LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT THROUGH TEAM SPORTS AND ITS IMPLEMENTATION IN BUSINESS ORGANIZATIONS

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to investigate and study the elements required to become a successful entrepreneur or business leader for former athletes. This research is aiming to present a framework for other athletes and business organizations to understand better the possible gained skills from team sports, and how they could be utilized in business organizations.

The main theoretical background for thesis was the Action Centered Leadership model by John Adair, and this model was used to research the required leadership skills in business organizations. The theoretical background research includes topics such as leadership elements in business organizations, leadership elements you learn from playing teams sports, and Athletes as entrepreneurs.

Four interviews were conducted with four ex athletes from Latvia, each respondent was representing a different team sport and sharing their experiences towards their sport and gained skill implementation into the field of business.

Based on the results and research, it is greater probability that athletes would be inclined to engage in business organizations or in entrepreneurship as a second career choice after retirement from professional sport.

Keywords	Leadership, business organizations, athletes, entrepreneurs.
Pages	31 pages and appendices 1 page

CONTENTS

1 INTRODUCTION

The author of this thesis has chosen this topic because he has been athlete himself for more than 20 years. The author has played floorball in the highest league in Finland and has participated in five World Floorball Championships. Moreover, playing sports at the highest possible level and living the lifestyle of a professional athlete has provided an opportunity to experience sport from many different angles. Because of this, the author has observed that sport is not only about the physical benefits, but also by playing a team sport, and interacting with others, and being part of a team can empower people to develop various essential skills that are important throughout their lives.

Whether a person is a professional athlete or not, sport teaches people development, it helps to learn things such as resilience, leadership, accountability, respect, patience, and it helps to highlight the qualities that are both effective on and off the sport field. However, in recent years, athletes have shown a rising interest in entrepreneurship, and many former athletes have managed to step into the field of business and have become successful leaders of companies. (Entrepreneur, 2018)

Sport, like business, is extremely competitive, and very often success depends on a team's ability to outperform the competition. Because of this, the research question for this thesis is: Do the traits that athletes gain from playing team sports help them develop the necessary qualities needed for leadership in business?

The author of this thesis has come up with objectives and they are as followed when taking the research question into consideration, the objective for these theses are:
- To analyze the theoretical basis of leadership.

- To research skills gained from playing team sports.
- To collect and analyze the opinions of former athletes based on the chosen methodology.
- Based on the theoretical framework and research, compare gained skills from team sports versus required skills for successful entrepreneurs and leaders.

The purpose of this thesis is to investigate and study the elements required to become a successful entrepreneur or business leader for the former athletes. Author has own interest in this research because he has been playing floorball professionally for last 5 years and after sport career, he would like to become successful person in business world. This research will not only help him, but other athletes and business companies as framework to understand the possible gained skills from sport, and how they can best be utilized in business organizations.

This thesis begins by researching literature on leadership theories and identifying the leadership elements that can be learned from team sports. For the theoretical background the Action Centered Leadership (ACL) model by John Adair has been chosen, and this model will be used to compare the athlete gained skills versus required leader skills. The purpose of choosing ACL leadership is because this model has directed structure towards teambuilding, it focuses not only on individuals, but also team tasks, and it investigates team building from leaderships perspective.

Then thesis describes the methodology used to collect and analyze empirical data and I will use qualitative research method where author will collect primary data and secondary data from research articles, scientific journals and literature reviews that explore concepts and theories.
The thesis goes on to describe the results of interviews with four ex athletes from Latvia, each interviewee represents a different team sport. The four most popular team sports in Latvia have been chosen for analysis:

basketball, hockey, football, and floorball. Respondents share their experiences towards their sport and gained skill implementation into the field of business.

As a framework the ACL model which divides leadership into the areas of "Task", "Team" and "Individuals" and therefore athletes' skills and leadership skills are compared in two different tables to understand if former athletes can become successful leaders or entrepreneurs. First table based on ACL theory - task, team, individuals, will highlight each categories mentioned skills by respondents. Second table will focus on mentioned skills in theory and supplemented question of the interview, that way it will help better make parallels between athletes, sports, and learned skills.

This thesis structure consists of 5 chapters – Introduction, Theoretical Framework, Methodology, Results, Recommendations and Conclusions

2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The confirmation of leadership we can find all around us. It is in our daily lives – in our local communities, in sport activities, in business organizations, in schools, and even in our families. But what really is the leadership, is it something we have born with, or it's something we learn during our life's. Certainly, leadership has been built into the human psyche, and the first time we face leadership in our families, because for the long period of time we are nurtured by our parents, and we learn to follow their leadership until we are able to take care of our own survival. However, when reaching adulthood our actions and behavior as leaders and followers is still likely going to be affected by our earlier relations with our parents and our genetics. (Bass, 2008, p. 3) This form of leadership has existed for thousands of years, but only in last the 50 years much wider research has been done to understand leadership in organizations. In last

40 years there have been more then 850 published articles and books with definitions of the leadership. (Bennis & Nanuss, 1985, p. 4) To understand leadership better will also go into management because often these are two terms that are regularly confused, but they are important key elements for delivering good service, leading, or managing successful business.

