

TALKING BUSINESS WITH RUBEN GONZALEZ

The Champion's Creed

RUBEN GONZALEZ SUCCEEDED in making his dream of competing in the Olympics a reality. Gonzalez took up the luge, hurling himself down an icy track on a sled at speeds over 80 MPH. While most Olympic luge athletes begin training by the age of 10, he started at 21. To some, Gonzalez's dream seemed hopeless, but four years later, he qualified to compete in the Calgary Olympics and again in Albertville. But his most memorable Olympics would be at Salt Lake City in 2002. At age 39, he was so much older than his competitors that some mistook him for a coach! Nevertheless, Gonzalez's story embodied the Olympic spirit, which is why he was chosen as one of 200 Olympians to carry the torch that year.

Gonzalez is the author of *The Courage To Succeed* and will be featured in the upcoming film, *Pass It On*. Now a motivational speaker, he shares his story and provides insight to audiences on how to push beyond their limitations. *Success* asked the three-time Olympian for his advice on achieving your dreams.

IGNORE DREAM STEALERS

"If I could go back and give advice to myself when I was starting out, I'd say not to listen to the dream stealers. When I first started, I called Lake Placid (home of USA Luge) and the man who answered laughed at me when I told him I was 21. I knew that hanging up wasn't an option. After awhile he realized I was serious about training. You cannot listen to people who try to keep you from your dreams. What if I

had taken that first no? That would have been the end of the story."

PROBABILITIES AND POSSIBILITIES

In lugging, nine out of ten people quit in their first year. These odds would make most wary, but not Gonzalez. "I got excited. I was going to outlast everyone. Most people look at their dreams and start calculating the odds of them ever happening. They can tell you the probabilities and that number keeps them from even getting started. They don't understand that probability has nothing to do with success. Don't focus on the probabilities, focus on the possibilities."

COMMIT TO YOUR GOALS

"In my first two years, I crashed four out of five times. By the third year, I got better and would crash only one out of 100." When Gonzalez recently taught his 6-year-old daughter, Gabriela, how to ride a bike, he saw history repeat itself. "After the first day she fell. The second day she kept falling and told me that she didn't want to do this. But I wouldn't let her give up, and by the third day she was able to stay on. Her third day of learning to ride her bike was like my third year of training. Commitment is what makes success possible."

FOCUS ON RESULTS

"Whenever you are trying to accomplish something, don't worry too much about how you go about getting results. Focus on whether you are getting results. If not, change approaches. Be open to new ideas and information. One

new idea could literally transform your life."

HANDLE SETBACKS

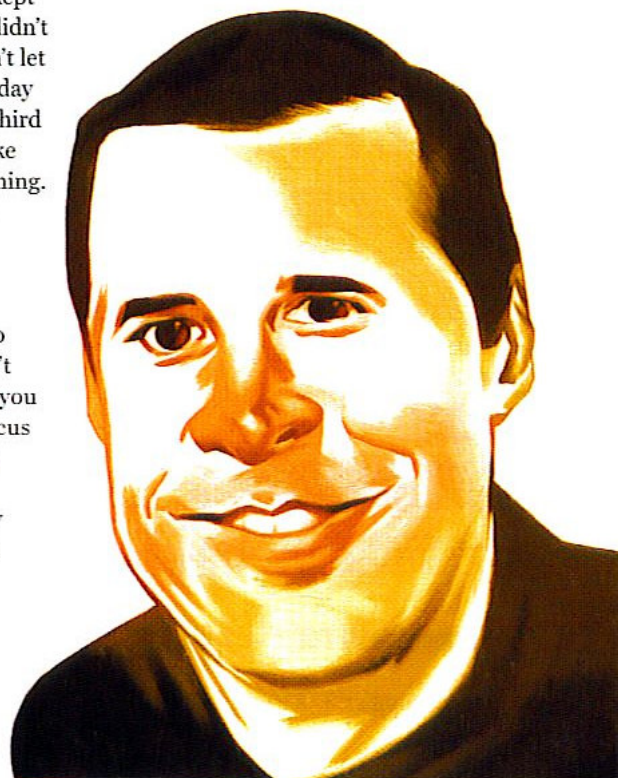
"Next time you experience a major setback, do what top achievers do: recover quickly. Right away, they force themselves to look at the bright side of things. If you recover quickly, you don't lose your momentum and your drive." How you choose to react to something can significantly improve your chances of success.

BUILD A "DREAM TEAM"

"Create your own 'dream team' of people who believe in you and who will encourage you when you are going through challenges. My family's been 100% supportive. Mentors who have done what you want to do are necessary as well. My coach is like the Michael Jordan of luge. Who you surround yourself with will determine how far you go. When these people believe in you, you will begin to believe it too."

FOR MORE ABOUT RUBEN GONZALEZ, GO TO WWW.SUCCESSMAGAZINE.COM/COACHES.

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THOMAS FUGHS