

Fencing is an original Olympic sport and one of the world's fastest sports as judged by the speed of the tip of the sword.

FOR YOUR
BUSINESS

by NORMAN KATZ

The martial art of fencing is strategic and tactical. It is a one-on-one competition of physical dexterity and mental analysis, and is sometimes described as “physical chess.” For these reasons and others, fencing offers entrepreneurs and business owners thoughtful lessons that can lead to better performance. Here are a few salient examples.

Don't forget your ground game

Fencing is more than knowing how to handle the sword: The sport relies upon mastery of footwork for balance, speed, tempo and distance. When I coach fencing, I begin with footwork.

Establishing the foundational data, processes, software systems and supply chain partnerships ensures that a business has the necessary ground game in place in order to execute the uninterrupted delivery of its products or services to its customers.

Pick what works for your repertoire

As a fencer develops their style, the result is that not every attack and defense move becomes a part of an individual fencer's catalog, especially at the outset.

You need to decide what products and/or services you can succeed at initially, and focus on excelling in this area. With experience and success, more complicated moves—or new items and amenities—can be developed and included.

Achieve your goals to reach your objectives

In differentiating between goals and objectives, I use the sports match



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analogy: The first person or team to score the most goals (points) before the end of play (except in golf) is the winner. The objective is to win. How? By scoring more goals first.

Therefore, goals are more tactical, as they have a shorter perspective, versus objectives, which are more strategic and have a longer outlook. The more personal goals are, the more attainable they are.

Think it through

Fencing teaches athletes to think two moves (or more) ahead. Understanding the ramifications of actions taken, or those avoided, is a critical thinking skill that leaders also require.

Gather the applicable internal and external people with the qualifications and experience to ensure that all possibilities and options are presented and discussed. Make decisions in the best interest of the organization. ■

Don't get foiled

What business leaders
can learn from the
sport of fencing

COURTESY OF NORMAN KATZ



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Better execution

Business is not a sport, it is a competition, but it need not be a bruising fight. A winning fencer, for example, is not always the one who is

tallest or has the longest reach. Successful businesses, like champion fencers, must self-assess and analyze the challenging forces at the speed of competition.

Fencers use skinny

swords, not thick, broad swords. In fencing, it's not about bludgeoning the opponent; it's about outscoring the opponent faster.

That's better execution, and that's smarter business.—NK