Authors Warren Bennis and Burt Nanus at their book in 1985 described difference between the leaders and managers in one sentence: "Leaders do the right things; managers do things right". (Bennis & Nanuss, 1985, p. 21) Leaders and managers are different within their values and personalities. Managers value stability, order, and efficiency in workplace, they are unwilling to take unnecessary risks and mostly they are focused on short term results. Leaders value flexibility, innovation, and ability to adapt for different kind of situations, they care about economical outcomes, but as well they care about people and their team. Moreover, they have long term attitude and vision towards company objectives and strategies. Managers are concerned about how to get things done, and they try to get people to perform better by creating order and consistency by drawing up formal plans, following structures and monitoring results against plans. Leaders are concerned with thing that are important and what they mean to people, they try to get people to agree about the most important things to be done. They set up direction by developing clear vision of the future, and they encourage other group members to overcome the obstacles. (Yulk, 2013. p. 13)

2.1 ACTION CENTERED LEADERSHIP

The Action Centered Leadership (ACL) model was presented by John Adair in 1973 and this model is also known as Teambuilding model. ACL model is remarkable because it may help to develop the several goals and wishes of

individuals, but also accomplish the different goals set for the team and whole project. One of the main results of good leadership is a good team and this model investigates teambuilding from the leadership perspective. ACL divides leadership into the areas of "Task", "Team" and "Individuals" and all these elements are important for the leaders to achieve success. Leaders are the ones who are responsible to finding good balance and harmony among these 3 areas. Analyzing each area separately will help to understand importance of ACL, and it will help to improve the way that team operates. (Adair, 2004, p. 145)

Accomplish the task

It all starts with task and to accomplish the task you need to build the team but without a task there is no reason to build the team and there is no reason to lead them in first place. Every leadership position is created because there is a particular goal in mind, and someone needs to oversee leading the team toward that goal. The goal can be rather general, for example run the profitable business, or it can be more specific, like develop a new product, to launch into market by the end of the year. It doesn't matter what the goal is, but it's important that there is a task, because that task will serve as a guide for the leadership that must be given to the team. (Adair, 2004, p. 146)

Build the team

Most people think that leading the team is commonly the main action of the leadership, but leadership consists of many other activities. When the team is assigned for some new tasks, they are mostly made up of individuals with various skills and experiences, so it is the leader's responsibility to produce best possible performance from each team member. They are also responsible to clarify how the team will work together, and what kind of communications standards they will use. In the

case of conflicts leaders can present methods for resolving them, and they are efficient to moderate and resolve them quickly. When building successful team, leaders cannot forget about encouragement, because it is essential part of ACL plan especially for long term projects and goals. Good leaders can accomplish that team feels as a whole group and that they are invested in the success, and moreover during the team tasks that they can persist the level of the focus and stay motivated to achieve successful result of the task. (Adair, 2004, p. 147-148)

Empower Individuals

Often leaders forget that team is made of individuals and that they are required to have guidance and best possible support, because every individual team member have different kind of desires, experience, fears, and motivation. Therefore, to extract the best from each team member it is essential to treat them as individual as possible. Often very common thing for the leaders to achieve the best possible outcome of the projects, is to offer different kind of reward or praise for a strongest input or performance from members of the team. To empower individuals every leader must find the best suitable role for every member, roles must suit for their skill level and interest areas, only then team can function successfully as possible. (Adair, 2004, p. 149-150)

2.2 LEADERSHIP ELEMENTS IN BUSINESS ORGANIZATIONS

Leadership has become the most researched component in organizational level, researching behavior, with several theories concentrating on leadership traits, styles, and situational approaches. It is the responsibility of leaders to get things done via the coordinated efforts of other, and it is expected that leadership styles in organizations will affect the performance of employees. (Rollinson et. al 2001) It is common knowledge

that any group that want to be properly organized there must be a well know leader. Leadership is a highly valued trait in most organizations, which has resulted of issue of organizational behavior being actively researched and contested. (Adair, 2003)

Leadership is widely recognized to be one of the elements that decides whether a group, an organization, or even a country will be successful. This is partially since a leader may have a significant impact on group members' behavior and performance. As a result, leadership is critical to the survival and efficacy of an organization's performance. The demand for strong leadership tends to expand as organizations develop and their expectations regarding their performance rise. Leadership skills needed in organizations is key traits that pays off for people who have it. All indications appear to show that there is strong link between leadership style and performance of employees in an organization. Leadership is social influence process in which a leader seeks employee voluntary engagement in order to achieve organizational goals. (Omolayo, 2000) Effective leadership is described as leaders' ability to guide and direct his or her followers to the agreed destination as decided by the entire group.

Furthermore, leadership style refers to a leader's pattern of behavior when dealing with employees. Lewin, Leppit and White (1939) identified three leadership styles - autocratic, democratic and lassie-faire. The leader under an autocratic leadership style makes all the decisions, wields absolute control, assigns tasks to members of the group, and retains a master-servant relationships with team. Democratic leadership style, on the other hand uses consultative approach and it tries to involve group participation in decision making and maintaining a master-servant relationship with group members. (Omolayo, 2000) The lassie – faire leadership style is characterized by a philosophy of non-interference, total independence for all employees, and has no set method for achieving objectives. However, there is no one best style of leadership in organizations. The efficiency of

specific leadership style is driven by the circumstances of the organization. (Omolayo, 2000) However, regardless of how leadership and its style are defied, one thing is certain and widely acknowledged among scholars: the role of leaders is providing outstanding organizational performance and workers' devotion to work cannot be overstated.

2.3 LEADERSHIP ELEMENTS YOU LEARN FROM TEAM SPORTS

Over the past 15 years, life skills learning in sport has received huge attention. (Gould&Carson, 2008) The question of whether leadership is learnable has gotten significant attention and Jonathan P. Doh presented many aspects of leadership which might be improved through various learning experiences. Additionally, he suggested "leadership skills are best acquired as part of a practical, experiential educational program" (Doh, 2003, p. 64) However, being part of the sport team my encourage to develop various skills and many argue that sport develops required skills for becoming successful leader. Ewing, Gano - Overway, Branta, and Seefeldt (2002) argue that sport endorse to learn the skills and values necessary to succeed in education, in the workforce and throughout life. The sport environment is an appropriate place to learn life skills because sport skills and life skills are similar (Danish, Fazio, Nellen, & Owens, 2002).

