience, teamwork: these are often bandied about as important, and this brings home their utility for leaders, particularly in complex, changing situations. It's also useful to define your goals from the get-go, and to keep focused on those goals over time.

We can all be Olympians - if only in how we approach our work! ■

Further reading

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Article written with Julia Smith,
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HOW PARISIAN HOSPITALS ARE PREPARING FOR THE OLYMPICS



Marie-Léandre Gomez is Associate Professor in the Accounting and Management Control department. She teaches management control in the MiM Grande Ecole, Executive Education and Ph.D programs. Her research focuses on the dynamics of organization and coordination, including organizational learning and creativity. Currently, she is coordinating a research project on the coordination of medical teams in crisis situations. She has contributed to articles in academic journals including *Organization Studies*, *Management Learning*, *M@n@gement*, and edited works at Cambridge University Press, Oxford University Press. A graduate of ESSEC (E93), she holds a doctorate in Management Sciences from the University Paris-Ouest Nanterre-La Défense.

'The eyes of the world are on this race'. Paris Olympics' triathlon hangs in the balance over E. Coli levels in the Seine
-CNN, June 18th, 2024

2024 Paris Olympics Could Be Deadly For Athletes, New Report Shows
-Forbes, June 18th, 2024

Will the Paris Olympics be a terrorist target? These three factors could be key
-The Conversation, June 25th, 2024

These recent headlines, from international media outlets, are just three among dozens in the lead-up to the Paris 2024 Olympic & Paralympic Games that highlight the various potential risks facing the Games: an unsafe Seine, extreme heat levels, terrorism...

This means that all involved need to take the necessary measures to prepare: the IOC, the athlete delegations, the host country, the police - and the hospitals, who need to be prepared for any number of extreme events. Marie-Léandre Gomez (professor), Marie Kerveillant (research engineer and assistant academic director of the ESSEC Executive Master's in Management et

Gestion des Organisations), Philippe Lorino (professor emeritus), Dr. Matthieu Langlois (MD, researcher and lecturer) all at ESSEC Business School, alongside partners at APHP Paris Santé Sorbonne-Université (team led by Professor Mathieu Raux), and the ENS Geopolitics of Risk Chair (Peter Burgess and Jan Verlin as heads), are exploring hospital preparations in their ongoing research project.

This project, called COMEXT (COordination of MEDical and non-medical teams in EXTreme contexts), explores how medical and non-medical teams coordinate in extreme settings, such as crises in hospitals and terror attacks. In 2021, they received funding from the Agence nationale de la recherche (the French National Research Agency), for a three-year period. By combining research expertise from management, philosophy, geopolitics and sociology, as well as from medical professionals, the project uses a holistic approach and blends different perspectives.

Why focus on hospitals? There's been an increase in crises - and their severity and complexity are also increasing!



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Their research looks at two key axes:

The coordination between first responders and second responders

- First responders include security teams, the RAID medical team (RAID stands for research, assistance, intervention, dissuasion, and is the police SWAT force unit that deals with the most dangerous situations), fire brigades, emergency medical assistance units.
- Second responders include the emergency department at hospital, and medical teams after patient intake.

Hospital crises, with a focus on the key role of medical directors in times of crisis. Hospitals are involved in both internal and external crises:

- Internal crises, to their structures and infrastructure (flooding, cyber attacks, power cuts) and human safety (armed intruders, fires).
- External crises, like accidents and attacks outside the hospital, provoking a massive inflow of wounded persons, situations where coordination with first responder teams is necessary.

The aim of the project is to better assess the level of complexity in crises faced by hospitals, to produce knowledge on their organization, and to contribute to helping hospitals in improving their crisis organization and coordination.

The Olympics: a unique set of circumstances

As evoked by the many headlines floating around, the Paris 2024 Olympic & Paralympic Games face potential crises, including heat waves and the ensuing risk for athlete and spectator health, bus accidents, and terrorist attacks. Hospitals are preparing to welcome a larger number of patients. Many doctors, nurses and employees have postponed their holidays to work this summer. Moreover, like many other sensible organizations, hospitals are also aware that they are at risk with cyber-attacks during the Olympics & Paralympics Games.

All hospitals in the Paris area and in all cities welcoming the Games have been working for months on crisis preparation:

- Coordination between the various hospitals and sites, notably in case of extreme crisis.

- Updating or creating crisis plans, assigning responsibilities in the organizations, anticipating specific event features, such as people speaking languages other than French in large numbers flocking to Paris. All the hospitals have also organized large training exercises, involving first responders, emergency departments, surgery rooms, doctors, nurses, logistics, pharmacy, supply, communication... all employees have a role to play in crises. These exercises involve hundreds of people, and necessitate huge efforts to be organized without being detrimental to regular patients coming to hospital that day.

These exercises are not just to rehearse and implement crisis plans. They help hospitals to identify pain points and correct them. Scenarios are built to raise awareness of how people's stress and emotions impact how they react in these tense situations.

The COMEXT research group is investigating various facets of crisis preparation through interviews with doctors and hospital directors and observing training and crisis exercises.. Data collection for the Olympics is still under process, but the researchers have shared some initial findings.

1. The Olympics & Paralympics Games are a wonderful opportunity to further develop hospital crisis preparation, and to develop agility and resilience. Historically, hospitals have had minimal interest in crisis preparation and organization. That being said, the 2015 Paris terrorist attacks were key in encouraging some doctors to improve hospital preparedness. Notably, the head doctor of RAID, Dr. Langlois, and doctors from La Pitié-Salpêtrière (notably Professor Raux) worked on their collaboration to better prepare for massive inflows of patients and developed executive education programs for doctors. Later, in 2019, the position of Crisis Medical Director was created to better organize the medical response to crises. The COVID-19 pandemic further demonstrated the need to better coordinate and organize. However, facing a critical lack of resources, hospitals found it difficult to maintain their efforts after the COVID-19 crisis. The 2024 games have again made crisis preparation a priority, with hospitals developing educational programs and simulation exercises in response. Both doctors and hospital managers acknowledge that preparing for possible crises during the Olympics is helping them to enhance their coordination, their ability to better anticipate, and their capacity to be more agile when facing uncertain and complex situations.

2. The preliminary findings also reveal a gender balance in medical crisis leadership. In the survey, half of the medical crisis directors are women, whereas there are overall fewer female heads of medical departments than male heads. In this regard, hospitals seem much more gender-balanced than most sectors. The COMEXT researchers are exploring various hypotheses to explain this finding. The most optimistic hypothesis is that crisis management is an opportunity for female doctors to empower themselves in managerial positions. The pessimistic one is that crisis management does not seem so interesting and rewarding for male doctors, who let it fall to their female colleagues. Further research could shed more light on the drivers of this phenomenon.

3. The conceptualization of crisis time: the COVID-19 pandemic and now the preparation for the Olympic Games show that we need to revisit the view of crisis as a specific moment, an episode that we can differentiate from 'normal' times. There is less and less discontinuity between crisis and non-crisis times, and the traditional trio of preparation- crisis situation - debriefing/post crisis. COMEXT proposes to revisit crisis time with a more continuous, processual view. It is particularly important for the future of crises such as the climate crisis. For hospitals, it may be encouraged to revisit crisis governance, with a more fluid crisis organization. Currently, the crisis medical director is officially appointed and active only during crisis times, which limits preparations. Moreover, coordination between hospitals, as well as between hospitals and the rest of the healthcare and rescue system, is to be rethought. This is part of the ambition of future research and propositions for the COMEXT group.

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Article written with Julia Smith, Editor-in-Chief, ESSEC Knowledge



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A MORAL TIGHTROPE: WHY DO WE ACCEPT VIOLENCE IN SPORTS?



