

Steven P. MacGregor

**SUSTAINING  
EXECUTIVE  
PERFORMANCE**

**HOW THE NEW SELF-MANAGEMENT  
DRIVES INNOVATION, LEADERSHIP,  
AND A MORE RESILIENT WORLD**

# Praise for *Sustaining Executive Performance*

“The best companies make the most of their most precious resource—human capital. *Sustaining Executive Performance* offers concrete guidance and a compelling rationale on how to achieve that. Critically, MacGregor shows that the responsibility for health and performance rests with ourselves and that this enhanced self-management enables us to exert a positive influence on those around us to create high-performing organizations.”

—Bernardo Quinn, Global Chief Human Resources Officer, Telefonica

“Here at last is a book that hardwires sustainability to the individual and shows clearly the way in which we may all contribute to a future world that is about more and better, not less and compromised. MacGregor presents a vision of executive health that is immediately applicable, practical, and grounded in sound business rationale—thereby making a significant contribution to sustainable value creation for the self, enterprise, and society.”

—Peter Lacy, Managing Director and Partner, Strategy & Sustainability Services, Asia Pacific Region, Accenture

“How you execute, and feel, as a leader changes throughout your career and is dependent upon many factors in your work and life. *Sustaining Executive Performance* brings together historic wisdom and modern research to set out the basis for sustained and effective leadership. MacGregor presents a compelling case for looking after one’s self that will sit with other critical business requirements, for even the most skeptical of minds. This book provides sound advice and reasoning on how to tune your body and mind to provide improved performance throughout your career.”

—Andrew Fenton, Vice President, Oracle UK, Ireland and Israel

“In our ever-complex world, organizations need to be thinking about all aspects of the health of their business. Steven MacGregor’s book shines a light on the three most important: employees, customers, and the community. In *Sustaining Executive Performance*, MacGregor provides the tools to help leaders at all levels of a business achieve balance and lasting success.

—Nathan Waterhouse, Cofounder and Managing Director of IDEO’s Collaborative Innovation Platform, [OIEngine.com](http://OIEngine.com)

“*Sustaining Executive Performance* offers today’s leaders the foundations for developing a new model of lifelong, personal advancement. Grounded in MacGregor’s personal experiences leading in the boardroom and on the trail, the SEP model can be integrated into one’s daily routine immediately.”

—William Cockayne, Ph.D., Lecturer at Stanford University and creator of the University’s Foresight Engineering program

# **Sustaining Executive Performance**

**How the New Self-Management Drives  
Innovation, Leadership,  
and a More Resilient World**

**Steven P. MacGregor**

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Printed in the United States of America

First Printing December 2014

ISBN-10: 0-13-398700-0

ISBN-13: 978-0-13-398700-3

Pearson Education LTD.

Pearson Education Australia PTY, Limited.

Pearson Education Singapore, Pte. Ltd.

Pearson Education Asia, Ltd.

Pearson Education Canada, Ltd.

Pearson Educación de Mexico, S.A. de C.V.

Pearson Education—Japan

Pearson Education Malaysia, Pte. Ltd.

Library of Congress Control Number: 2014952345

*To Pamela and Harry,  
who provide the day-to-day joy and love that keep me moving.*

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# Foreword

Executive health is an oxymoron. Or at least, it used to be. When I first started working in the field more than 28 years ago at Stanford University Medical Center, the incidence of worsening health in line with greater seniority was commonplace. Senior executives in key decision-making positions in all cultures were proactive at work and reactive about their personal health. Heart attacks, strokes, diabetes, and depression were accepted by the business leaders as “part of the territory,” and people suffered and even died needlessly.

Thanks to tireless efforts and insights of the likes of Dr. Steven P. MacGregor, attitudes and health profiles of business leaders have changed. My own case study of the Mr. Timebomb scenario—which I have used in my teaching to raise an awareness of the need for change in professional business life at premier business schools, such as INSEAD, Cambridge, Skolkovo, IMD, and CEIBS—is starting to fade, slowly but surely.