Both sport skills and life skills are learned through demonstration, modeling, and practice (Danish & Hale, 1981), and there are some overlapping with the type of skills needed for success is athletics and entrepreneurship. For instance, communication, working in team, goal setting, problem-solving, and performing under pressure are skills needed in the sport, classroom, and workplace environments. These skills may be developed in one environment and then transferred to other areas (Danisln & Nellen, 1997).

Moreover Danish (1986) defines some of these skills as the ability to perform under pressure, solve problems, meet deadlines and challenges, set goals, communicate, handle success and failure, work in a group and within a system, and receive feedback and benefit from it. In the youth sport environment athletes are said to learn to cooperate, show courage, play fairly, be loyal, develop self-discipline, practice self-control, respect rules, express compassion, foster peace, exhibit sportsmanship, maintain integrity, be honest and civil, be aggressive, become competitive, persevere, subordinate self to group, show leadership, feel empathy, understand ethics, respect the environment, experience the team as a moral community, develop perspective (Fullinwider, 2006).

Jones (2008, p. 123), who has coached Olympic and world champions and now coaches' business leaders, maintains that:

"Sport is not business, of course, but the parallels are striking. In both worlds, elite performers are not born but made. Obviously, star athletes must have some innate, natural ability – coordination, physical flexibility, anatomical capacities – just as successful senior executives need to be able to think strategically and relate to people. But the real key to excellence in both sports and business is not the ability to swim fast or do quantitative analyses quickly in your head; rather, it is mental toughness. Elite performers in both arenas thrive on pressure; they excel when the heat is turned up. Their rise to the top is the result of very careful planning – of setting and hitting hundreds of small goals. Elite performers use competition to hone their skills, and they reinvent themselves continually to stay ahead of the pack".

Teamwork

It's so obvious that teamwork is one of the skills which is learned by participating in sport. Mostly teamwork skill is gained from team sport where huge role plays motivation of participants to do their part and by

delivering their effort to reach the team ultimate goals. Teamwork also includes the assigning of responsibilities, which is what successful leaders do every day. To become a great leader, you are required to have team building skills, to set example and to be efficient for those you lead. By developing team building skill in workplace, you can have a positive effect on group projects, campaigns, employee engagement and motivation in the workplace. (McEwan & Beauchamp, 2020, p. 184)

Teamwork and team performance can be thought of as a multi-level process in which team members engage in individual and team teamwork (Kozlowski and Klein, 2000). Taskwork refers to individual or group tasks that team members complete with the use of tools and machinery. Teamwork, on the other hand, refers to interpersonal relationships between team members (Bowers, Braun, and Morgan, 1997). It is widely believed that effective teamwork is defined by effective communication and collaboration among team members as they work toward a common objective. Team effectiveness is the result or consequences of a team's performance (Salas, Cooke, and Rosen, 2008), and it can be measured in different ways, including objective and self-reported team effectiveness, as well as member satisfaction (Lei, and Tews, 2016)

Communication

To become great leader, a person requires excellent communications skills and playing sports could help to develop the capability of communication. Communication techniques from sport can be also applied to business situations, because for good leader it is important to communicate effectively in any kind of situations. Sport teaches players how to work together and gives the ability to inspire others and recognize and appreciate good work from the team members. People who play sports learn to present their winning ideas to others, and that's what good leader

should look like, they need to have winning mentality and ability to carry the team towards their goals. (Weinberg & McDermott, 2002)

Although no one can agree on the proper definition of leadership, most researchers agree that leaders are people who guide, direct, encourage, or inspire others. They are the men and women who have an impact on others in a company or community. They command others attention. They encourage others to follow them or to achieve goals that they set. They are in command of the situation. They help groups and organizations perform better. They are successful. These people may not be presidents of countries or CEOs of companies, but they have the potential to be. Employees who volunteer to mentor less experienced or younger employees, managers who lead successful project teams, or vice presidents who lead divisions and push their personnel to reach company goals are examples of role models (Deborah, 2006).

Leadership is based on communication because leaders lead via good communication. Good communication skills enable, promote, and create the necessary understanding and trust for others to follow a leader. A manager achieves little without efficient communication. A manager isn't a good leader if they cannot communicate effectively. In a reality, a manager's ability to communicate effectively is what permits them to advance to a leadership role. According to an early Harvard Business School research on what it takes to achieve success in an organization, the individual who gets ahead in business is the person who "is able to communicate, to make sound decisions, and to get things done with and through people" (Bowman, 1964). By communicating more effectively, managers improve their ability to get things done with a through people.

Strategic and Organizational Development

To become a good leader, you are required to have effective way of communication and working in team, and these two skills are not going to be effective unless you have good organization and strategy behind it. Athletes who do sport for living and are part of the teams has the skills to come up with a game plan and different strategies to win games and competitions. It's similar in leadership, because leaders have ultimate goal in mind and the try to develop strategies and to ensure the work being done is effective and efficient. (Jones, 2008, p. 123)

As part of a systematic change effort, organization development is an emerging discipline aimed at increasing the effectiveness of the organization and its members. According to management theorists such as Chester Barnard and Chris Argyris, the genuinely effective organization is one in which both the organization and the individual may grow and develop. A "healthy" organization is one that has such kind of climate. Organizational development aims to make businesses healthier and more productive. These ideas apply to a wide range of institutions, including schools, churches, military forces, governments, corporations, and sports teams (Sanzigiri and Gottlieb, 1992).

