

Christian Marcolli Discusses His New Book, *Spotlight on Performance: Executive Inspiration, Volume II*

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What's the secret to sustaining individual success? The truth is, it transcends any one person. Reaching and maintaining peak performance depends on building a trusted network, creating an inspired, committed team, and focusing on friends and family. Sustained success isn't just working hard 24/7, it's allowing for moments of recovery, play, connection, and truly enjoying life. But for most top performers, particularly in business, achieving that kind of equilibrium between the personal and the professional can seem improbable at best. Given the endless pressures on someone running an organization, taking time for a simple living may seem pointless. As one global performance explains, it's anything but.

In his new book, *Spotlight on Performance: Executive Inspiration, Volume II*, Christian Marcolli – an experienced global performance coach – unlocks the secrets of achieving and sustaining excellence. He's helped clients, from Olympic champions to CEOs, learn to not only reach top levels of performance but learn how to enjoy their lives while doing it. He delves into the critical strategies that

help top performers protect their energy to avoid burnout, becoming more effective, more efficient, and happier. The bonus? Inspired teams, supportive friends and family, a vibrant network of allies and colleagues, and a sense of buoyancy that carries through nearly any challenge – on the court or in the boardroom.

Grit Daily: You've worked with athletes and CEO, literally from the Olympics to the boardroom, to help them achieve an incredibly high level of sustained performance. What's the real connection between sports and business? It seems like it's far deeper than simply an urge to win.

Elite sports has plenty of important lessons for business leaders. Since they compete on a very public stage, we can all see and admire the qualities that enable great athletes to triumph, often under intense pressure. In general, they have a mindset and determination that transfer into business – and top achievers in the business world tend to have a drive and a focus that translate into sports.

In each field, a high performer has to make a tremendous commitment in time and energy. Often, they question the best way to succeed. In my keynote talks, the issue of teamwork comes up frequently. When we're talking about the success of world-class sports stars, such as Roger Federer, I often get asked by business leaders how much great individual performance comes down to teamwork. The answer is probably much more than you think. Roger's team was critical to his success over the entire length of his career. His long-term tennis coach, Severin Lüthi, has done such an amazing job to make the outstanding achievements possible. So while success in business as well as sports tends to be seen as an individual effort, that's a superficial view. Just like there's a dedicated team supporting a top athlete, business leaders need to develop and lean on an amazing support team as well.

Grit Daily: Post-pandemic, the nature of organizations has brought a whole new set of pressures to business leaders, such as handling market velocity, distributed workforces, digital transformation, and endless disruptions. How does your book, *Spotlight on Performance: Executive Inspiration, Volume II*, help executives succeed in this new climate?

Whether or not you've just returned to today's demanding world of work, we're experiencing an incredible intensity in modern business life. The pressures on leaders now are greater than they've ever been: an "always-on" business culture, globalization, AI, and advances in communication technology that leave leaders further exposed to constant demands.

Even before COVID-19, these pressures were building. Now they're even greater. So, volume II of *Spotlight on Performance* includes the most effective strategies for executives to mitigate these pressures, cope with this level of intensity, and grow personally as well as professionally. For instance, properly disconnecting at the end of the working day can help achieve inner calm, a clear head, and the right frame of mind to connect with families and friends and sleep better – which is so critical to

sustained high performance. Or learning how to transition between the work at home and gain control over technology. It's really about developing behavioral patterns to sustain high performance at the very top.

Grit Daily: What are the biggest hurdles for ambitious entrepreneurs and executives trying to sustain their own continued excellence in the business world?

The scale of the challenges at or near the top in the corporate world is tremendous, including:

- A highly competitive global business environment
- Constant commercial and technological change
- Adverse economic circumstances
- High pressure to perform
- Intense stakeholder scrutiny
- Enormous workload

Then there are the challenges specific to each industry or organization. Add to that the need to create cohesive teams – sometimes in a virtual or hybrid format, communicate clearly with everyone, and build trust. At times, it can make for a very lonely life, as many leaders have revealed to me. When ambitious entrepreneurs and leaders don't share their heavy burden or face their challenges and don't build support teams and alliances to help, they can not only get very lonely, they face the risk of getting completely exhausted.

Grit Daily: Talk about the intersection between personal and professional success. So many big names in the business world are associated with a nonstop, above-all-else work ethic. How does happiness at home really translate into a high level of performance?

Business leaders tend to neglect their private lives. They tend to be incredibly dedicated to and preoccupied by their work, with "unfinished business" constantly occupying their minds. When with family and friends, they may be mentally absent because they're distracted by work-related issues.

I recommend to my clients that they deliberately invest in and build up strong support at home, whatever home means to them. Having a network of people outside work who support and love you unconditionally is immensely important to feel safe, protected, and at peace. It allows you to let go and recover more efficiently during periods of massive stress. Often you can rely on the "home" people for that honest, constructive feedback that helps keep things in perspective.