In *Sustaining Executive Performance*, MacGregor makes a significant contribution to keeping us moving on the right road. He starts with a notion of physical health that extends to the mental level, ever more required in a world of 24-7 connectivity and distraction addiction. He connects ancient wisdom, some established medical science (noted over the years by myself and others), as well as the latest research, which shows why such timeless wisdom existed in the first place.

The key legitimizing process for the busy, skeptical executive is laid bare—so keeping us moving on the right road of executive health. But perhaps more importantly, MacGregor shows how this road connects with others on the map. By conceptualizing executive health as personal sustainability and then linking this to business and societal sustainability, we see the system in which the executive operates. Whether for the experienced manager or manager-in-training, here is a book that shows the connection points of self-leadership—to powerfully affect leadership of the many things that surround the self, for both the manager and leader of today, as well as for tomorrow.

We are all truly indebted to Dr. MacGregor for his seminal work.

**Dr. Michael B. McGannon, M.D.**

Medical Director, Leaders Health Challenge (LHC)

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# Acknowledgments

What looks neat and tidy in hindsight is anything of the sort. My life and work the past ten years has been a roller-coaster ride, during which I have shared part of that journey with a number of fantastic friends. Planning the journey is important, but it can take you only so far. Sticking to one's beliefs, values, and, dare I say, gut feeling takes you the rest of the way—as long as those fantastic friends are there to provide the fuel.

Sincere thanks to the “gatekeepers” during the journey: to Peppe Aurricchio, an innovator and risk taker, and the rest of my IESE friends and allies—particularly Idunn Jonsdottir and Josep Valor, who lead the best executive education team in the world. To Rory Simpson, a pioneering Scot who gave me the confidence to keep going on a different path, and who is developing Telefónica University into a place of transformation and inspiration for thousands around the world. On my first visit there, I remember remarking that it had “good air,” and three years later I believe the same, with so much exciting potential ahead. To Katherine Semler and the rest of the talented team there, thank you for making my visits such a joy.

To Pablo Cardona and Juan Fernandez at CEIBS, and Mike Wade and Bill Fischer at IMD, it has been a privilege to work with you and see firsthand the powerful development you affect in leaders around the world. To Anne-Marie Hughes and Richard Cox, guiding me from my University sporting career through to the design of my first executive programs, you have both positively changed so many people in all walks of life and will continue to do so. To Simon Pickard and Nigel Roome, my good friends in the sustainability field who always guarantee excellent conversation. Thanks also to Ferran Bruguera and Daniel Solé, whose creative skills have made such a difference.

My thanks to chapter reviewers and interviewees Howard Stupp, Paul Mathieson, Lucy Kimbell, José María Álvarez-Pallete, Nuria Oliver, Elena Roura, Doug Gillon, Sergi Bayod, Brian Cookson, and Lydia Price. Your openness and generosity of time has made the book better. Thanks also to Michael McGannon for penning the Foreword. Your work provided inspiration when I was first looking for traction in a

complicated market. To the Pearson team for their expertise, guidance, and hard work: Elaine Wiley, Barbara Hacha, Sarah Kearns, and Charlotte Maiorana, with whom I have the pleasure of working for a second time.

To Pamela, your creative confidence has transmitted to my own work and given it the best chance of success. To my brother Stuart, thanks for providing the emergency office and making great coffee, and the rest of my family and friends for providing energy, laughs, and inspiration during the “not so hot” Scottish summer of 2014. Six weeks I won’t forget and an absolute privilege to be able to write this part of the ride.