Organization development (OD) is dealing with the longer-term efforts and programs, and it's aimed to improve an organization's capability to survive by changing its problem-solving and renewal processes. OD requires moving toward the flexible organization and its aim is to attain corporate excellence by combining the ambitions of individuals for growth and development with organizational goals. Organization development is planned, with systematic approaches to change and improve its efforts. It involves changes to the entire organization or to nearly all segments of it. The goal of OD activities is to improve the system's efficacy while also maximizing the potential of each individual member. It consists of a set of

planned behavioral science intervention activities carried out in partnership with organization members to find better ways of working together toward individual and organizational goals. (Brown and Don Harvey, 2006)

Decision Making

In general, decision making is the study of discovering and selecting options based on the decision maker's values and preferences. Sport is all about decision making, and it provides the chance to practice different decision-making styles and strategies in sport. Of course, in field of sport there are different decision makers – coaches, referees, players, spectators, etc. They are supposed to make fast and effective decisions when completing tasks such as play-calling, ball movements, penalty kicks, circumstances during play, player changes etc. (Kaya, 2014, p. 333) However, most decisions made by athletes are made while the play is in motion, and majority of those decisions are made rapidly and based on athletes' technical and tactical skill sets. Technical skills are defined as "the specific procedures to move one's body to perform the task that needs to be accomplished". (Martens, 2012, p.169) Tactical skills are defined as "the decisions and actions of players in the contest to gain an advantage over the opposing team or players" (Martens, 2012, p. 170)

While the term "leadership" is associated with the ability of an individual or group of individuals to empower, encourage, support, and help others to achieve a goal, decision making as a theory focuses solely on choice and the ability of the leader to select the best alternative from a variety of options (Glaholt MG, Wu MC, Reingold EM, 2010). However, regard of effectiveness of decision making, leaders need to gather and analyze information and to resolve problems a leader must have a self-confidence to do that. Leaders must be certain about decisions they make, and they need to keep the interest of all stakeholders involved. They can't be

plagued by self-doubt because otherwise they would be never able to make the required actions or gain respect of others. Employees will be less dedicated to the team if the leaders doubt their decisions, so they need to show their followers that they are knowledgeable and they trust their followers. As well if leaders are wrong, they need to acknowledge that and be able to move forward by providing better solutions. (Ejimabo, 2015)

Value of Practice and Preparation

People who do sport daily and regularly, learn the value of practicing and preparation, they learn from the success that comes with proper preparation or the failure that comes if they do not put enough effort into practicing time to get better. The most important part of doing sport is repeating the same things repeatedly, because preparation and practicing helps to get better, and it is common thing in sport, life, and business. (Whales, Frawley, Cohen & Nikolova, 2021) Playing sports will strengthen the idea that repeating and honing skill is valuable element of development, and it is essential part for increasing efficiency on field and off the field, besides becoming better at something is a reward itself. Practicing not only improves your mechanics, but also it resets your instincts so when similar situation will come, you are able to react immediately. (Wankel & Berger, 1990) Therefore, it is important to understand the importance of practicing because it will help to reach your individual or team goals in sport and so does in organization.

Overcoming Adversity

Overcoming Adversity and setbacks are part of life and sport, and where else you can learn this skill better than doing sports. People who do sport in top levels they learn to overcome adversity and failure through the many situations they face in athletics, a range of psychological qualities to

withstand the pressures that they experience, either in their preparation process or during the competitions. (Fletcher & Sarkar, 2012)

The great thing about athletics is that sport teach us, and it give us opportunity to learn from our failures, which we face on our way when trying to achieve or goals and dreams. No matter what sport you are playing it is important to trust the process you are going through and to do that better you have to learn to accept success with humility. To deal with failure with dignity by overcoming setbacks through resilience and individual's ability to persevere and adapt. (Reivich & Shatté, 2002) Every time when we face setbacks and we manage to overcome them, we are developing our mental resilience and mentality of overcoming adversity and failures, and this skill will be useful for the rest of our lives.

In this context, the success or failure of an organization may be linked not only to qualities of the manager's behavior, but also to organizations internal elements and external factors of environment. (Zacharakis, Meyer & DeCastro, 1999; Minello, 2010). According to Singh Corner and Pavlovich (2007), business failure is linked to the manager's decisions and behaviors, as well as the manner he runs his company. As a result, the entrepreneurial characteristics that impact behavior and the managerial competences appear to be inextricably intertwined, with repercussions on the organization's behavior.

Dealing with Success and Failure

When talking about success, it's very important for sport people to learn to be proud of their accomplishments while being respectful of their opponents. They need to learn to value their achievements so that the emphasis of the pride that comes with team success, don't trigger feelings of superiority drive towards their opponents. In sport and as in life people need to be respectful and need to learn to deal with success and failure.

Failure happens in sport and in life, and everyone should learn to deal with them in most efficient ways, because not always everyone is able to win in the competition or accomplish their goals. People who do sport they learn that failure is just a temporary setback and that is something from what need to learn and improve to get better. (Reivich & Shatté, 2002)

However, in the organizational level dealing with success and failure is measured differently and there can be implemented different frameworks. For example, dealing with success and failure in organizations is recognized as learning process and it can be measured in ways of two complementary approaches to learning – the behavioral and the cognitive. (Glynn, Lant, and Milliken, 1994)

Learning theories are divided into two groups based on their assumptions about human capabilities and the complexity of learning processes. One of these ways behavioral learning is less relaying on decision makers impressions. The second strategy, cognitive learning, emphasizes the perception of decision makers. Each approach has weaknesses, and each approach may explain some phenomena that the other cannot. Combining the two learning approaches provides a more complete picture, because they complement one other. (Leroy & Ramanantsoa, 1997)

For example, managers and leaders who face ambiguous information about their own companies prefer to credit positive outcomes to strengths in their own organizations, while they blame negative outcomes on environmental factors. (Wagner & Gooding, 1997) However when managers or leaders are asked to evaluate data from other people's businesses, they link positive outcomes to environmental opportunity and negative outcomes to organizational weakness. Similarly, Huff and Schwenk (1990) found that Chrysler executives attributed poor companies' performance to environmental factors, while high success was attributed to strong management and leadership.