Grit Daily: There's been a lot of discussion about the importance of a better work-life balance for leaders and executives, as well as everyone else. Do you think that's realistic for the C-suite, given their roles?

Not in the conventional sense. Life on the top is different. What's crucial is working on strategies that enable leaders and executives to sustain their energy, focus, confidence, and level of performance. I've worked with so many senior leaders and executives in parallel with my work with world-class athletes, offering them personalized coaching in numerous techniques to improve their performance at work and their lives outside of work.

As a result, they have significantly more energy, are much more engaged at and outside work, are more productive, focus on the most relevant and value-adding activities, and can lean on routines that allow them to completely recover during stressful periods. Furthermore, they have learned to take deliberate actions to manage relationships better at work and at home. Overall, they're better able to harmonize their professional and private lives in a very fulfilling way.

What does that look like? Over 80% of executives improve their ability to sustain high performance and see improved personal health, fitness, and well-being. They're better able to harmonize their professional and private lives – in other words, that critical work-life balance. Further, many have achieved promotions and other forms of success.

Grit Daily: You've been coaching for a long time and have likely witnessed athletes and leaders in crash-and-burn situations. How can anyone get back on their feet after a disastrous failure and regain their confidence?

One of my favorite examples is Olympic champion skier Dominique Gisin, who fought back from serious injuries to win gold at the 2014 Winter Olympics. Then, when she retired from pro skiing, she extended her renewed drive and confidence into new areas: a university degree in astrophysics, a pilot's license, and an ambassadorship with the Red Cross. She was voted one of the five most inspiring women in Switzerland. The strategies we worked on translate to business and personal lives as well, such as:

- Set big goals. Think about what you really want to achieve. What does success look like for you? What will make you feel fulfilled? For Dominique, that was reaching her potential, first as a professional athlete, winning the Olympic gold, and then re-inventing herself professionally and giving back to people in need.
- Deal with your fears. Dominique recognized what was holding her back and worked extremely hard on herself to build a winning mindset. Even the greatest champions put in a lot of effort to get comfortable with what initially doesn't feel right. Dominique will admit there were times when she just wanted to give up. Instead, she dug deep.
- Work hard on yourself. Even the greatest champions put in a lot of effort to get comfortable with what initially doesn't feel right. Dominique will admit there were times when she just wanted to give up. Instead, she dug deep.
- Build an amazing team. Dominique could not have succeeded without the skills and support of others around her. So, seek out the experts who you can fully trust and who can help you excel.

Grit Daily: Since your practice is global, do you see a difference in attitudes between executives in the U.S. and executives in Switzerland or the EU, for instance?

Actually, our attitudes are more global than ever before. The notion of a “global village” is now reality. We’re part of a huge online marketplace, an ever-expanding social network, a more streamlined work environment, and business colleagues on another continent as accessible as those in the office next door. Technology and AI have revolutionized the way we communicate and interact. I see more common ground and more of a need to build a solid global culture. With so many organizations depending on global teams, what matters most is genuine, effective teamwork, where diverse personalities, talents, and ideas are encouraged, no matter the location.

Grit Daily: What’s the one single piece of advice you want executives and leaders to follow today?

What matters to me most is enabling people to aim high and achieve their goals – not just professionally, but in life overall – and to do it in a healthy, enjoyable, and even playful way. This is possible, and nobody should settle for less. Some of that involves embedding new behaviors. Whatever that behavior is, it’s going to take about three months of daily application to see a difference. Most people give up before that because they don’t see the positive impact or effect yet, and they may even feel worse temporarily as they’re putting so much effort in without seeing real results. But it’s the same for everyone. Make sure to regularly connect the new behavior with your deeper purpose and activate your willpower. If you do that for three months, every day, no matter how you feel, the positive effects will start to click into place.

Ritualizing a behavior in this way makes all the difference. What began as a mental exercise will now “stick,” becoming a massive benefit to you and to those around you at work and even at home.

Grit Daily: Is there anything you’d like to add that we haven’t asked about?

Only this: ultimately, it’s up to you to take responsibility for enriching not only your own life but the lives of the people around you, not only at work but also in private space. Learn the techniques that help. Practice them until they’re a part of your daily behaviors. It will make all the difference in how much you can enjoy performing at the very top and living a fulfilled life in general.

[Dr. Christian Marcolli](#) is a global expert on sustainable high performance who coaches executives, business leaders, market-leading brands, and elite athletes to achieve outstanding results. His firm, Marcolli Executive Excellence, focuses on fostering leadership excellence, driving team effectiveness, and creating organizational health. He’s an in-demand speaker, award-winning author, University of Zurich-trained psychologist, and former pro soccer player.

His latest book, [*Spotlight on Performance: Executive Inspiration, Volume II*](#) (Atlas Elite Publishing Partners, November 2024), is a guidebook on achieving peak performance for executives and athletes.



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