—Barcelona, November 2014

# About the Author

**Steven P. MacGregor**, PhD, is Founder of The LAB (Leadership Academy of Barcelona), which helps to develop talent from the world's top enterprises in the fields of executive health and performance, design thinking, and sustainable innovation. Since 2010, he has worked with more than 5,000 executives from around the globe, through talks, workshops, and coaching, and has taught more than 250 classes at the best-ranked business schools and universities, including IESE, IMD, CEIBS, and Pompeu Fabra. An international-level duathlete, he has trained with Olympic athletes, Tour de France cyclists, and Ironman champions. A native of Motherwell, Scotland, he lives in Barcelona with his wife, Pamela, and sheepdog, Harry, and can be found on a frequent basis running up and down the mountain overlooking the city.

## Stronger, Faster, Smarter

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*In order for man to succeed in life, God provided him with two means, education and physical activity. Not separately, one for the soul and the other for the body, but for the two together. With these means, man can attain perfection.*

—Plato

*The Games of Olympiad V had just finished, and the star competitors were making their way around the stadium during the closing ceremony. The Stockholm crowd roared their appreciation and tried to pick out their heroes. Sixteen days of competition<sup>1</sup> had yielded dozens of gold-medal winning performances and new Olympic champions: the faster sprints, the higher and longer jumps, the amazing feats of strength. And of course, who could forget the following from Georges Hohrod and M. Eschbach:*

O Sport, you are Joy! At your behest, flesh dances and eyes smile; blood races abundantly through the arteries. Thoughts stretch out on a brighter, clearer horizon. To the sorrowful you can even bring salutary diversion from their distress, whilst the happy you enable fully to savour their joie de vivre.

**T**he Olympic Gold Medal for Literature. The nine-verse “Ode to Sport” was highly praised by the judging panel: *“which without dispute appeared to us to carry away the literature contest, in our eyes has the great merit that it is of the exact type that we sought for the competitions in the matter of inspiration. It emanates as directly as*



*possible from the idea of sport. It praises sport in a form that to the ear is very literary and very sporting.*” They went on to say that it was “*full of merit everywhere*” and “*impeccable from the point of view of logic and from the point of view of harmony.*” So who were these new Olympic champions? Hohrod and Eschbach were pseudonyms for Baron Pierre de Coubertin, the founder of the modern Olympic Games. A small man, athletically fit, always well dressed, with a strong moustache and lively, bright eyes, he was the president of the International Olympic Committee at the time and the driving force of those first Games. We do not know for sure if the judging panel was aware of the real identity of Hohrod and Eschbach, which were actually neighboring villages near the birthplace of de Coubertin’s wife, Marie; neither do we know when or how de Coubertin was presented with his medal. Because these were the first Games of the Olympiad in which arts competitions composed of architecture, sculpture, painting, music, and literature would create new Olympic Champions in addition to the runners, jumpers, and throwers, perhaps de Coubertin was nervous about a low turnout from the arts community. Although the incorporation of the arts was part of his original intention since the first modern Games in 1896, the first two Olympics were merely a matter of survival. He was particularly embarrassed by the Paris Games, his “home” games of 1904, which were overshadowed by the Paris World Fair of the same year. The first major attempt at integrating the arts in the Rome Games of 1908 suffered a false start because of problems encountered by the Rome Committee in staging them, and further, because of the lack of time that their eventual late replacement, London, was afforded. And so to 1912, and 16 years into a still vulnerable Olympic Movement, de Coubertin was not to be denied, not by a deeply reticent Stockholm Committee who believed that art could not be judged in the same way as a running race or jump, nor by the Greek delegation of the day who wanted Athens to be the permanent base of the Games every four years. Perhaps when receiving the news of the medal, yet surely when writing “An Ode to Sport,” de Coubertin would have reflected on the famous Greek artists who won titles in the Ancient Games, through long years of physical training, intellectual debate, and reflection, which marked the gymnasia of the day. Dotted in and around the public libraries and business *Agora* of Athens and elsewhere, men of all ages would go to train their bodies

and their minds. Lectures on philosophy and art would take place in addition to the physical training and competition.