2.4 ATHLETES AS ENTREPRENEURS

Successful professional athlete careers in sport sometimes can be short, therefore most top athletes need to consider pursuing a second career (Kenny, 2015); others could find entrepreneurship as an interesting option. Leaning towards entrepreneurship of top athletes might be explained by the simple logic that the professional field of sport offers various business opportunities for self-employment. (Ratten, 2015)

Several empirical studies have attempted to identify the personalities of people with high degrees of entrepreneurial intent and high performing entrepreneurs from those of other groups, such as managers or employees. According to Kerr et al. (2018), most of the current research examines whether personality traits predict the chance of becoming an entrepreneur and later of achieving success as an entrepreneur. Zhao and Seibert (2006) researched that people who are considering becoming an entrepreneur or those who is taking part of physical sport activities, share certain personality traits. They are found to be more emotionally stable, equally extraverted, more open to experience, more conscientious, and less agreeable than managers in general. Also, athletes were found to be like entrepreneurs in their personality traits and there is a greater probability that they would engage in entrepreneurial activity as second career choice.

3 METHODOLOGY

For this thesis author will use effective research method tools by which information will be gathered. As research method will be used qualitative research method because as the name suggests it is concerned with quality of information. Qualitative methods attempt to gain an understanding of the underlying reasons and motivations for actions and establish how

people interpret their experiences and the world around them. Qualitative method will provide insights into the setting of a problem, generating ideas or hypotheses. (MacDonald & Headlam, n.d.)

This research method will help to gather complete, detailed information of the researched topic. The purpose of qualitative research method is contextualization, interpretation, and understanding perspectives of the topic. Researcher is data gathering instrument and data collection will be unstructured. This type of research method will help me to gather extensive insights on topics that are not well understood. Researcher will analyze all data with content analysis method to narrow down the data and identify the most essential themes discussed. There will be organized interviews with former athletes, and they will involve open ended questions to converse with respondents to extract data about proposed theme. This research method was chosen accordance with purposive sampling method for selecting the interviewees to ensure that they can provide valuable insights on the topic based on their experiences and professional background.

4   RESULTS

Author organized 4 interviews with former athletes, where 4 responders represented 4 different team sports in Latvia – Ice hockey, basketball, floorball, football, and these sports have been chosen because of their popularity in Latvia. Interview questions is built in four parts, background, task related, team related, and empowerment related questions. To analyze interviews and to better analyze theoretical parts, author decided to create 2 tables. Table 1 is based on ACL theory - task, team, individuals, and it will be highlighting each categories mentioned skills by respondents.

Table 1

	TASK RELATED KEY ELEMENTS	TEAM RELATED KEY ELEMENTS	EMPOWERING INDIVIDUALS KEY ELEMENTS
RESPONDENT 1 (FLOORBALL)	Focus, purposefulness, perseverance, teamwork.	Motivating, leading by example, never giving up, sharing.	Inspiring, motivating, respecting, collaborating, taking initiative
RESPONDENT 2 (BASKETBALL)	Discipline, ability to understand, communication.	Communication, leading by example, making sure everyone fits in.	Inspiring, motivating, communicating, taking initiative, gaining confidence.
RESPONDENT 3 (ICEHOCKEY)	Focus, speed, accuracy, ability to understand the situation and find solutions.	Patience, communication, responsibility, showing example.	Motivating, inspiring, ability to trust for years, communication.
RESPONDENT 4 (FOOTBALL)	Focus, speed, quality, and ability to react. Responsibility, teamwork, and communication with other people.	Taking the lead, pushing, and motivating others, finding the best individual approach for everyone.	Motivating, inspiring, creating good working environment. Good communication, teamwork, and collaboration.

For example, for task related part to gather the key element skills, author decided to combine two question answers:

- What were the main competencies in your sport? (In general)
- What characteristics or skills from the sport have been most useful for you in field of business?

The outcomes of the answers were different as we can see in the Table 1, but of course some of the respondents were thinking similar. For example, RESPONDENT 1 (floorball) and RESPONDENT 3 (hockey) thought that focus is the most important skill for accomplishing any kind of task. But then again RESPONDENT 2 (basketball) and RESPONDENT 3 (hockey) thought that ability to understand the situation and find the solutions has the crucial importance when accomplishing task successfully. Of course, many other skills were mentioned, but another important skill of completing task in the team is discipline. RESPONDENT 2 (basketball) said that most important is to stay disciplined, but from other side it overrated in professional sport and business, because managers are the ones who makes the discipline, you just need to follow it.

For the team related part to gather the key element skills author asked 5 questions to responders. These questions were designed in the way to understand athlete's role in the team, and what they have learned from their role or position in the sport team. To be able to analyze the importance of leader and leadership in team, author also asked to responders to describe themselves as leaders in their sport team, companies, and works. Also, athletes were asked to describe in their opinion the most important competencies for leadersOnce again, some answers were similar, but only two skills were mentioned by all responders – communication and leading by example. RESPONDENT 3 (hockey) and RESPONDENT 2 (basketball) said that they learned communication skill from their role in the team, but RESPONDENT 1 (floorball) and RESPONDENT 4 (football) thought that this skill is the most important competence for the leader.

Leading by example is essential part of leadership and it is especially important when trying to build successful team. Leaders cannot forget about encouragement, because by encouraging the individuals and making them fit into the team better, team is going to be more united, and more successful when working for long term projects and goals. Also, similar way was thinking respondents, but of course answers were different because there are many different leadership approaches. For example, RESPONDENT 2 (basketball) said that he is a similar kind of leader in sport and work: "I was foxy in way to make a person believe that he can fit in a team. I was successful in most of the times, and I do find a lot of similarities with the basketball team". Then again RESPONDENT 3 (hockey) was telling that: "I was example for many players in team, in some ways I was quiet one, but most responsible and the mature one, I'm working for the results, and I liked to request the same commitment from others".