Delphine Dion is Professor of Marketing at ESSEC and holds the LVMH chair. She is the academic director of the LVMH chair program and the Luxury Brand Management track of the Global MBA. She received the 2023 teaching award of the ESSEC Foundation. Her current research explores market dynamics in the luxury industry related to environmental and societal issues. In particular, she analyzes market dynamics related to second-hand markets, new materials, craftsmanship and consumer inclusivity. Her work has been published in books and leading academic journals. She serves on the Editorial Review Board of 5 academic journals. She has received several awards, including the 2020 Outstanding Editorial Review Board Member Award of the International Journal of Research in Marketing and the 2018 ESSEC Foundation Research Award.

During the Rugby World Cup in fall 2023, fans flocked to France from all over the world to cheer on their team. France's star player Antoine Dupont captained les Bleus to the quarterfinals before getting knocked out by South Africa - this after suffering a fractured cheekbone and undergoing major surgery earlier in the tournament. Rugby players are no strangers to this type of injury - the field is dotted with players wearing "scrum caps" to protect from cauliflower ears and violent tackles are the name of the game. Why are we drawn to watching such a violent sport, when we know people are likely to get hurt? Delphine Dion (ESSEC Business School), Clément Dubreuil (Kedge Business School) and Stéphane Borraz (NEOMA Business School) explored this question, finding that viewers experience a sort of moral ambivalence and justify the violence as they watch.

Rugby isn't alone in this, either: American football, ice hockey, mixed martial arts and wrestling are other examples of violent contact sports that continue to enjoy popularity. In these sports, violence isn't just incidental, it's a key part of the game. Past research showed this violence cultivates emotional contagion and appeals to our baser instincts. This

can lead to a confusing experience for the viewers, who enjoy watching even though they know violence is wrong. So what makes violence acceptable - and enjoyable - in sports?

To better understand this contradiction, the researchers conducted 21 interviews with consumers (rugby fans) and nine with professionals in the rugby world and analyzed social media posts.

All's fair in love and war

In their interviews, the researchers found that the interviewees often used war metaphors and vocabulary when describing rugby, a form of "translating" one reality (rugby) to another (war) by dramatizing the violence. This type of thinking can also be seen in New Zealand's traditional haka, traditionally performed by Maori warriors before a battle. All of this means that rugby is often seen as a war-like alternative reality, one where violence is fêted and justified. Violence is seen as the players fulfilling their duty and benefiting the community - defending their team and not letting the fans down.



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It's just a game!

At the same time, this dramatization of violence is linked to also de-dramatizing the violence, and justifying it as “just a game”. Interviewees noted that it’s just for fun, and to win, with fans and players playing this up with songs and performances that poke fun at the violence. For example, the Stade Français has introduced pink, leopard print, floral, and other fun jersey patterns, to lighten the mood. While these might be parodies of violence, they do also normalize and justify it, by suggesting it’s not so bad and actually can be funny.

It's how it is

Another way that people justify the violence in rugby is by saying it’s the rules of the game. As long as a play is allowed, then it’s acceptable. One spectator explains: “You also have to distinguish between the pain inflicted by players who give their best and who are aggressive but play by the rules—which is all part of the game—and the pain that results from the actions of players who deliberately break the rules. [...]. When it is in the course of the game, when he is doing nothing wrong,

a player who hurts another is doing his job, there is nothing to blame him for.” This is a common experience: when we encounter moral ambivalence, we look to the rules set out by what we see as legitimate institutions, in this case World Rugby. That being said, other spectators expressed concern about rising levels of violence and suggested the rules might need to change to curb this phenomenon. Instead of accepting the rules, they challenge them and suggest that new ones are needed. People also trust the official representatives, such as the referees, to enforce these rules. If the referees are seen as too lax, then the violence is more likely to be seen as inappropriate.

Lights, camera, action

All the world’s a stage, and rugby is no different. The game’s broadcast plays a big role in how we perceive the match and thus the violence. Certain plays are shown over and over again, in slow motion and with freeze frames, whereas others can be shown only at a distance. When players are injured, they are surrounded (and therefore hidden) by medical staff, or even covered with a white sheet. When injuries are talked about, it’s often using

euphemistic language: “it stings” rather than “it hurts”, for example.

Broadcasting can even make violence aesthetic. Commentators often use language like beautiful and nice when describing the action, and #beaugeste (beautiful move) and #beaujeu (beautiful game) are popular hashtags during a game. There’s a big focus on the “art of the game”, with one spectator describing this as: “There is a beauty to rugby. It’s a bit like the Greek aesthetic of masculine strength, it exalts the group spirit. Like the Spartans, or Roman soldiers: the beauty of a well-ordered army, where everything is efficient.” This can result in a perception that violence is beautiful. All of this contributes to camouflaging the consequences of the violence and producing a distorted vision of it.

This study suggests that market players (fans, players, broadcasters, etc.) use different justifications to resolve the moral ambivalence of violence, by telling themselves that it’s like a battle, that there are rules to be respected, and that the game is a thing of beauty. These different strategies allow them to rationalize that the violence in rugby is okay, even though they wouldn’t accept violence in another context.

Where to go from here?

While it may indeed be “just a game”, the rising levels of violence and associated injuries do give reason for concern. The researchers suggest three strategies to mitigate this:

Contextualizing: Competition organizers and broadcasters should think about how they contribute to normalizing violence, for example by showcasing the players as warriors. They should avoid using war references and parodies, and focus instead on player performance and technique.

Ruling: Since many market players justify the violence by referring to the rules, governing bodies should commit to regularly reviewing the rules to prevent high levels of injury. One example is that of spear tackles, a once widely accepted move that is now banned to protect players.

Broadcasting: Policymakers and broadcasters have the opportunity to collaborate and produce a charter of responsibility when showing contact sports. This could reduce the distortion of violence and avoid glorifying it, by using direct language that properly describes injuries and pain, offering filters to avoid viewing violent content (particularly for young fans), and access additional content that explains the real risk of violence and injuries. This also concerns social media like YouTube, which compile short, violent and spectacular sequences taken from rugby games and totalize millions of views.

Violent sports aren't going anywhere. With so many eyes on the sport, it's important to understand how people justify that this violence is acceptable even when it's not in other contexts, giving us insight into the complicated human psyche. ■

*Article written with Julia Smith,
Editor-in-Chief, ESSEC Knowledge*



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HOW TO TURN RIVALRIES INTO A COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE



Elisa Operti is Professor of Management. She teaches Strategy and Network Analysis courses in various programs (MS, Executive, PhD). Her research focuses on how social networks affect behavior and innovation at the individual, organizational and regional level. She is particularly interested in the interplay of positive and negative ties in social networks, and in multilevel network processes. Her research has been published in various academic journals (*Academy of Management Journal*, *Organization Science*, *Strategic Management Journal*, *Journal of Management*) and has received funding from the French National Research Agency (ANR), from the Paris Seine Initiative and from the Swiss National Foundation (SNF).

The Palio di Siena is a historic horse race dating back to medieval times - while the race itself only lasts 90 seconds, there's days of festivities in the lead-up, with the city's competing 17 contrade (neighborhoods) treating their respective horses like royalty. The whole city turns out to watch the race, packing into Il Campo, where the celebration will continue into the night long after the 90-second race has been won. With such high stakes, it's no wonder rivalries and conflicts will pop up. Elisa Operti (ESSEC Business School) and her colleagues Stoyan V. Sgourev and Shemuel Y. Lampronti examined rivalry networks in the Palio¹, exploring and explaining how managers can harness rivalry.

