



Marcus Goodarzi's advice for the corporate world is to open up and engage all the senses, e.g. when giving a speech. "You have to feel, taste, and smell what's going on. If you focus too much on making your points, you lose everybody in the room."
Photo: Laura Bentsen

Translator: Bente Pedersen

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World Champion teaches executives to change gears

Becoming a champion takes the right kind of focus and the right mental gear—for top executives as for athletes—says Denmark's world champion in karate

■ PERFORMANCE
By Gro Hoyer Thielst

This week Marcus Goodarzi is on the karate WC competition mat. He's been there before and won the gold medal. This time he must prove his ability to referee karate at the top level and find the best junior and cadet athletes in the world. That task does not differ greatly from what top executives—and others having to perform—face.

"You have to know when to keep a very specific focus and when to defocus. It's all about maintaining the right interplay between being

completely focused and having a broader outlook. Humans are not meant to focus specifically on one thing for a considerable period. In that case the body pays a very high price in the form of stress, depression, and chronic fatigue," says Marcus Goodarzi who, according to his résumé, must have a very goal-oriented disposition and manages to fully utilize the 'Open Focus' theory which he practices and teaches.

At 21, Marcus Goodarzi moved to Denmark from Iran with his first National Championship medal in the bag, believing that he would live off of his sport. But his black

belt didn't translate in Denmark. He had to get back in line and start over in karate. Marcus Goodarzi started studying to become a physiotherapist and was eventually accredited to fight with his black belt. Since then he's won medals at National, European, and World Championships, coached the national team, founded three karate clubs and topped it off with a Master's degree in Sports and Welfare. Today he's an external lecturer at University of Copenhagen, guest speaker and mental coach to executives and athletes, but mainly works as a physiotherapist.

"The best athletes and business executives in the world are the ones who are able to shift gears spontaneously from completely focused to unfocused. Making a crucial decision, preparing

a speech or presentation necessitates deep concentration on that one specific thing," says Marcus Goodarzi.

Whichever uniform he's wearing, his main interest is preventing stress and making people aware of their attention.

"People who do fire walking don't have thicker soles under their feet than others. They just have the ability to shift their attention," he adds.

Whether Marcus Goodarzi can practice what he preaches is up to the top panel of referees for the next few days. His job will be to be open to impressions prior to the matches, but once they begin, to be sucked into the moment of fighting between opposing nations. It's the stillness in the eye of the hurricane. grth@borsen.dk