To analyze theoretical part – Empowering Individuals, author asked respondents 4 questions. These questions were designed in the way that

author have put forward already some important key element from theoretical part – empowering Individuals, and responders were asked to give their opinion about these elements. These elements are – importance of inspiring, motivating, displaying high integrity and honestly, building relationships, collaborating, promoting team, and taking initiative.

First question asked to respondents was: How do you see the importance of inspiring and motivating others? To this question RESPONDENT 2 (basketball) answered: "It is very important, and that is a main reason why I started my own private school". In similar way was thinking RESPONDENT 3 (hockey), he agreed and said: "It is very important, because team is never going to be successful if they are not motivated, and I think that motivation you can get when you are inspiring". As well RESPONDENT 1 (floorball) was thinking similar: "It is important for the company to have motivated and inspired team, because if they will be motivated and inspired, they will achieve better results and they will be happier with working environment". Responders were also asked: What in their opinion displays high integrity and honestly? RESPONDENT 3 (hockey) thinks that high integrity and honesty need to be earned and it is ability to trust for many years. However, RESPONDENT 1 (floorball) thinks that it is the actions we take in our work environment, it's employees initiatives to come up with some ideas or solutions, and that they are not scared, because they know that every opinion is important, and that it will be respected by others. But then again RESPONDENT 2 (basketball) thinks differently, he thinks that it is rare these days and, and basically it is the perfect person in these days.

To analyze and to supplement the theoretical elements of the skills athletes learn from doing sports, the author made Table 2. Each skill mentioned in theory is supplemented with one question of the interview that way it will help better make parallels between athletes, sports, and the skills.

Table 2

	TEAMWORK	COMMUNICATION	STRATEGIC AND ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT	DECISION MAKING	VALUE OF PRACTICE AND PREPARATION	OVERCOMING ADVERSITY
	WHAT SKILLS FROM SPORT HAVE BEEN MOST USEFUL FOR YOU IN FIELD OF BUSINESS?	WHAT WAS YOUR ROLE IN TEAM?	DESCRIBE YOURSELF AS LEADER IN YOUR COMPANY / WORK?	WHAT YOU THINK ABOUT TAKING INITIATIVE, HOW EMPOWERING THIS IS IN YOUR MIND?	HOW OFTEN YOU HAVE HAD PRACTICES AND WERE THEY CONSISTENT?	WHAT IS YOUR FIELD OF BUSINESS?
RESPONDENT 1 (FLOORBALL)	Ability to work in the team have been the most useful skill learned from sport.	I have always been a team player and the guy in team who tries to motivate others, by being example, inspiring and sharing experiences.	Being example for others, motivating employees and offering them opportunities for growth. Working together with team, empowering them to share ideas, and working closely with employees in product launching.	It is important to take initiative, I really appreciate that in my employees, that they can come up with some ideas or solutions and that they know that always we will be respecting each other's opinions.	Well, when I was in top age as athlete, practices where consistent, we practiced 3-4 times per week together with team and extra that I did some individual practices, and in weekends we always had a game.	I had an injury for my knees and for long time I couldn't play floorball and I started company BLINDSAVE with idea to build the best goalkeeper kneepads.
RESPONDENT 2 (BASKETBALL)	To understand the persons characters. To find a way to communicate with everyone. Almost everyone.	I was a captain in a lot of teams I played. I was foxy in a way to make a person believe he can fit in a team. I was successful in most of the times.	I do find a lot of similarities with basketball team. And I think leader must lead by an example. Every problem has a solution if there is no solution it is not a problem.	I like to take initiative when I feel confident, but also when I don't. The best thing is that you become confident through the unconfidence in the beginning. This is the real confidence.	I played Basketball professionally 20 years. Twice a day. They were super consistent.	I work for Latvian Basketball federation (director), I do run my own private basketball school, I do some business in agriculture as well.
RESPONDENT 3 (ICEHOCKEY)	To understand how to quickly fix everything. Find a way to do it in everyday situations. For me the most important thing is that the team is built with good relationships (communication) and if there is no team, there are no results.	A person you can trust and count on. I do what need to do for the team.	I always try to be example for others, in some ways I'm quiet but responsible and mature. I am happy to invest time and money and I hope that it will succeed and bring profits and results in the future. I like to see the results.	I don't always like to take the initiative, because other times it can have the opposite effect. You need to build a team to succeed.	I have played ice hockey professionally 22 years. Twice a day. They were super consistent.	I'm working in my own hockey school as headmaster, also as the coach, and I do some business as well, mostly investments and I have been doing it for the last few years.
RESPONDENT 4 (FOOTBALL)	Discipline and responsibility, and teamwork. Communication with other people.	I was center midfielder, and captain in many teams.	I always have tried to find the individual approach to every team member, and to try to open everyone and push forward with positive approach, by motivating them. Also trying to show and explain everyone the big picture so, that they more involved themselves.	I think it's very important to take initiative, that's something what shows how ready you are take risk, and it shows how confident you are.	It was different in many levels, but in first league it was very consistent, 3-4 week, and games.	My field is fintech field, and there I have been last 6 years.

Skill - Teamwork was mentioned a lot, and when respondents were asked question – What skills from sport have been most useful for them in field of business? All respondents agreed that teamwork is one of the most important skill what they learned by doing team sport, and that especially teamwork have been most useful skill learned from the sport. RESPONDENT 2 (basketball) also mentioned that to develop this skill, first he needed to learn to understand each person's character, and he needed to find a way to communicate with everyone. For example, RESPONDENT

3 (hockey) told that for him most important is that team is built with good relationships and right communication, because if there is no team and teamwork, there is no results.