Learning how to take advantage of rivalries can also be useful today as part of a talent management strategy. The job market remains a tough nut to crack: employers and companies still in the throes of 'talent war' must offer flexible working conditions and higher salaries to recruit and retain top talent. How does this link to a legendary horse race? Managers need to think of new ways to manage this mobility. One way is by managing rivalries between companies, as these rivalries are a constraint that reduces competition

for talent. For this, we can look to the jockeys of the Palio.

Choose your friends wisely - and your enemies even more wisely

If love is a tale as old as time, so is rivalry. It's present everywhere - famous rivalries include Coke and Pepsi, Cambridge and Oxford, McDonald's and Burger King. But rivalry is not the same thing as competition; while competition refers to a situation in which actors' goals are opposed to each other², rivalry consists of a more personal antagonism between players. In other words, rivalry is personal and based on social relationships, and competition is impersonal.

Rivalry in the Palio

The Palio di Siena is founded on rivalry; held on July 2nd and August 16th, horses representing the city's contrade (neighborhoods) race three times around the main city square. Each contrada has its own culture and community, and the Sieneese are fiercely



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proud of their *contrada*. During the Palio, they proudly wear their colors, sing their songs and mock their rivals - rivalries they've been exposed to since they were born. Most *contrade* also have historical allies. For example, Aquila is allied to the Civetta and the Drago *contrade*, and its rival is the Pantera.

During the race itself, jockeys do their best to win the Palio or prevent the victory of their rival, going so far as to unhorse another jockey or whip another horse. In the lead-up, key players will plot about how they will foil their rival's race to victory, forming pacts and identifying who their jockey will be. These jockeys aren't necessarily locals representing the *contrada* they grew up in: they're paid professionals providing their services to a *contrada*. While they're expected to show loyalty to their employer, and are paid like a top athlete, they are able to race for another *contrada* in the future if they so choose. As such, leaders work hard to strengthen ties with them, given the intense talent competition in the market.

A study of rivalry

Just how do these rivalries impact the careers of the jockeys themselves? The researchers examined the careers of 480 jockeys between 1743 and 2011 and conducted interviews with key players including captains, jockeys, Palio experts, and journalists, seeking to understand the drivers of career mobility.

They found that while jockeys have represented different *contrade*, it's in less than 2% of cases that they left one to compete for a direct fierce rival. What's more, jockeys were also less likely to move to the allies of their rival or to the rival of their allies, showing that these ties run deep.

To highlight this, one jockey stated that "You won't go to the other camp, to the rival, or the *contrada* that is close to the rival. This is because of the relationships you develop and the emotional bonds. You can't go on one side and then on the other".

In the rare situations where jockeys did move to a rival, there were certain characteristics that stood out about the individual. As the labor market became more developed and salaries increased,

rivalries were more salient in career choices, as jockeys wanted to manage their reputation and appear reliable to their employers.

Where the jockey was from also played a role. Jockeys who switched teams were more likely to come from the region around Siena, but not from Siena itself or another part of the country. These people may hit the sweet spot between being a Siennese citizen, and the tendency to abide by societal norms that accompanies that, and the suspicion cast upon outsiders that also leads said outsiders to conform to social norms.

Another key factor was their success rate: jockeys with a less stellar track record were more likely to switch allegiances. This may be because they know they have less of a shot at winning, so they are more willing to go to the highest bidder. On the flipside, the top jockeys may also be tempted if they feel the financial reward will outweigh the reputational cost. Comparatively, the average performers are much less likely to go work for a rival.

Framework for managers: Using rivalry for a competitive advantage

These findings can be extrapolated to a more general talent management strategy, with tips on how to retain talent and boost employee commitment. The researchers suggest a three-step framework to Map, Manage, and Leverage interorganizational rivalries³.

Mapping rivalries

- Map the rivalries and allegiances your company has to understand the possibilities. Consider factors like proximity and shared history.
- Add information on the rivals and allies of those in your network to better understand the broader competitive landscape.
- Identify individuals who may be more vulnerable to competition, using information like past performance, location, and professionalism.

Managing rivalries

- Come up with actions to boost employee commitment and loyalty. In Siena, this includes narrative story-telling, cheers, and songs - in a company, this could take the form of narratives and socialization techniques that include all employees.
- Encourage bonding between employees.
- Communicate about the importance of loyalty.
- While these tactics should include all employees, pay special attention to those previously identified as being more sensitive to the challenges and opportunities offered by rivalries.

Leveraging rivalries

- Savvy managers can use rivalries to retain employees or even recruit top talent from a rival. How? Strong social bonds can be one effective tool.
- In recruitment, managers could look at, for example, new hires in an undesirable location or those feeling unappreciated, perhaps offering these people a bonus to move.
- Allied firms can also establish agreements for offering advantages to those who move between their firms.
- Establish strategies for when things don't go your way and you lose an employee to a rival. They can be used as a bridge between companies, and create a network of company alumni.
- In recruitment, another strategy is to fish in talent pools that aren't associated with your rival: perhaps in another area, or those that come from firms that haven't previously collaborated with your rival.

While these strategies are based on rivalries between organizations, they can also be applied within organizations. Many of us are familiar with having a competitive work environment.

With an increasingly competitive labor market and an ensuing war for talent, managers need to pay attention to how these rivalries impact their company and how they can be used "for good". These competitive markets are still marked by social bonds that shape people's careers, and by leveraging these rivalries, companies can recruit and retain talent more effectively. ■

*Article written with Julia Smith,
Editor-in-Chief, ESSEC Knowledge*





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TAINED LOVE: HOW COMPETITION CAN IMPACT TEAM DYNAMICS



Maren Mickeler is Assistant Professor of Management. Her background is in business administration. She holds a PhD from Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München, an MA from the University of Hamburg, and a BSc from the University of Hohenheim. After graduating, she worked at two multinational media corporations for more than two years. Her research focuses on employee collaboration and decision making. She is a quantitative researcher relying mainly on experiments - field, lab and online - and large scale datasets to study her research questions.

Real Madrid's vice captain, Dani Carvajal, recently spoke to Marca, a Spanish sports newspaper, about his new teammate, Kylian Mbappé: "I wish that he [Mbappe] won't have a good Euro, but that he will be his best version from August onwards".

Why was a team leader hoping a teammate wouldn't play well? Because while they may be Real Madrid teammates, they're facing off in Euro 2024 (UEFA European Football Championship), with Mbappé playing for France and Carvajal for Spain. Naturally, each will be doing their best to knock the other's country out of competition - before joining forces again in August and once again playing shoulder to shoulder. This situation is common in sports, with teammates becoming rivals when playing for their countries instead of their club teams, and then going from rivals to teammates once again once the event is over. In 2024 alone, there are the Euros and of course the Olympics, meaning hundreds of professional athletes will be pivoting from teammate to rival and back in the span of a few months.

It's a normal part of the sports world - and indeed of the working world. While you may not be in the running

for a medal, you might find yourself in a situation where you're going up against a colleague for the same outcome. For example, perhaps you, a software developer, and your scrum master are both in the running for local elections - but running for the same seat and for different political parties. What happens once you return to normal after having been competitors? Does this have a lingering effect on your work, even if you're ostensibly back to sharing the same goals and the competition is behind you?

Maren Mickeler, an assistant professor of management at ESSEC, and co-authors Thorsten Grohsjean (Bocconi University) and Henning Piezunka (INSEAD) are exploring this question in their recent research project. They explored how this dynamic - working together for one organization, but having affiliations with other competing organizations - played out, looking at the example of professional soccer players.

