



Olympic Story of Trust

by Bob Whipple: MBA, CPLP

I was a Division Manager for Eastman Kodak when a strange request came in from the Olympics. Responding to this impossible challenge involved having total trust in the system and team, to allow them to break every rule in the book and put out a new product in less than three days.

On a Tuesday morning in 1992, one of the product planners got a call from a customer in Albertville, France. The Winter Olympics was starting to wind down, and this customer from Sports Illustrated had a challenge for us. He noticed that there were colored Olympic rings embedded in the ice of the figure skating venue. His idea was to climb up into the rafters and take images looking directly down on the skaters in the Woman's Singles Finals on Saturday night with the rings in the background. He needed some special equipment in a format we did not sell.

The accelerated cycle time to get a new product like that to the market was 9-12 months in order to develop the process, get the hardware approved, establish the specs, create the packaging, etc. The problem was that we had to ship the product on Friday morning to be sure it would get to Albertville on time. That meant we had to get everything done in less than three days rather than a year. Talk about a scramble!

The team assigned the task of getting this product out had a blast breaking all kinds of rules in order to make the impossible deadline. In the end, the customer had what he needed, and the next issue of Sports Illustrated had an image of Kristie Yamaguchi winning the Gold Medal while she was literally flying over the Olympic rings embedded in the ice.

The Business Unit was so thrilled that they presented the Department with a framed copy of the image signed by Kristie Yamaguchi. When the business unit came to the factory to deliver a personally signed copy of the image, it was an electric moment for the workers. That framed picture hung in a place of honor to remind the team that the impossible is really possible if trust in the team is there. It is truly amazing what a turned-on team of workers can accomplish.

Bob Whipple, MBA, CPLP, is a consultant, trainer, speaker, and author in the areas of leadership and trust. He is the author of: *The Trust Factor: Advanced Leadership for Professionals*, *Understanding E-Body Language: Building Trust Online*, and *Leading with Trust is Like Sailing Downwind*. Bob has many years as a senior executive with a Fortune 500 Company and with non-profit organizations. To bring Bob in to speak at your next event, **contact him at** www.Leadergrow.com, bwhipple@leadergrow.com or 585.392.7763