And so he wanted his modern conception of Olympism,<sup>2</sup> like the Ancient Greeks who awarded Olympic Champion Laurels for sculpture, music, and literature in addition to feats of strength and physical prowess, to promote a holistic form of human development. His struggle to integrate the arts within the Games was symptomatic of the struggle that de Coubertin had experienced the past 30 years of his life in establishing the modern movement. Like any athlete, his was a long journey of focus, sacrifice, and the quest for progress and achievement. The starting pistol could be viewed as his lecture at the Sorbonne in 1892, in which he made the first public call to reestablish the Olympic Games, a lecture which, on the whole, was received badly, but would only temporarily derail a then-despondent de Coubertin.

In that lecture, Stockholm was presented as a world capital of sport, with the Swedish school of gymnastics together with the German and English models presented as best practices for improving the educational system. Believing sport to be a mechanism by which the world could unite, de Coubertin's principal aims were peace and education. His strong belief in the power of sport to achieve these and more are reflected in the nine verses of "An Ode to Sport," in which sport is characterized as "pleasure of the Gods, beauty, justice, audacity, honour, joy, fecundity, progress and peace." In his writings before and after establishment of the modern movement, de Coubertin's aim was for Olympism to be "a doctrine of the fraternity of the body and the mind." His expectation was that sport could reestablish this balance in the younger generation that had been missing for so long, with an educational system he saw plagued by barriers and a complete lack of free thinking. In 1887, when Coubertin was formulating his plans, the word *overwork* was on everyone's lips. He believed that permanent and excessive fatigue derived essentially from "physical weakness, intellectual dullness, and moral degradation" and believed that the body, rather than being perceived as inferior to the mind, was actually the means by which the mind could function better. Tracing the loss of this ancient wisdom, he wrote the following:

Olympia did not disappear merely from the face of the earth. It disappeared in peoples' minds. A belief took root, this belief was that the body is the enemy of the spirit, that the struggle between them is an inevitable and normal thing, and that no understanding should be sought out that would allow them to join together in governing the individual.

Athletics was viewed as the means by which this individual “governance” could work—and excel. Defined by de Coubertin as “the voluntary and habitual practice of intense muscular exercise based on a desire for progress and extending as far as will,” it contained at its core five key attributes: initiative, perseverance, intensity, search for perfection, and scorn for potential danger. Coubertin also wrote about the importance of maintaining body-mind balance into adulthood, bemoaning the lack of modern gymnasias and questioning where adults would go to keep themselves in good athletic condition “in the few fleeting moments they might carve out for it in their busy professional schedules.”

Yet although Coubertin was merely reconceptualizing the Ancient Greek virtue of whole person development, where going to the gymnasium was considered a civic duty, such ideas were not readily accepted. Even after the establishment of the International Olympic Committee and several editions of the Games, de Coubertin's energy was devoted to reinforcing his message. Between 1918 and 1919, he published 21 “Olympic Letters” in *La Gazette*, the Lausanne newspaper, to try to rouse the sympathies of the readers in support of the Olympics and the work done in Lausanne. One of those letters concerned one of the primary objectives of de Coubertin, that of education, which, in the broader context of lifelong education or human development, is also the core concern of *Sustaining Executive Performance*. It is reproduced below.

### **Olympic Letter III: Olympism and Education**

Somewhere, Montaigne wrote that one should imagine the body and the soul as two horses yoked to the same shaft. He hitches them up two at a time. I prefer to hitch them up four at a time, and to distinguish not only the body and the mind, which is too simplistic, but rather the muscles, the understanding, the character, and the conscience. This corresponds to the

four-fold duty of the educator. But both cases involve hitching things up, and the major flaw in modern education is that it is no longer conversant with the art of hitching-up, i.e. of associating the action of divergent forces into a harmonious convergence. It has allowed itself to be carried away by extreme compartmentalization, by which it was then swept away. Each strength works in isolation, without any link or contact with its neighbour. If the topic is muscles, the only thing they want to see is animal function. The brain is furnished as though it were made up of tiny, air-tight compartments. Conscience is the exclusive territory of religious training. As for character—no one wants to take responsibility for that. In a short time, the educated man will end up looking like those primitive mosaics in which little pieces formed larger, crude and stiff pictures. What a decline in comparison to Greek education, which was so lucid, its outline so clear!