Extra-organizational competition between colleagues sharing the same employer occurs frequently in the business world. For example, the research team found that when two members of a company's C-suite were



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on other boards, they were on boards of competing companies in 20% of cases. The findings are not so surprising: employees of the same company often have similar profiles, making them sought after by similar firms - and if they're similar firms, chances are they're also competing firms. Even if we look below the C-suite, this may play out if coworkers are associated with different social groups or political parties outside of work. The frequency of this constellation means it's crucial to understand its implications for collaboration.

If Kimmich and Kane play for FC Bayern Munich, then Kimmich plays for Germany and Kane for England during the FIFA World Cup, the researchers hypothesized that their extra-organizational competitive relationship (induced by their different national team affiliations) could have an impact on their interpersonal relationships when they are no longer competitors. Why? When people have something in common - a shared affiliation - they feel the other person is more similar to them and more likeable¹. If colleagues enter extra-organizational affiliations that create a competitive linkage between them, they may start to see the other as

more "dissimilar". Or, in other words, they can become more aware of what divides them than what unites them.

For this to be the case, two conditions must be met: Team members both need to identify with their additional affiliation and they also need to directly compete against each other in their extra-organizational roles.

Pitch perfect: unpacking team dynamics in top-tier teams

To analyze whether extra-organizational affiliations can cause harm to collaboration between colleagues, Dr. Mickeler and her colleagues analyzed the case of male professional soccer players, using data from the 2018 FIFA World Cup and the top five European leagues (England, France, Italy, Spain and Germany). They looked at players who played for the same club but different national teams - like former Real colleagues Raphael Varane and Luka Modric who faced each other in the World Cup for France and Croatia, respectively. Since players don't control their opponents (apart from how they play, of course), it means they don't pick

their rivals - or if they will play someone who is a close colleague outside of tournament time. It also means that a few short weeks after playing against someone, they'll be back to being on the same side - with little transition.

In the soccer leagues' regular season, each club plays the others twice, making for 306 matches for the German Bundesliga and 380 for the other European leagues. In the 2018 FIFA World Cup, held every four years, there were 64 matches total. Using match data from the sports analytics company Wyscout for all five major European leagues before and after the World Cup, the researchers studied the number of passes between teammates. This allowed them to compare how the number of passes changed for treated player dyads before and after the World Cup if they directly faced each other by comparing them with untreated dyads that did not play each other in the World Cup.

It turns out that it's not so easy to go back to being friends after having been rivals. The researchers identified reduced collaboration (i.e. fewer passes) in those pairs that had faced each other during the World Cup. In other words, players that had played against each other for their respective national teams tended to pass the ball less frequently in the post-World Cup season compared to their pre-World Cup rates. They also passed the ball less frequently compared to players that had played for different national teams but not against each other - making the rivalry less salient for those players.

This effect started early and lingered considerably. Players started passing less frequently to their teammate/rival after the group stage announcement of the World Cup: so once they knew they would be playing against each other, but before it actually happened. Their identity played a role: the effect was stronger for players with only one citizenship or who had lived in the country for a longer period, compared to those with dual nationality (around 33% of players), and for those who were more vocal about their national team on social media. Their reduced collaboration continued throughout the whole post-World Cup season - suggesting that the effect doesn't end immediately after the tournament. Taken together, this suggests that team dynamics can take a hit after a major tournament - and that this can last a while, meaning that players, coaches, and owners should be aware of the issue.



From the pitch to the professional world

We can't all be a professional soccer player raking in millions - but this type of constellation occurs in different formats in the professional world, such as the C-suite execs on different corporate boards or two colleagues campaigning for the same political seat. The results of this study suggest that a period of

competition undermines collaboration, an effect that seems to kick off once the competition has been announced and linger after the competition has wrapped up. This means that these results have implications off the pitch, and that companies should consider this to avoid negative consequences for team dynamics.

What should companies do?

Organizations and managers may want to consider keeping track of their employees' extra-organizational affiliations to identify situations where their employees can turn into competitors, given the possible negative impact.



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If employees hold competing affiliations, managers could consider discouraging the discussion of touchy topics to avoid an impact on teamwork.

Managers need to actively manage feelings of rivalry and dissimilarity between employees who compete outside their workplace by openly speaking about these experiences.

Companies may not be able to influence what their employees do outside of work - but this research suggests that it is important to keep in mind the influence on teamwork, since extracurricular activities can spill over into workplace dynamics. ■

*Article written with Julia Smith,
Editor-in-Chief, ESSEC Knowledge*

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WINNING THE MARKETING GAME: LEVERAGING SPORTS EVENTS FOR MAXIMUM IMPACT



Marc Mazodier is Professor of Marketing at ESSEC. He teaches Marketing Management and Marketing Research courses in in the Executive Education, MBA and PhD programs. His academic research focuses on brand management and marketing communication efficacy. His work has been published in leading academic journals such as *Journal of Marketing*, *Journal of Marketing Research* and *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*. Marc has also done industry consulting work. He is Affiliate Researcher at the SAMS Institute. Marc has given several marketing research seminars in Europe, Asia, and Middle East. He is Associate Editor of the *Journal of Advertising Research* and is a member of the Editorial Board of the *European Journal of Marketing* and *International Journal of Advertising*. He received his PhD at the Aix-Marseille Graduate School of Management.

Brands will take the opportunity to harness the energy around the Paris 2024 Olympic Games. One question is, what is the most effective advertising strategy to achieve this goal? New research from Marc Mazodier, Professor of Marketing and Head of the Marketing Department at ESSEC Business School, and François A. Carrillat (Griffith Business School) and Christine Eckert (UTS Business School, EBS Business School)¹ examines how ads tailored to sporting events impact brand attitudes and choices compared to traditional advertising strategies.

Experts and researchers usually agree that for effective ads, it's best to be consistent and have ads that align with the product category. Think of car commercials, where the happy customer drives along a scenic road, or banking commercials, where customers look confident in financially safe situations. The superiority of typical advertising over atypical advertising may be surprising if one ignores that most consumers pay little attention to ads. Prior research suggests that our average exposure to digital and outdoor ads is less than 1s^{2,3,4}. Therefore, ads easily recognizable from brand and product category standpoints perform better on average.

Professor Mazodier and his colleagues discovered that an ad that alludes to an event leaves people feeling more positive towards the brand the ad is about and makes them more likely to purchase the brand than typical ads. This exception to the rule is essential since companies shell out millions of dollars for major sporting events' primetime slots - and get millions of views in return. Marketers can apply this strategy in the case of the Olympics, using elements of the host city and the Games themselves - like baguettes, berets, and Hausmannian architecture for Paris 2024. This type of advertising may diverge from product category consistency - but can catch viewers' attention.

The research team compared ads from different categories:

Product-typical ads: these represent the product itself - driving along for a car commercial, for example. This allows consumers to easily recognize what the ad is about. L'Oreal often uses this type of advertising, with good-looking celebrities and a picture of the product.

Event-typical ads: They represent the event, but not the product category. For instance, Air France's new campaign



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for the 2024 Paris Olympics shows a woman with the colours of the French flag painted whimsically across her face, as if the flag is blowing in the wind.

Dual-typical ads: They involve elements of both like the last Renault commercial for Roland Garros, which shows tennis players, clay courts, and moving cars.

Atypical ads: Neither event nor product are explicitly indicated, and there are unusual elements—this can help pique the consumer's interest. For instance, Audi showed robbers waiting for their driver who “could not stop driving” instead of a car.

The goal of advertising is to ensure that consumers recognize your offer and to create positive attitudes toward it. Major sporting events - where fans flock to a certain location and spectators at home are glued to the television - provide a unique opportunity to get your ad in front of more people. So how can companies hit a home run? Dr. Mazodier and his colleagues set out to explore which ad type performed best - and why.

