

# A Journey Training for an Ironman and Marathon: A Testament to Leadership and Discipline

## Background

As an ambitious professional, Steven decided to challenge himself by completing both an Ironman triathlon and multiple state marathons. These endurance events require exceptional physical and mental fortitude, mirroring the qualities needed for effective leadership in the business world.

## The Challenge

### Ironman Triathlon

- 2.4-mile (3.86 km) swim
- 112-mile (180.25 km) bicycle ride
- 26.2-mile (42.2 km) run

### Marathon

- 26.2-mile (42.2 km) run

## Key Disciplines and Leadership Characteristics

### **1. Goal Setting and Vision**

Steven began by clearly defining his objectives. This included creating a vivid image of crossing the finish line for both events which aligns with Jack Welch's philosophy that good business leaders *"create a vision, articulate the vision, passionately own the vision, and relentlessly drive it to completion"*.

### **2. Strategic Planning**

Steven developed a comprehensive training plan for both events, working backward from his supplemental goals for times, etc. This mirrors the business practice of setting both long-term objectives and short-term milestones.

### **3. Consistency and Dedication**

Steven committed to daily training, making it non-negotiable; injury and sickness were the only exceptions. This consistency in preparation reflects the leadership quality of leading by example and demonstrating both grit and unwavering commitment to one's goals.

### **4. Adaptability and Resilience**

During his training, Steven faced numerous challenges, including fear of open-water swimming for the Ironman and the fact that he wasn't an outstanding swimmer. Therefore, he had to learn to adapt both his training and mindset which demonstrated the resilience required in both endurance sports and leadership roles. As a leader, you will be challenged and you will hit obstacles that you must address and have the resilience to complete.

### **5. Time Management and Prioritization**

Balancing training with work and personal life, he had to excel at time management. He focused on the five most important aspects of his life, including both training and work, mirroring the prioritization skills crucial for effective leadership. Training for an Ironman required 20+ hours a week of training for all 3 disciplines while also working a full-time job, requiring both prioritization and time management both critical to leadership roles.

### **6. Continuous Learning and Improvement**

He embraced feedback from coaches and training partners, constantly seeking to improve his performance. This openness to learning and growth is a key characteristic of successful leaders. Leaders have to recognize that feedback is a gift. Fundamentally, it helps you to grow and improve both how to engage with problems but also how you grow professionally.

### **7. Mental Toughness**

Both the Ironman and the marathon required him to develop exceptional mental fortitude. He learned to push through discomfort and maintain focus during long periods of physical stress, skills that translate directly to handling pressure in leadership positions. As a senior executive, you are challenged every day with issues and stress. You develop skills on how to cope and how to best solve issues but also fundamentally, strengthen your mental toughness and grit.

### **8. Team Building and Support**

He recognized the importance of having a support team, including coaches and training partners. He can say that without his training partners and coaches, completing marathons and the Ironman would not have been possible. There are many long training days where you train multiple disciplines on the same day. Being physically tired is completely normal. The days when you feel you cannot train more is when you appreciate your team and coaches the most.

Recognizing that you depend on others in the office reflects the leadership understanding that success often depends on building and leveraging a strong team.

### Outcomes and Leadership Lessons

1. Long-term Perspective: Completing these endurance events taught me the value of maintaining a long-term focus, crucial for strategic leadership.
2. Resilience in the Face of Adversity: The challenges faced during training and races enhanced his ability to persevere through difficult business situations.
3. Confidence and Credibility: Achieving these ambitious goals boosted his self-confidence and earned him admiration, enhancing his leadership presence.
4. Discipline and Consistency: The rigorous training regimen instilled a level of discipline that carried over into Steven's professional life, improving his consistency in pursuing business objectives.
5. Stress Management: Learning to manage physical and mental stress during endurance events improved Steven's ability to handle high-pressure situations at work.
6. Goal Achievement Process: The step-by-step process of working towards these athletic goals provided a template for approaching complex business challenges.

### **Conclusion**

Steven's journey through Ironman and marathon training exemplifies how the disciplines and characteristics required for endurance sports closely align with effective leadership. The mental toughness, strategic planning, consistency, and resilience developed through these challenges significantly enhanced my leadership capabilities, providing him with a unique edge in the business world. Additionally, remember that great leaders have strong teams to help them especially when the problem is daunting.