

World Cup - Business Analogies?

“and the world cup final for sales conversions is between....”

- There’s no one right way to manage, but consistency is important
- Star or team?
- Don’t ignore the back room boys.
- You can have too much motivation!
- Behaviour...and psychology matter.

As the world cup approaches we’ll see truckloads of articles comparing business to football: are you a striker or a defender?; are you a team player ?

You may be interested in football but should you pay any attention to these comparisons? Approach these articles (including this one) with caution; running a marketing campaign or cold calling are not the same as playing in front of 100,000 delirious fans. That said, you can sometimes get insights into business from thinking about another area like football

What makes a great manager?

Alex Ferguson, Jose Mourinho, Sam Allardyce and Arsene Wenger do their work in very different ways. There’s no ONE right way to manage. The key is consistency. Whatever you think of those four, they’re consistent in what they do. Look for this when you’re recruiting managers

Do you need star performers or a perfect team?

It’s a false choice. The trick is to get a great team which includes star performers – and then get them to respect and support each other without jealousy and backbiting. The best teams include different types of people who don’t just respect but value differences. Holland invented total football: they were a great team and Johann Cruyff, one of the great stars of the modern era, was at the centre of it. Your client company culture can have a huge impact on who is an acceptable recruit. Is it a jealous, back-biting place or does it value variety ?

The Backroom Boys

Don’t be seduced by talk of “backroom functions” implying that certain jobs are less important than others. Strikers get all the glory but you need a John Terry or Rio Ferdinand (remember, even full backs and administrators can be moody). Value your own receptionist, accountant and IT department and make sure your clients value theirs.

Pump It Up

You can get too motivated. Hard to believe but it's an established psychological fact. It's a particular problem if you're measured by sales targets. Get too pumped up and your performance falls of. Watch those twitchy, "up-for-it", all-star teams fall apart in a game. Getting the right balance between motivation and cool consideration is a management art. Watch for this when recruiting sales staff.

Transfer Deals

As recruiters, the problems of signing new players must strike a chord with you. One wrong person can ruin a team's performance if he gets sent off or acts the prima donna. Football managers tend to recruit on ability ("He's the most skilled young player I've ever seen") but the hero becomes a zero when he doesn't fit in. You have the chance to test ability AND the applicants behaviour - which means you're more likely to get it right.

Sports Psychology

Thomas International's assessments can help you find out about peoples behaviour in teams, as solo performers and as managers. But you may be sceptical that psychology has much to do with business – let alone sport.

Just before Arsenal's Champion's league second leg against Real Madrid, Swedish midfielder Freddie Ljungberg revealed that Arsene Wenger brought in a sports psychologist. He said: "...yes, the boss brought someone in to talk to us briefly. In Madrid we helped each other so much, we tackled, we ran for each other and maybe we haven't done so much of that in the past."

In America a lot of professional sports managers studied psychology: it's seen as a crucial part of the job.

As we said at the beginning, let's not push this too far but watching SKY SPORT down the local may give you a few skills you can use at work.