Going for marketing gold

To explore which ad type had the biggest impact, the researchers compared these ads in terms of consumer response.

The researchers conducted four field and lab experiments across a total of 32 ads to explore the effects of the type of ad on consumer brand attitude and brand choice, exploring different product categories (cars, food and beverage, skincare) and sporting events (the Olympics, Wimbledon, and FIFA World Cup). With a systematic approach, building sequentially on the results of each study, they looked at how participants (undergraduate students and users of online survey panel companies) responded to ads at different exposure times and the mechanisms driving this effect. A professional graphic designer designed realistic ads for the experiments to ensure that respondents weren't biased from previous exposure.

Participants were asked about their attitudes toward the brand after seeing the ad, their opinion on the ad itself, and the attributes they linked to the brand.

Surprisingly, it turns out that event-typical ads come out on top, even for very rapid exposures (under 500 ms), and that this is amplified for “longer” exposure times (up to 2 seconds - every bit counts!). While the product-typical ads also performed well after a very brief exposure, event-typical ads led to the best brand evaluations. They resulted in the most positive ad evaluations regardless of the duration of the exposure. Furthermore, dual-typical ads never performed best in any of the four experiments. This is counterintuitive since industry and academic experts thought this ad type yielded good results.

Next, they delved into the “why”: what drove the results? They pinpointed three mechanisms:

Knowing what the ad is about: the event-typical ads give enough information to achieve this, even with the rapid exposure.

Provoking curiosity: the consumer wants to know more about the ad. Even if the product category isn't sports-related, they want to know more - what's linking the product and the event? - and it grabs their attention.

Transfer attributes people associate with the event to the brand itself - attributes like popular and iconic, which are associated with the Olympics, can translate to positive feelings about the brand.

These results counter conventional wisdom, which says that convention is key and dual-typical ads are the ideal way to take advantage of mega-events. Indeed, the lackluster performance of dual-typical ads means they are never the best advertising strategy since they can confuse the consumer. The effects of the mechanisms and the winning performance of the event-typical ad were amplified with increased ad exposure.

What should marketing teams consider?

- Be creative! If there's a big event - sporting or otherwise - identify how to involve emblematic symbols in your marketing strategy, even if the event isn't directly related to your product or brand. This creativity can set your brand apart and make your ads more memorable.
- Event-typical ads work well even after brief exposure in print, outdoor, and digital formats, so it's a strategy worth pitching.
- Resist the urge to use dual-typical ads and prioritize event-typical ads, which could get the most consumer traction.
- Event sponsors should take note of how to adapt their marketing activities to the event to increase the impact of their sponsorship rather than using

standard ads.

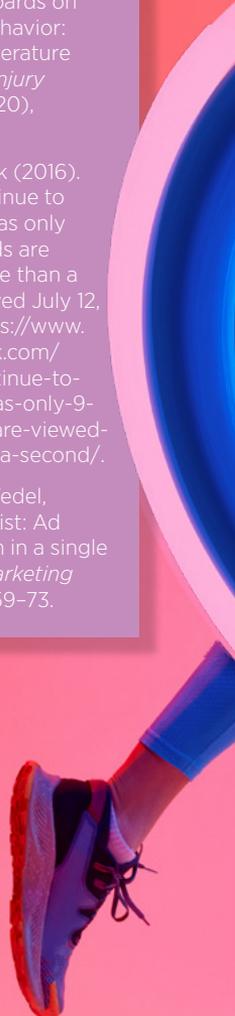
- When it comes to using iconic symbols, check the legalities - for example, the Olympic rings and scenes of the Eiffel Tower at night have strict copyright conditions. If you are an event sponsor, these legalities may not apply, but they still warrant a call to the legal department.
- It may not even be necessary to use registered symbols - Dr. Mazodier's research suggests that even more generic symbols (like a stadium or athletes competing), available to all, will do the trick.
- Event sponsors must identify the most representative symbols of an event and coordinate with the event's organizing committee to register these symbols (if doable) to create more effective, unique ads.

Today, we're bombarded with ads everywhere we go: on our phones, on the metro, on television... but how many do we really pay attention to? Dr. Mazodier and his colleagues offer a strategy to boost the impact of limited exposure in a saturated market by aligning advertising campaigns with mega sporting events. With the Olympic and Paralympic Games coming up fast, event-typical ads offer a way to score the winning goal to boost impact and drive consumer curiosity and positive feelings. Much like the teams playing this year, every play needs to count - and brands can tap into the crowd's energy and bring home the gold in consumer opinion. ■

Article written with Julia Smith,
Editor-in-Chief, ESSEC Knowledge

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GET A HOBBY! HOW LEISURE ACTIVITIES CAN HELP YOU AT WORK



Karoline Strauss is Professor of Management at ESSEC Business School. Her research focuses on employee performance, motivation, leadership, careers, and well-being. She is particularly interested in how people shape their own future, and the future of their organization, such as by contributing to innovation or sustainability. Her work has been published in journals including the *Journal of Management*, the *Journal of Applied Psychology*, and *Human Resource Management*. She serves on the editorial boards of the *Journal of Applied Psychology*, the *Journal of Management*, and the *British Journal of Management*.

You would be hard-pressed to find someone nowadays who denies the importance of work-life balance. Decades of research have shown that it is key for both work and personal outcomes, and companies are taking note, making it a common buzzword on job postings and in the workplace. But does it matter what you do with that balance and how you spend your time outside of work? Professor Karoline Strauss and her colleagues Ciara Kelly (Sheffield University Management School), John Arnold (Loughborough University) and Chris Stride (Sheffield University Management School) have shown in their paper¹ that indeed it does matter: their research highlights the positive impact of leisure activities on psychological resources that can help at work.

Enduring career success comes down to more than the sum of the work experience, education, and technical skills listed on a resume. Your personal resources - qualities like self-efficacy - are also critical in maintaining a sustainable career. Professor Strauss and her co-authors focused on a sustainable career as it means one in which the employee is “healthy, productive, happy and employable throughout its course”²

and that fits into, rather than takes over, an employee's life as a whole. Anyone who has ever struggled to switch off emails after work or wrestled between staying late at the office and meeting friends for dinner can recognize how this is easier said than done. Hence the focus here on personal resources that bolster a sustainable career: namely, self-efficacy. Self-efficacy refers to the strength of your conviction in your abilities. In this case, the researchers looked at it specifically in how it relates to your career, so employees' career-related self-efficacy. Why is this important to your career, you may ask? Given that the world of work is constantly in flux, having faith in your abilities is an invaluable asset when faced with changes and difficulties. It's not just us who are saying so, either: scores of papers have pointed to self-efficacy as invaluable for a whole host of work behaviours, like career satisfaction³ and employability⁴.

So how do leisure activities fit into this picture? And just what kind of leisure are we talking about here? Leisure activities run the gamut from binge-watching Netflix to rather more involved activities like dancing and singing in a choir. To account for this and see if the type of hobby you partake in is important, the



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researchers classified leisure activities in two ways: according to their seriousness and according to their similarity to the employee's work activities. The possibility of a leisure activity being 'serious' may seem counterintuitive, but what it means is that you consider it to be an important part of your identity, that it involves regular training, and that you intend to become good at the activity. Because skill acquisition implies mastery, it can help build self-efficacy through fostering confidence in your abilities. Since these experiences are taking place outside of work, they aren't associated with the risk of losing your job if something goes wrong, making for an opportunity to develop personal resources in a less stressful setting.