To analyze skill – communication, author decided to supplement communication skill element by question -   What was your role in the team? And reason was to understand what kind of impact they had from their role and did their role in team required them to develop communication skill. For example, RESPONDENT 1 (floorball) told: "I was goalkeeper in team, and I have always been a team player and the guy in team who tries to motivate others, by being example, inspiring and sharing experiences". RESPONDET 2 (basketball) said: "I was a captain in a lot of teams I played. I was foxy in a way to make a person believe he can fit in a team. I was successful in most of the times."

Strategic and organizational development skill element part was supplemented with question – Describe yourself as leader in your company or work? As we can see in Table 2 there are different answers, and each of the answer is different, because also every leader has different approach, but most common answer for respondents was that they all try to lead by example, and by motivating others. For example, RESPONDENT 2 (basketball) and RESPONDENT 4 (football) are more oriented to individual approach for their team members, RESPONDENT 2 (basketball) tries to make happen that every member fit in the team, but RESPONDENT 4 (football) is trying to find individual approach to each member, to open them up and push them forward with positive attitude. However, here we can observe different approaches, and RESPONDENT 3 (hockey) is more result and resource oriented, he says: "I am happy to invest time and money and I hope that it will succeed and bring profits and results in the future. I like to see the results, so I have gathered the best possible team with different kind of specialists, and they try to deliver for me good results".

Decision making skill for table was supplemented with question – What you think about taking initiative, how empowering this is in your mind? Author decided to add this question because decision making as theory focuses solely on choices and ability of leader to select the best options by taking initiative. RESPONDENT 1 (floorball) said: "It is important to take initiative, I really appreciate that in my employees, that they can come up with some ideas or solutions and that they know that always we will be respecting each other's opinions". RESPONDENT 2 (basketball) said: "I like to take initiative when I feel confident, but also when I don't. The best thing is that you become confident through the situations where you are not confident in the beginning. This is the real confidence". RESPONDENT 3 (hockey) said: "I don't always like to take the initiative, because other times it can have the opposite effect. You need to build a team to succeed". RESPONDENT 4 (football) said: "I think it's very important to take initiative, that's something what shows how ready you are take risk, and it shows how confident you are".

To analyze skill – Value of practice and preparation, author asked respondents to answer question – How often you have had practices and were they consistent? The reason for this kind of question, is to understand how professional athlete was, and that how committed they were. This question will help to compare the sports and athletes and later in discussion part it will help to make parallels between athletes' professionalism and what athletes are doing now after their sport careers. From respondent answers we can see, that two of athletes were professional and two others were semiprofessional. RESPONDENT 1 (floorball) was semiprofessional athlete and he said: "When I was in top age as athlete, practices where consistent, we practiced 3-4 times per week together with team and I did some extra individual practices, and in weekends we always had the games". RESPONDENT 2 (basketball) was

professional athlete for 20 years and he said: "I played Basketball professionally 20 years. Twice a day. They were super consistent".

Overcoming adversity skill element was supplemented with question – What is your field of business? The reason for this question is to understand in what kind of field athletes are working after their sport careers and what could be the possible obstacles, they have had overcome in their sport careers and in their works. For this reason, and after researching theory, author decided that most effective will be to combine last two skill elements, overcoming adversity and dealing with success and failure. In both skills the elements are similar, so it will be the best to analyze them together, to get better understanding how you can overcome adversity and how to deal with success and failure. RESPONDENT 1 (floorball) said: "I had an injury for my knees and for long time I couldn't play floorball and I started company BLINDSAVE with idea to build the best goalkeeper kneepads". RESPONDENT 2 (basketball) said: "I work for Latvian Basketball federation (director), I do run my own private basketball school, I do some business in agriculture as well". RESPONDENT 3 (hockey) said: "I'm working in my own hockey school as headmaster, also as the coach, and I do some business as well, mostly investments and I have been doing it for the last few years". RESPONDENT 4 (football) said: "My field is fintech field, and there I have been last 6 years".

5 RECOMMENDATIONS

In general, author wants to point out that in every sport, all the qualities and characteristics connects and complements each other. It is the same with the sports themselves, but the specifics and essence of each sport are different. When analyzing the interviews and summarizing the results, it can be concluded that many things also depend on the person and his or her personality, what may seem important to one may seem insignificant to the other. The results of the respondent answers are as different as the

people interviewed and the specifics of their sports. Each respondent deals or manages own business daily, but they are different in fields. Although everyone is basically involved in sports, but the specifics of daily work are different.

Therefore, the answers to the questions related to task, team, and impowering individuals related parts is similar, but in each question all respondents draw attention to something else that may also be related to the specific difference between their current occupation and their daily work tasks. It is obvious that some answers to the questions do not coincide at times, but that is because we need to take in consideration the role the person has in the work. Many people can be the managers of the company, but how much they can inspire and motivate people depends on their personality as well of their previous role in sports. All of this later reflects in the business, how great a leader you are and can be, and which qualities are important for you and how to use them properly to lead a team.

Analyzing the second table, where the main emphasis is on skills, it can be concluded that this time the answers of the respondents coincide more, considering that we are talking about team sports, then of course everything is based on teamwork. All the respondents mentioned that this skill have helped for them in business, and the ability to work in the team have been the most useful skill learned from sport.

Asking the question "What was your role in the team?" The answers came differently, as I mentioned in the first part, I can already point out here that a lot depends on the specifics of the sport itself and the style of play. For one, the role is created by his position on the field, for another, the role is created by what kind of person he is and how great a leader he can be in team. The role in the team depends to a large extent on the technical skills according to the sport or job responsibilities, as well as on how many

leadership skills and dominant qualities you have. Everything is based on the ability to communicate, and the way how to communicate, and great thing about sport is that it teaches us to communicate with everyone and in many different situations.

The answers to the question about leadership styles in work were different because they concerned the specifics of work. Precisely because these people played different roles in sports, and the specifics and diversity of their work, make them work differently for different tasks. But author need to note that everyone answered that motivation still binds everyone both in sports and now at work. And same as in sport, now in the work they try to lead by example, and by finding individual approach to every team member.

