



By Richard D. Czerniawski

DO THE IMPOSSIBLE FIRST

I'm currently reading *THE IMPOSSIBLE FIRST: From Fire to Ice—Crossing Antarctica Alone* by Colin O'Brady. I learned about Mr. O'Brady from a podcast in which he appeared and told his story. He is a professional endurance athlete and adventurer. Mr. O'Brady is a four-time world record holder for things I would never consider tackling, such as going for the Seven Summits speed record. Forget the speed record; I wouldn't entertain the notion that I could successfully climb even one of those summits if you gave me 10-years!

Traversing the Antarctic continent "unsupported and unassisted" was considered impossible. What does it mean to do it unsupported and unassisted? Well, unsupported means there are no way-stations with food, medical supplies, or anything anyone might need suffering through sub-zero temperatures for about 1,000 miles. Nor are there any airdrops of supplies. Instead, everything Mr. O'Brady needed, he had to carry and pull on his sleigh. As per unassisted, he could not use a parasail or anything to propel him along his torturous route. He endured every painstaking, bone-chilling, torturous mile pulling his sleigh and supplies, which weighted approximately 300-pounds at the start of his trek.

The last adventurer to attempt this feat before Mr. O'Brady was one Colonel Henry Worsley of the British Army—a legendary figure. However, Colonel Worsley fell ill and had to call for an emergency evacuation just 100-miles shy of doing what mere mortals deemed impossible. While he was successfully evacuated, he died in a hospital in Chile.

Yet Colin O'Brady achieved the impossible to become "the impossible first." He's not alone in becoming the impossible first. At one time, running a sub-4 minute mile was considered impossible. Medical experts believed that the human body could not survive it. (Sir) Roger Bannister made it happen and shocked not just the naysayers but the world. It's curious to note that only two days after Mr. O'Brady made history, another adventurer, Captain Louis Rudd of the British Army (what's with these Brits), successfully completed his journey crossing Antarctica unsupported and unassisted. Roger Bannister's sub-4 minute mile was soon matched by others. The impossible, while incredibly difficult, is now possible.

The impossible is probable. I think that when others tell us something is impossible, that we can't possibly do it, we need to overcome their prejudice and press-on—if it is critically important to accomplish. If we don't press-on to achieve the impossible, then one of our competitors will obtain the title of "the impossible first." They will beat us to it!

What does it take to do and become the impossible first? First, we need to silence the naysayers—at least in our minds. We need to overcome the psychological barrier. It requires "mind over matter." Colin O'Brady made it clear that he would have to rely on the muscle between his ears to get him through. Roger Bannister trained alone, far from those whose opinions would serve to discourage him from his endeavor.

Second, we need to plan meticulously. It's no accident that these two individuals were able to achieve what others believed to be impossible. They took a scientific approach to address and conquer their challenge. Moreover, they knew they would not accomplish their goal if they undertook their quest in the same way as those that failed. They recognized that they had to approach the problem in a new way or risk certain failure.

Finally, those that become the impossible first execute precisely and adapt where needed. Mike Tyson, former boxing heavyweight champion of the world, once declared, "Everyone has a plan until they get punched in the mouth." We need to think through each step and execute it with perfection. If, and when, things begin to go wrong, it is crucial to adapt to the situation and get back on course.

When I think of those businesswomen and men doing the impossible first, my mind jumps to Steve Jobs, Anita Roddick, Elon Musk, Jeff Bezos, and Sara Blakely, among others. They have entrepreneurial hearts and minds, and do not fear going where others dare not.

If we seek to get ahead and stay ahead of our competition—regardless of the endeavor, we must open our minds. We need to set-out on doing and becoming the first. If we fail to attempt it, we open the door for one of our competitors doing and becoming the impossible first.

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