So far, we've painted a rosy picture of the benefits of serious leisure activities, but it's important to consider the potentially deleterious impact of leisure activities on your psychological resources. Can there be a downside to being very invested in a hobby? "That depends on how similar your work and hobby are," says Professor Strauss. Similarity was analyzed based on how the skillset, activities, and mental and physical demands of the hobby mapped onto those of the employee's job. This presents a conundrum, as it

may be beneficial to practice the same skills on your 'off time' as during your work, thereby enhancing your personal resources. On the other hand, by never really switching off from your work, you may end up more depleted and end up with detrimental consequences for your personal resources and your job. By looking at both leisure seriousness and work-leisure similarity, Professor Strauss and her colleagues were able to tease out this conundrum and figure out how you can best make your downtime work for you full time.

Using this approach and gathering monthly data from employees over seven months, they found that there are two patterns that can help optimize how you spend your downtime. If you spend more time on a hobby that's serious but dissimilar to your work, or not serious and similar to your work, you'll see an enhancement in your level of self-efficacy.

But beware of 'too much of a good thing': spending a lot of time on a hobby that's both serious and similar to your work tends to leave people with lower levels of self-efficacy compared to when they spent less time on their leisure activity of choice. This might be because people

found it quite taxing to be constantly depleted and not particularly effective. So a journalist who has a cooking blog on the side will actually experience decreased self-efficacy compared to an accountant with the cooking blog, or another journalist who likes to rock-climb in their spare time. This could be because engaging in different challenging activities exposes you to different experiences and builds up different resources. When you are drawing from the same resources during work and during your leisure time, you run the risk of exhausting yourself from the lack of recovery time if the activity is more challenging. Conversely, if your hobby is similar to your work but is more lowkey, it is not as taxing and doesn't pose the same threat to recovery, instead allowing you to build up self-efficacy.

We've known for a while now that it's important to have a life outside of work and that what you do with your life outside work has implications for your job. From this study, we can also learn that hobbies aren't just a means to kill time and have fun: they can also provide an opportunity to build up useful resources like self-efficacy that can translate to maintaining a sustainable career. It also suggests that there are

important nuances to be considered in the impact of leisure activities. This is useful for the employer looking for the best performance from their employees, the employee seeking to both enjoy themselves and have a successful career, and the would-be entrepreneur looking to turn their hobby into a business. The work doesn't stop here, however: it's also interesting to consider the impact of hobbies on outcomes like job performance and health, and whether the effects hold true for everyone, as these particular employees were largely childfree.

What can we do with this information? As an employee, consider how related your hobby of choice and job are, how challenging your hobby is, and how pivotal it is to your sense of self. If you find yourself answering "Very related, very challenging, and it defines who I am": you may want to put some extra effort into how you disconnect from both to avoid depleting your levels of self-efficacy. If, however, you answer either "Well, they are similar, but my hobby is quite relaxing, and I don't take it that seriously!" or "I put a lot of time and effort into my hobby and it's a huge part of me, but it bears zero similarity to my job": you're in luck, as this has the potential to increase your self-efficacy, which can bolster your career sustainability. As an employer, consider that everybody wins if you encourage your employees to feel fulfilled and seek out hobbies outside of work, rather than wanting employees' sole focus to be on their job. Finally, this may serve as a cautionary note to people looking to start a business based on their hobby: it might become too much of a good thing. Altogether, this highlights how important it is for researchers and employers alike to consider how life outside work influences life on the job, and how this relationship can be nuanced. And if anyone is looking for motivation to take up a new hobby, add this to the list: it can help your career! ■

Article written with Julia Smith,
Editor-in-Chief, ESSEC Knowledge

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JUST MAKE AN EFFORT? OR JUST PLAN FOR 'A GOOD TRIP'?



Fabrice Cavarretta is Associate Professor in Leadership and Entrepreneurship at ESSEC Business School. Coordinator of the PhD Entrepreneurship seminar, he developed various intrapreneurship programs through ongoing learning. His research focuses on logic used by managers to develop new firms, and on artificial intelligence applied to people and organizations analysis. Professor Cavarretta is the author of *Oui! La France est un paradis pour les entrepreneurs* (Plon, 2016) in which he tackles the specificity of national entrepreneurial ecosystems.

We've been conditioned to think that hard work and success go hand in hand: think Bill Gates declaring that he never took a day off in his twenties, Malcolm Gladwell's theory that you need to spend 10,000 hours doing something to become an expert, or parents worldwide telling their children to study hard so they can do well in school and get a good job. It seems intuitive that if you make an effort, your performance will reflect that. But what does science say? In a paper in *Organizational Dynamics*, Fabrice Cavarretta explores the subtle relationship of effort and performance.

He shows that when it comes to the science of organizational behavior, the ability for effort is not a given, nor does it even play a central role – developing motivation should take the spotlight. It can be hard to disentangle whether effort is a cause or a consequence in a given situation: does someone put in an effort because they enjoy the work and want to work with their colleagues (effort-as-a-consequence), or is it because they're trying to achieve a certain result (effort-as-a-cause)?

Dr. Cavarretta therefore suggests an alternative perspective: we can look at effort through a feedback loop: effort – performance – pleasure – motivation – effort. If this seems familiar, it's because it's akin to the mechanisms seen in other compulsive behaviors, some that are toxic such as drug abuse, others that are desirable such as a passion for music or for a sport. Such loops are common and can explain both harmful and beneficial spirals. This conceptualization of effort matters in particular to management and education, where leaders or educators seek to improve the performance of others.

Effort-Consequence instead of Effort-Cause

It's important to avoid mixing up the causality of effort, and to refrain from popular belief linking ability for effort to strong performance. In reality, one's ability to put in an effort typically arises as a consequence of something, not as a major cause.

To accomplish something, making an effort depends more on the right time and right place, rather than being the focal point. It's also a matter of a self-



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fulfilling prophecy: if we believe in our abilities to accomplish something, we are more motivated, then we perform better, which feeds our belief in our abilities, and so on and so forth, leading to an ongoing cycle of effort-as-a-consequence.

In addition, exerting effort is not always something that we can do over long periods of time, as it depletes our mental resources, and our initial motivations get exhausted when we rely mostly on them. Thereafter, relying on effort-as-cause fails after a while. This phenomenon is linked to our drive for pleasure: if we can't get a reward quickly, our brains lose interest. So how can we keep up our efforts even when the reward lies in the distant future?

Keeping up the good work: Behavioral loops and pleasure

The trick is to refrain from seeing effort as a cause or as a consequence, but rather as both. By seeing it this way, we can organize performance over the long term and generate an addictive loop, meaning a drive to repeat behaviors that are pleasurable by themselves. As the term "addictive loop" may have

negative connotations, Dr. Cavarretta prefers using the phrasing "planning for a good trip".

This approach counters the tendency to overestimate our ability for both making an undesired effort as well as resisting the temptation of alternative pleasurable activities. An addictive loop approach avoids those two obstacles by aiming for activities that generate pleasure, hence our desire to make an effort, hence more activities.

For example, would you say yes to being chased and beaten in the mud, on a Sunday afternoon? This is probably not desirable for most of us. Yet rugby players quite enjoy this during their weekend games with their friends. To them, it represents succeeding in something difficult and belonging to a team. Here, the effort of sustaining physical pain is a consequence – of loving rugby. By building a rich relationship with the activity, rugby players have established a performance-effort loop by which they will keep working hard to feel that enjoyment again.

To establish such a loop, one can follow a systematic approach: frame the activity so that you enjoy the process on the way

to achieving your outcome, and then 'enjoy the trip'. Here are a few tactics to support this approach; notice that we recycle many classical self-help tricks, in order to build a performance-effort loop.

