

7 THINGS SUCCESSFUL SWIMMERS DO DIFFERENTLY

Guest editorial by Olivier Poirier-Leroy

PHOENIX, Arizona, December 5. WHY do some swimmers have a hard time achieving success while other swimmers seem to effortlessly enjoy wild and never-ending success?

Generally the first two answers tabled are talent and genetics. However, possessing these two attributes alone will not constitute an elite swimmer. Sure, they will always get by for a few years on these two characteristics, but it isn't long before that isn't enough. And before long, these promising young athletes are reflected upon as "flashes in the pan."

Those at the top of the podium approach their sport different than the rest. Here are 7 ways that successful swimmers are doing it differently:

1. Ownership. I used to compete against a swimmer who loved playing the "blame game." If his results weren't as good as they should or could have been, we would all be barraged upon with a litany of excuses. Whether it was goggles filling up with water, a bad night's rest, or he was racing with a workout suit, he'd pawn off his lousy competition performance on outside influences and bad luck so that he wouldn't have to own up to them. Pawning off failures by making excuses for them removes accountability. Successful swimmers own their awesome performances and their not so good ones too.

2. Use Failure as Fuel. Failure may as well be another 4-letter word. You can see it in the pained faces of swimmers who come up just short at the end of a race. Successful swimmers, once the initial sting of defeat has receded, are able to see past failure. Instead of having it demoralize them, they use it as the catalyst for massive positive change. Those moments of disappointment provide important -- albeit sometimes painful -- lessons that will help pave the way to achievement. Remember, failure only becomes fatal when you give up and do not heed the lessons it provides.

3. Surround Themselves with Like-Minded Athletes. The expression "you are a product of your environment" is just as relevant when applied to the swimmers and people you associate yourself with. As much as we like to believe that other people have no influence on our lives, in the words of esteemed John Donne, "No man is an island entire of itself." The actions and behaviors of the people you surround yourself will rub off on you, whether you immediately realize it or not. Good news, however, is that this goes both ways -- negative people will bring you down just as well as positive people will bring you up.

4. Plan. Successful swimmers know exactly where they are going. They have a concrete, visceral goal in the horizon, and they aren't afraid to put together a plan to make it happen. This means breaking it down step-by-step, and setting out what directly relates to achieving their goal. Faster start? Check. Shave ? second off the turns?

Noted. Improving ankle flexibility? Put it on the to-do list. Don't be afraid to take your goal, break it apart to its smallest pieces and then slowly put it back together.

5. Execution. Of course, having a plan and all of the motivation in the world does nothing without the follow-through. Top echelon swimmers don't wait for the perfect moment, they don't wait until they "feel like it" and they don't wait until the beginning of next season to start hauling ass towards their goals. Start today, start now.

6. Cross the Line Between Excellence & Perfection. Whenever a swimmer tells me that they are "perfectionists" my first thought is, "you never complete anything, ever." Perfectionists are great at making plans, of concocting great and earth-shattering goals, but incredibly terrible at completing them. Why? Because they've set impossible standards, they are dooming themselves to failure from the outset. Their high expectations will never be met because "perfect" is an illusion. There will never be a perfect time. You will never feel perfect. The only "perfect" time to act is this one, right now. Success doesn't come to perfectionists -- it comes to the swimmers who show up and get things done.

7. Embrace Hard Work. In an era where instant gratification is expected from everything we do, it can be very easy to dismiss the idea of hard work. Whenever a really tough set gets scrawled up on the chalkboard, the elite swimmer won't groan and moan. Their steely eyes will narrow and they will be the first in the pool to tackle it. Why is that? Are they gluttons for punishment? Not at all. They welcome those hard sets because they know that is what will separate them from the athlete in the lane next to them. While others are bowing out or not giving their best effort, the successful swimmer smiles gleefully as he or she powers through the sets that no one else is willing to do.

Can you think of any other characteristics that a successful swimmer possesses? Leave your answer in the comments below!

Olivier Poirier-Leroy is a former national level swimmer in Canada. He is also the publisher of [YourSwimBook](#). Learn 8 ways that it can help your performance by [clicking here today](#).