Let us not try to hide the fact that Olympism is a reaction against those unfortunate tendencies. Olympism refuses to make physical education a purely physiological thing, and to make each type of sport an independent, separate exercise. It refuses to catalogue the knowledge of the mind, and to classify it into mutually isolated categories. Olympism refuses to accept the existence of a deluxe education reserved for the wealthy classes, no shred of which should be handed out to the working classes. It refuses to condense art into pills that everyone will take at set hours and to establish timetables of thought along the lines of railway schedules. Olympism is a destroyer of dividing walls. It calls for air and light for all. It advocates a broad-based athletic education accessible to all, trimmed with manly courage and the spirit of chivalry, blended with aesthetic and literary demonstrations, and serving as an engine for national life and as a basis for civic life. That's its ideal program. Now can it be achieved?

*La Gazette de Lausanne*, no. 294, October 26, 1918, p1.

## The Ancient Greek Virtue of the Scholar-Athlete

That “clear” and “lucid” Greek education system was driven by the purpose of producing good citizens,<sup>3</sup> based on the training of the body through physical exercise, and of the mind (primarily, though not solely) through music. The Olympic Games were the arena in which these virtues were displayed, with such arenas playing witness to the peak of this dialogue between mind and body. Participation rather than victory was the main aim. The Greeks believed that the formation of a strong character demanded the cultivation of the body, and that by cultivating the body in athletic meetings, they broadened and strengthened the mind, thereby creating a complete person. It was such a vision that Coubertin wanted to re-create, primarily for the youth of the modern era. If the Games were the public expression of this whole person, the progress toward it was honed through daily attendance in the *Gymnasia* of the day. Regarded as civic duty, the great and good of Ancient Greece—writers, politicians, and philosophers, from Socrates to Sophocles, Aristotle, and Pericles—would all have spent regular time doing physical training. The main *Gymnasia* of the day, the Lyceum and the Academy, were managed by Plato and Aristotle. Plato’s *Lysis* describes an encounter that Socrates had when making his way from the Lyceum to the Academy, describing his main activity there, not as wrestling but “words, mostly words.” Indeed, the *Gymnasia* offered respite from the frenzied business of the day that would take place in the Agora or Forum, and where the more important issues of life were addressed, at least for people such as Plato and Aristotle. How can we be good? What makes us fall in love? How do we know what we know?

Plato was also, according to ancient texts, a champion wrestler, gaining honors at the Isthmian Games. This is where his name came from. Called Aristocles after his grandfather, his wrestling coach is said to have called him Plato on account of his broad shoulders—*Platon* meaning broad in Greek. For Plato, lectures at the Academy on the virtues of physical education were commonplace, and balance between the body and the mind was a critical factor; the goal was to “bring the two elements into tune with one another by adjusting the tension of each to the right pitch.”<sup>4</sup> Just as much a danger as neglecting the body, focusing only on the body to the detriment of this balance would result in athletes becoming unadaptable and sluggish, “needing too much sleep.”

So what of today? How is the “pitch” between body and mind achieved, particularly for adults in business with those “busy professional schedules” as noted by de Coubertin in the late nineteenth century? The word *overwork* remains on everyone’s lips with a modern business environment often characterized by poor physical condition and excessive stress.