Lessons for leaders

The role of leaders is to put in place a system of efforts-as-consequences, generating a spiral where outcomes get bigger and better as time goes on. Here's a non-exhaustive list of tips and tricks for leaders to motivate followers in the long term:

- Don't neglect indirect activities that create pleasure, like giving feedback and offering training sessions. Focusing only on the direct and painful activities can set people up to fail, since as mentioned earlier, it's hard to sustain effort over long periods of time.
- Avoid a "no pain, no gain" mentality. Accepting that tasks are "undesirable" focuses people on the forced aspect, so they seek a compensatory short-term reward elsewhere. This implies a loss of motivation, which could be avoided since most tasks can be made interesting.

- Grant people autonomy. When people choose and/or design their task, there's a greater chance that the effort-performance-pleasure-effort spiral will be triggered.
- Leverage psychological drivers. For instance, the Pygmalion effect, where people perform better just by feeling that their leader believes in them.
- Orient discreetly through a gentle nudge. Nudging uses subtle cognitive techniques to encourage individuals to behave in a certain way. Leaders can nudge their followers into the first round of effort, which then initiates the positive performance loops.
- Who's in control? You are: Each of us has an unconscious belief about how much we are in control, and it determines the actions we go on to initiate. Luckily, people can be trained to expand their sense of control to more situations.

- Social validation. We are social animals, so many activities emerge just because the actors got positive social, material, or financial feedback loops from their environment. Leaders should focus their followers' attention on sensing such information from the outside world: employees should pay attention to customers' feedback, students should focus on the usability of their new skill, etc.

Lessons for individuals

Similarly, individuals can consciously organize themselves into performance-effort loops. To do so, they can apply the above tricks to themselves, and consider a few additional ones:

- Build an identity: Our actions tend to align with how we perceive ourselves and how others perceive us. If you declare to yourself and to others that you are an entrepreneur, you are more likely to take action to launch your project.

- Make it a habit: your brain is a creature of habit, and science has therefore identified habit formation as a key for success.

- Be playful: Pleasure and play are linked, and if we frame something as a game, it can be more engaging and less depleting. In a professional context, this amounts to structuring a task to make it challenging, with clear metrics, but not overly so, a bit like a brain teaser.

- Break it down: If a large, long-term project is too overwhelming, break it into smaller tasks. This helps us enjoy the process and "earn" psychological rewards along the way as we check things off our list.



A word to the wise: avoid forced effort. When considering a task that requires an effort, what is the harm of just pushing directly to get the task done, like by giving a reward or punishment? For example, can there be a downside to incentivizing – e.g., using money -- a kid to learn their times tables?

Unfortunately, the brain then perceives the task as distasteful – since one needs to be paid to do multiplications, math is not fun! Subsequently, this child is more likely to lose interest in math. Paradoxically, this tactic works in the short term, as it gets the child to learn the times tables, but results in exactly the opposite of the long term objective, which is to become good at math.

Such extrinsic motivation schemes – where effort is forced by external rewards – have been shown to lead generally to undesirable outcomes. While we can't ignore them as short term tactics, they only work in limited contexts, and only if properly inserted in a scheme balanced with intrinsic motivations.

Planning for a good trip

Even with a wealth of management and behavioral research at our fingertips, the exact role of effort had been misread due to its complex looped relationship with performance.

Our civilization cherishes effort, laying social stigma onto those who don't seem to make enough of it, and overblown praise towards those who make a lot of it. What a misunderstanding, given that many performers expend effort mostly as a pleasure-driven consequence of contextual factors!

Instead of deluding ourselves about “just making more of an effort”, we should now consider performance as a long-term process built on behavioral spirals. Let us become experts at building those quasi-addictive loops where we end up appreciating every activity ... even and especially those that require effort! ■

*Article written with Julia Smith,
Editor-in-Chief, ESSEC Knowledge*

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TO DO OR NOT TO DO: HOW TO FRAME MORE AMBITIOUS GOALS SO YOU STICK TO THEM



Sonja Prokopec is Professor of Marketing and the Associate Dean of Faculty at ESSEC Business School in Singapore. Her research explores consumer judgment and decision-making. She is interested in understanding the factors that affect brand desire including brand management strategies and the interplay between primary and secondary markets. Her research has been published in the *Journal of Consumer Research*, *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, and *International Journal of Research in Marketing*, as well as in the press. She was the ESSECLVMH Chair Professor of Luxury Brand Management from 2010–2022. She advises companies from the luxury and automotive industry as well as start-ups. Prof. Prokopec received her PhD in Marketing from the University of Houston in 2007.

Have the Olympics inspired you to run a marathon? Take up tennis? Or just work out more in general? Thanks to research, we are pretty familiar with how setting these goals will impact your behavior and performance. We know less about what makes people decide the level of their goals: for example, deciding to work out twice or three times per week. Sonja Prokopec (ESSEC), Mirjam Tuk (Rotterdam School of Management, Erasmus University), and Bram Van den Bergh (Rotterdam School of Management, Erasmus University) looked at how people framed their goal-setting and the impact on their behavior.

We are constantly setting goal levels in our daily lives: exercising twice a week, saving 20% of our paycheck, attending 80% of our university lectures... By setting goal levels, we tend to be more likely to actually achieve those goals than if we had just set ourselves something like “I’ll save as much as possible this month”. This much is known to research: there is a large body of research examining the outcomes of setting goals. We know less about the determinants of setting goals, which Dr. Prokopec and her colleagues focused on in their recent paper, through exploring how to influence people to

set more ambitious goals. They looked at two different ways of framing goals: goal-consistent decisions (considering how many goal-consistent activities to engage in) vs. goal-inconsistent activities (considering how many goal-consistent activities to forego). For example, when planning your weekly workouts, you might say “I will work out twice this week” (goal-consistent framing) or “I will rest five nights this week” (goal-inconsistent framing). These work out to the same amount of workouts, but, as Prokopec and her colleagues argued, how you frame it can make all the difference. Why? Because if you make a decision that is inconsistent with your goals, this might make you feel negative emotions like guilt and regret, which will then boost your motivation for self-improvement and encourage you to set higher goal levels. To address that guilty feeling and feel like you’re not living up to your standards, you might then act in a way to compensate by addressing the source of those feelings: like if you skipped a training run and your goal is to run a half-marathon, then you are more likely to add another training session the following week to compensate.



If the end result (same number of workouts, same amount of money saved...) is the same, why would the framing matter? Because the very idea of deciding to forego the activities that are consistent with your goal, like going to the gym, can trigger those negative self-evaluations. To get rid of those negative emotions, you might feel more inclined to reduce those negative feelings through self-improvement, and then set yourself tougher goals (higher goal levels).

How it works

Over a course of seven studies, Prokopec and her colleagues looked at how people set goal levels in different situations, allowing them to test different aspects of their theory and using a mix of “real-world” and lab settings. They found that making goal-inconsistent decisions indeed made people more ambitious, and that this held regardless of the way the goal level was presented (an open-ended response box, a slider scale, or as a range). Situations that are less critical for goal achievement (skipping the gym vs. skipping taking the stairs) proved less likely to provoke those negative emotions mentioned above, and in those

situations, people were less likely to set higher goal levels despite exposure to goal-inconsistent framing. Similarly, if people were provided with some positive affirmation, they also were less likely to experience negative emotions and thus to set higher goals. Conversely, when people were making goal-consistent decisions, nor the relevance of the situation to their goal nor receiving positive affirmation impacted the goal level they set, demonstrating the link between making goal-inconsistent decisions and the emergence of negative emotions.