The supplemented question answers about the initiative also differed greatly, but it could be felt that the initiative was related to the extent of the career in sport. Taking initiative can be compared with decision making because both requires taking action. However, most decisions made by athletes are made while the play is in motion, and majority of those decisions are made rapidly and based on athletes' technical and tactical skill sets. It doesn't change the fact that, athletes have had good practicing in decision making, so they are used to take initiative on the field.

When asked about practices and preparation, you can also see how different the respondents are, and how different were their career paths and roles in the teams. Someone trained more, someone less, someone had frequent injuries, someone was a professional and someone was semi-professional, which is also very important factor for evaluating the athletes understanding about the value of practicing. Most important part of doing sport is that it teaches us the value of practicing and repeating same things repeatedly, and as we know preparation and practicing helps to get better, and it is common thing in sport, life, and business. (Whales, Frawley, Cohen

& Nikolova, 2021) Therefore, it is important to understand the importance of practicing because it will help to reach your individual or team goals in sport and so does in organization.

As well when touching the elements and skills of overcoming adversity in sport and business life, it was obvious that some respondents have gone through this process in their sport life's, some more, some less. By playing in top levels, they have learned to overcome adversity and failure through the many situations they face in athletics, a range of psychological qualities to withstand the pressures that they experience, either in their preparation process or during the competitions. (Fletcher & Sarkar, 2012) And also later this experience is contributed to their careers and development. Sometimes we do not even realize how much we use our skills that we have already developed and acquired in the beginning of our sport careers.

6 CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this thesis was to investigate and study the elements required to become a successful entrepreneur or business leader for the former athletes. This research was aiming to present framework for other athletes and business organizations to understand better the possible gained skills from team sport, and how they could be utilized in business organizations.

The main theoretical background for thesis was Action Centered Leadership model by John Adair. ACL model has direct structure towards teambuilding, and it focuses not only on individual development, but as well team tasks. ACL model divides leadership into three areas of "Task", "Team" and "Individuals" and so does it go in team sport organizations. There is team of athletes, coaches, and staff and all together they are completing different kind of tasks to achieve their common goals. Of

course, team is made of individuals, and they are required to have guidance and best possible support. In business organizations it is provided by leaders and managers, but in sport teams by coaches and captains. Therefore, author came to conclusion that ACL model also could be easily compared and implemented in team sport organizations, because leadership in business organization and sport team organizations share similarities.

Similar way it goes with skills and leadership elements, and to answer the main research question author was also researching theoretical background of topics such as Leadership elements in business organizations, Leadership elements you learn from playing teams sports, and Athletes as entrepreneurs. Research concludes that there are many skills and elements in leadership and sport: teamwork, communication, strategic and organizational development, decision making, value of practice and preparation, overcoming adversity, and dealing with success and failure. These skills and elements share similarities in business organizations and sport, and they were researched from both perspectives.

From these parts it can be concluded that the ability to work in team, communication, and ability to overcome adversity and deal with success and failure has been most useful skills learned from team sports. All these elements go hand in hand because effective teamwork is defined by effective communication and collaboration among team members as they work toward a common objective. However, the great thing about athletics is that team sport teaches us, and it give us opportunity to learn from our failures, which we face on our way when trying to achieve or goals and dreams. No matter what sport you are playing it is important to trust the process you are going through and to do that better you have to learn to accept success with humility. To deal with failure with dignity by

overcoming setbacks through resilience and individual's ability to persevere and adapt. (Reivich & Shatté, 2002)

However, from interviews with ex athletes it was concluded that so much it depends on person and his or her personality, what may seem important to one may seem insignificant to the other. All the qualities and characteristics what respondents have very well connects and complements the needed leadership skills in business organizations. Each respondent deals or manages own business daily, but they are different in fields. Although everyone is basically involved in sports, but the specifics of daily work are different. It can be concluded from this research that, yes, athlete gained traits from playing team sports help them to develop the necessary qualities needed for the leadership in business.

In general athletes who participate and play team sports were found to be like business leaders and entrepreneurs in their personality traits and skills which they have gained through their sport careers. There is greater probability they would be inclined to engage in business organizations or in entrepreneurship as a second career choice after retirement from professional sport. While non – athletes invest time in education, athletes focus on their sport career and when athletes need to adopt a second career, athletes are competing in the same job market as non-athletes, but often with lower educations level or less experience. Therefore, for athletes it is important to realize the importance of the side education during their sport careers, or at least establish some future study plans after professional sport career. Then again need to take in consideration that team athletes have spent long time in sport organizations, and they know their team sport very well. Possible career solution for them would be to implement their gained skills into sport field entrepreneurship. As good example is the author of this thesis, he is also professional athlete, and during his sport career he have understand the importance of the

education and need for a second career besides being athlete. Author have started own company which is organizing sport camps for the kids.

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(Appendix 1/1 (page 1)

Appendix 1. Interview questions

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

1. How old are you and how long have you been playing team sport?
2. What sport did you do, and in what kind of level?
3. What are your achievements in sport?
4. What is your field of business and how long time have you worked in this field?

TASK related questions

1. What position have you played?
2. How often you have had practices and were they consistent?
3. What are the main competencies in your sport discipline? (In general)
4. What characteristics or skills from the sport have been most useful for you in field of business?

TEAM related questions

1. What was your role (position) in team?
2. Which competencies have you gained from your position?
3. How would you describe yourself as a leader in your sport team?
4. How would you describe yourself as a leader in business company?
5. In your opinion what are the most important competencies for a leader?

EMPOWERING INDIVIDUALS related questions

1. How do you see the importance of inspiring and motivating others?
2. What in your opinion displays high integrity and honestly?
3. What do you think, how important is building relationships, collaborating, and promoting team?
4. What you think about taking initiative, how empowering this is in your mind?