Why should we care? How may we legitimize the Ancient Greek virtue beyond health and well-being to executive performance? A key inspiration for integrating a more physical approach to management education and development comes from considering Maslow’s hierarchy of human needs<sup>5</sup> and realizing that mental performance is often dependent on physical states in the same way that Maslow details the satisfaction of such basic human needs as food, water, and sleep before more advanced functions, such as creativity and problem solving, can be satisfied. Although Maslow’s hierarchy lacks any significant level of scientific support, it was subsequently adapted and empirically supported by Alderfer<sup>6</sup> through his ERG (Existence, Relatedness, Growth) model. A critical mass of research to fully legitimize the body-mind link for performance has emerged over the past 10 years, in specialized fields including psychophysiology, which looks closely at the body’s physiological bases and its link with psychological processes, cognitive neuroscience, and biochemistry. Several studies enlighten the real and actionable link between body and mind, particularly as it relates to the modern day executive or knowledge worker, and range from functional needs to performance enhancement.

On a functional level, *The New York Times*<sup>7</sup> reports on varied research that shows the need to periodically “unplug” from digital devices, whereas Sparrow et al.<sup>8</sup> show that Google is beginning to change the way we think and act on a fundamental basis. Such mental health issues are complemented by physical health research. In the performance domain, Colcombe and Kramer<sup>9</sup> found fitness training to increase cognitive performance, regardless of the type of task, the training method, or the participants’ characteristics. Further, findings in neuroscience<sup>10</sup> show a 48-hour oxygen advantage being provided to the brain through exercise that specifically aids executive function—those tasks that include complex decision making and strategic analysis that managers are engaged in regularly. Other research<sup>11</sup> shows that exercise increases the size of

the hippocampus, critical for memory, effectively reversing aging and further debunking the long-held belief that cognitive decline was irreversible. A groundswell of research is emerging in this area, not for management development specifically, but in the battle against cognitive disease, including Alzheimer's and Parkinson's, which shows the acute link between body and brain. Linking to innovation, Fields<sup>12</sup> discusses the significance of studies that show aerobic exercise contributing to the creative process, because the cognitive effects specifically lower fear and anxiety associated with the unknown. Finally, research has focused on the energy requirements of the brain, considering decision fatigue and "ego depletion"—where one is not consciously aware of being tired as with physical fatigue, but where glucose is required for self-control and good decision making.<sup>13,14</sup>

A critical mass of scientific evidence is therefore beginning to emerge that supports the performance imperative of the ancient Greek virtue that de Coubertin aimed to reintroduce. Behavior is indeed changing in different areas. If Plato, Aristotle, and Socrates could be viewed as the rock stars of the day, looking at the modern equivalent allows us to consider some of the basics.

## Rock Stars Don't Trash Hotel Rooms Anymore

They don't. Think about it; in the 1960s, 70s, and 80s, there was frequent destruction of hotel rooms, and wild parties and televisions thrown out of windows were part of the *de rigueur* of rock star success and excess. But those days are gone. This very question was picked up by the *Guardian* newspaper in 2011<sup>15</sup> in which requests for a quiet place in the hotel, a comfortable bed, and late check-out were shown to be the new norm. So to help us answer the question, let's look at the day-to-day routine of a well-known rock star, Mick Jagger:

"I train five or six days a week but I don't go crazy. I alternate between gym work and dancing, then I do sprints, things like that. I'm training for stamina. (I get to) bed early the night before. I give myself two hours to get ready for a show, to tune up the voice and get myself in the right frame of mind mentally and physically."

As you may expect, Jagger has a personal trainer and also frequently trains by running, swimming, kickboxing, and cycling. Yet he also spends a lot of time practicing ballet, yoga, and Pilates—activities that develop a key aspect of fitness: core strength, which is essential for athletes and businesspeople alike. He also places great focus on his diet and looks at consuming a large carbohydrate intake as well as lean protein for those high-energy and movement concerts.

How many miles do you think he moves in one concert? Quite a lot, actually: 12. So this changing rock star behavior perhaps owes much to the fact that the rock stars are simply too tired! Twelve miles every other night, in between media duties and sustaining the highest standards of performance. It's hard work being a rock star, and it's getting harder. The multimillion dollar business that is a world tour no longer leaves space for those heady days of excess, and this raising of standards and demands is reflected in many spheres of society.