To rule out other explanations, Prokopec and her colleagues also looked at other possible drivers of the increased goal levels. When “choosing” or “rejecting” a decision (i.e. the decision to eat healthy healthy foods vs. skip unhealthy foods for goal-consistent actions, or to skip healthy foods vs. eat unhealthy foods for goal-inconsistent ones), the main factor impacting their goal levels was still whether or not the action was consistent with their goals, not if they were choosing or rejecting to do it. They also found that the amount of perceived effort didn’t impact the goal levels they set, even when the amount of effort was manipulated to be more or less in a lab

setting: the effect still boiled down to the influence of the framing.

So how exactly does making a goal-inconsistent decision drive us to push ourselves further? As mentioned, that kind of decision can provoke negative feelings about ourselves, such as feeling guilty, regretful, or disappointed about our decision. Prokopec and her colleagues found that these feelings subsequently produced a feeling of self-improvement, which then drove people to set higher goal levels for themselves. In other words, people sought to resolve those negative feelings with their drive to be better and therefore set themselves more ambitious goal levels.

Implications

Taken together, this series of seven studies gives insight into what makes people set higher goals for themselves. Making a decision that is inconsistent with your goals leads to negative emotions like regret and disappointment, producing a desire for self-improvement, and leading us to redouble our efforts and set higher goal levels in the aim of getting rid of those pesky negative feelings. This gives us insight into how

negative emotions impact how we act subsequently, and what we do to rid ourselves of them.

This knowledge can help individuals looking to achieve their goals with a better understanding of the factors influencing goal-setting and goal-achievement. It can also provide a guideline on how to frame your goals in a more achievable way, and how to use “failure” (goal-inconsistent decisions) as fuel. People may be tempted to give up after getting off track, and this research could help them rediscover their motivation and achieve their goals. Professionals, like services aiming to help consumers achieve their goals (like gyms or Weight Watchers), or public health professionals aiming to encourage the public to follow health guidelines, can also make use of this information. It could also help managers learn more about how to motivate their employees. By understanding how people set goal levels, we can nudge people toward their goals in a more effective way.

Raising the bar

How can you use this information to set higher goal levels and stick to them? Keep in mind the following:

1. When coming up with your goal, frame it in a goal-inconsistent manner, i.e. “I will spend 80% of my income this month” rather than “I will save 20% of my salary this month”.
2. Plan for goal-inconsistent activities in pursuit of your goal, like a “cheat day”.
3. Lean into negative feelings caused by making a goal-inconsistent decision and use them to fuel your goal achievement.
4. If you are helping someone else to achieve their goals (a service provider, for example, or a manager), recognize the power of a simple intervention. Framing an action as “goal-inconsistent” (choosing how many workouts to skip) can help push people to set higher goals. ■

*Article written with Julia Smith,
Editor-in-Chief, ESSEC Knowledge*

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WHY PHILOSOPHY AND SPORTS HAVE MORE IN COMMON THAN YOU THINK



Xavier Pavie is a philosopher, teaching professor at ESSEC Business School, program director at the International College of Philosophie (CIPh), and director of the iMagination center. He is also an associate researcher at the Institut de recherches philosophiques (IREPH), Université Paris Nanterre and responsible for the Philosophy for Responsible Innovation program with the Institut Catholique de Paris (ICP). With a master's degree in management and a master's degree in philosophy, he holds a Ph.D in philosophy with an HDR. He is also a graduate of the International Teachers Programme (HEC Paris) and the Global Colloquium (Harvard Business School). His research is dedicated to the philosophy of spiritual exercises, which he applies to innovation, imagination, lifestyle, and responsibility.

Do ancient philosophers and professional athletes have more in common than we think?

In his book *Exercices spirituels, leçons de la philosophie contemporaine* (Spiritual exercises - lessons from contemporary philosophy) ESSEC professor of philosophy Xavier Pavie explains that yes - much like ancient philosophy can be considered a spiritual exercise, sport can too. Let's dive in and explore!

Ancient philosophy as a spiritual exercise

What exactly does this mean? Dr. Pavie explains that ancient philosophy is a discipline that changes one's way of living and seeing the world, through changing how one speaks and acts. That tells us about the role of the mind in philosophy - but what about the body? It might not seem like your body plays a role in spiritual exercises, and indeed, ancient philosophers had an ambiguous position on the body. For example, Plato said in *Phaedo* that the body can distract us from reality and our search for the truth, because we can get carried away with passion. However,

then in the *Laws*, he talks about physical training - while it's mostly for preparing a soldier for war, he lists priorities as: 1) the gods, 2) the soul and 3) the body - our bodies can be strong, beautiful, and help us achieve balance and security. He places an emphasis on a strict gymnastics program - to be conducted alongside studying music and philosophy. He emphasizes this balance between body and soul in *Timaeus*. Taken together, Plato's thinking was that gymnastics can build a strong body - which helps in turn build a strong soul.

Plato wasn't the only ancient philosopher emphasizing the role of the body: Plato was a wrestler, and Chrysippe and Seneca were long-distance runners. Socrates himself said, "No man has the right to be an amateur in the matter of physical training. It is a shame for a man to grow old without seeing the beauty and strength of which his body is capable."

There's a natural link between physical exercise and the desire for self-improvement, including spiritual exercises. The literature abounds with metaphors comparing spiritual exercises to sport - like Marcus Aurelius writing





“The art of living is more like wrestling than dancing, in so far as it stands ready against the accidental and the unforeseen, and is not apt to fall.”

This suggests that self-improvement requires training, like a sport. Ancient philosophers may have seen it this way - but how did the school of thought evolve over time?

As simple as taking your first steps

In modern philosophy, there are fewer references, but you can find them if you know where to look. Nietzsche, for example, used long walks to reflect and meditate. Other philosophers, like Zarathoustra, also see walking as an ideal way to encourage new ways of thinking and getting a change of scenery. Physical exercise is also a way of developing self-control. It's a way to encourage introspection and go back to basics, since walking only requires your legs. Walking can also be a way to reconnect and commune with nature, another mechanism for transforming oneself. Above all, it's a way to connect with oneself - body and mind - that can be practiced by even those among us

who aren't pro athletes, since it's a more gentle workout.

Intense workouts for the body and mind

For other philosophers, both physical and spiritual exercises were meant to be intense. Walking is a step in the right direction - but intense sports are the way to feel fulfilled. Since they're also not possible for everyone, with our individual physical and lifestyle limitations, it's not a way to make fulfillment accessible to the masses. Indeed, this kind of dedication to a sport is often only available to an elite few.

Transform your mind to transform your body

Whether your activity of choice is a brisk walk or body-building, physical exercise can be a way to conduct spiritual exercises too. This was first pointed out by the ancient philosophers, and remains true in contemporary philosophy. Some philosophers even believe it's essential to exercise your body to properly exercise your mind. Integrating physical and

spiritual exercises allows us to know ourselves better, and thus engage in self-improvement. This allows for a more “holistic” transformation, integrating physical, aesthetic, and spiritual improvement. As Dr. Pavie summarizes in his analysis of sport and philosophy, it's important not to think of body and mind only as a dichotomy, but to think of our “spiritual body” and that transforming our body can be a way to transform ourselves. ■

Article written with Julia Smith,
Editor-in-Chief, ESSEC Knowledge

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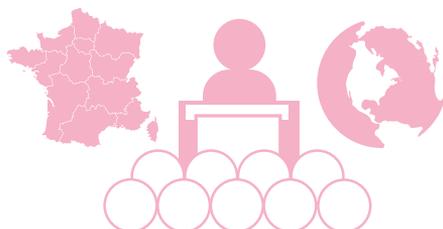
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