Professional sports, home to another type of modern-day rock star, offer an additional example. The *Wall Street Journal* included a simulation in January 2014 during the Sochi Winter Olympics that placed all previous gold medal winners in speed skating in the same race. As you would expect, the first gold medal winner in 1924 was last in this simulated race of champions, but even the difference in the past 10 to 20 years, not just from gold to silver, but likely gold and nowhere, was quite staggering.

This pattern is good news for society in general. We are evolving as a human race, and standards are continually increasing. We are pushing the boundaries not just in sport, but in business and science. Yet at what price? Those raising standards in business mean that demands are also placed on you as a business professional. It's no doubt harder now to survive and thrive in the global competitive business landscape than it was 10 to 20 years ago, and that bar rises ever higher.

So, just like a rock star, how can you find that extra advantage, starting from your physical self, that ensures you attain and sustain a high level of executive performance?

Sporting performance of course requires a physical focus, and Jagger, in his 70s, perhaps needs to dedicate more time in this respect, yet the performance habits of another modern-day rock star shows the universality



of the approach. Magnus Carlsen is the World Chess Champion and is 21 years old. Chess, from a distance, has nothing whatsoever to do with athletics and the physical self, yet Carlsen, in between modeling for clothing labels and his marathon chess matches, places a massive focus on his physical preparedness and fitness. In the 2013 world chess championships, he took his personal chef to the tournament. His older opponent had shed about 13 pounds (6kg) of weight in the 6 months prior to the championships. Yet Carlsen is only following the example of the greatest chess player of them all, Gary Kasparov. Kasparov would prepare for his chess matches like a boxer, putting himself through a punishing regime of strength training for another type of endurance event. A personal record of 102 push-ups isn't bad for a chess grandmaster, and he acknowledges that it played a role in his longevity, allowing him to sustain his grandmaster-level performance for more than 20 years.

## Developing the Whole Person

So why does management development focus, almost solely, on the neck up, when the demands placed on you as a manager, as an executive, touch every facet of your life? My work is focused on whole person development where health and well-being are linked to executive performance. Since 2007, I have delivered an executive training program in which I aim to *remind busy professionals that they have a body*. As we advance through a career, we tend to increasingly live our lives on a purely mental level, with all of our emails and strategies and meetings and metrics, forgetting we have a body until something goes wrong with it! *Sustaining Executive Performance*—the pursuit of longevity at the highest level in an ever-demanding society—may be achieved through paying a little more attention to long-held wisdom and simple practices.

For the Ancient Greek philosopher and citizen, self-governance was achieved through a harmonious balance between body and mind. For the twenty-first century business leader, a new conception of Peter Drucker's *self-management*, as we develop in this book, offers refuge from an increasingly complex, connected, and out-of-balance life. Whether the focus is on personal productivity, work-life integration, the quantified self, or executive health, a myriad of pop-tech gurus offer endless management sound bites that pique the interest of the busy

professional but fail to satisfy the deeper questions that accompany their daily craft and graft.

*Sustaining Executive Performance* will take a bottom-up approach, deconstructing the essence of basic human needs within the enterprise and society to show that such needs are universal at the individual, enterprise, and societal level, and also timeless in their fit with established philosophy—a powerful reminder in an age where only the “new” is held up as being of consumable value. What results is a reflection on leading a sustainable, happy, and productive life that starts with the individual but can apply to organizational and societal innovation, leadership, and resilience.

If such a claim sounds ambitious (it is, but I hope not overly so!), it is merely attempted through a work of synthesis. I attempt to join the dots of the patterns I have observed during my experiences and the teaching, coaching, and academic and field research that has characterized the past 15 years of my life, from around the time I started my PhD in Glasgow after rediscovering my own athletic journey. I therefore aim to make this text personal and *human*. Reading dull academic texts during my PhD studies actually put me off the reading process for several years! So I will present studies and experiences from real people, both from today and through history—those who have something to say and those who have had interesting experiences. It is also personal in that I recount many of my own experiences, including some of the major milestones through university, professional career, and sport. Key topics include design, innovation management, and corporate social responsibility, developed as I lived and worked in Scotland, Spain, and the United States, traveling worldwide and teaching thousands of amazing people.

I draw content from a broad range of fields, including management science, neurology, medicine, elite sport, and business ethics, and my overriding aim is to appeal to a broad audience and make the link between previously disparate issues. I attempt to join science to popular management to philosophy for a highly pragmatic resource and guide that nevertheless legitimizes action for the most skeptical minds and provides the base for continual action and lasting change. I will switch frequently between sources, such as the *Journal of Psychological Science* and the

Bulletproof Executive, from *Harvard Business Review* to Fast Company, and from Brain Pickings to the *Proceedings of the National Association of Science*. All are leaders in the themes I cover in this text, and those with less academic heritage are especially able to disrupt conventional wisdom and lead us to deeper insight.

The book aims to be a reference for life reengineering for the experienced manager, and a reflection on practice for management students. By life reengineering, I mean the adoption of new habits and practices that drive health and performance, and for the management student, a reflection on the practices that will drive their career as they begin to “design their life.” This, I hope, will satisfy the increasing need of the executive education market at a time when enterprises worldwide recognize the key need for lifelong learning and development of their most precious resource, and at the MBA level where the new generation of leaders are under increasing pressure to perform and mend a broken system, yet where opportunities abound. The book may also serve as an introductory text or accompaniment for classes on leadership, design and innovation, and corporate social responsibility.

There are three main parts of the book. The first five chapters establish the foundations of the text, developing the driving rationale of the *Sustaining Executive Performance* as well as the levers that make it work. Baron de Coubertin’s reconceptualization of the Ancient Greek virtue of body and mind, presented here, is followed in Chapter 2, “The New Lanark Mills,” by a first examination of the *Triple Lens of Sustainability*, looking at several historical and contemporary business cases to link the individual, organizational, and societal levels. In Chapter 3, “Design Your Life,” and Chapter 4, “Day-to-Day Reengineering,” the field of design is then shown as the lever by which we may bring a more human-based approach to workplace performance, and make that actionable on the individual routine level. The Sustaining Executive Performance (SEP) model, a design-based framework, is presented in Chapter 5, “The New Self-Management,” as a guide for the twenty-first century professional to better manage themselves (see Figure 1.1).



# SUSTAINING EXECUTIVE PERFORMANCE



**Figure 1.1** The SEP model

Parts 2 and 3 of the book are interlinked and attempt to show the Triple Lens of Sustainability in action. Each of the five elements of the SEP framework—MOVE, RECOVER, FOCUS, FUEL, and TRAIN—has a dedicated chapter showing how individuals may improve their own awareness of the key factors necessary for health, well-being, and performance—and think about change. These five chapters make up Part 2. Each is followed by a broader treatment of the concepts on an organizational and/or societal level—a further five chapters which make up Part 3. We therefore switch among the individual, organizational, and societal, each of the three levels of the Triple Lens of Sustainability—a concept that we develop throughout the book.

Pierre de Coubertin was an incredible visionary, and like many with vision, he perhaps suffered for being ahead of his time. The arts competitions were not sustainable without his drive and doggedness. They would continue until Zatopek's Helsinki Games of 1952 before disappearing altogether.<sup>16</sup> Having poured so much energy, not to mention financial resources, into the Olympic movement over the greater part of his life, he would suffer from financial difficulties, ill health, and to some extent, disenfranchisement with the IOC before his death in 1938. One may only imagine his despair in observing his final Games. In 1936, Berlin was used as a political pawn, contrary to his founding aim as a vehicle

of peace between nations. Then again, perhaps a flicker of optimism would have burned bright after watching how sporting performance, and in particular that of a certain Mr. Owens, would show the way—the simplicity of a sporting event showing the complexity of sport, and also the value for a better governance of oneself, to become, just like the Ancient Greeks, stronger, faster, and smarter.

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