



Running Toward Success

Jason Karp's winning attitude helps him and his clients achieve the gold standard.

Subject: Jason Karp, PhD
Company: RunCoachJason.com
Location: San Diego, California

Starting Blocks. From a very early age, Jason Karp, PhD, owner of RunCoach Jason.com and IDEA author and presenter, knew that his future would involve running—and lots of it. He got his first taste of running while participating in a track meet in middle school, where the seeds of a career were planted. “There was something exciting about running faster than the guy in the lane next to me; something intriguing about how to do it.”

Unaware that this interest would later become his bread and butter, Karp began to invest his extra time in learning more about the sport and the mechanics behind it. “While I didn’t know at the time exactly what form my career would take, I knew that one of the things I wanted to do was coach,” he recalls. “So I took the steps necessary to become as educated as I could in the field of exercise science.”

Training Regimen. Karp quickly realized that the higher his education went, the more respect he could gain from colleagues and clients alike. He enrolled in

a master’s program “at a school where [he] could rub elbows with the best.” The plan worked, as his graduate degree afforded him the opportunity to take a job as a college cross-country head coach—one of the youngest in the country.

Not yet satisfied with his educational pursuits, Karp returned to school to obtain a doctorate degree. He also began privately coaching a runner he met through a running group. “While coaching this runner—who qualified for the U.S. Olympic marathon trials—I decided this was the route I wanted to go,” says Karp. “I created a website, drafted a contract and started a coaching business.”

Facing Hurdles. Despite his education and perseverance, Karp has experienced his share of difficulties. “Like anyone who [is self-employed], the biggest challenge I’ve faced has been attracting clients,” he concedes. “It takes time to establish a reputation and to get other people to know who you are and the value of your services.”

One of the greatest lessons he’s learned is that patience is key to success. “It takes 10 years to make an overnight success,” he jokes. And it is his experience as both a runner and a coach that has led him to the realization that the level of success desired is often dependent on the amount of work put into achieving it. “I have learned from being a runner and a coach that to run fast, you first have to spend a lot of time running slow. Running your own business is like that, too.” Just as in training for a marathon, Karp recognizes the importance of pushing past boundaries to

spread the word about his business. “In addition to distributing brochures and fliers at [races], I host a series of free running clinics in the local park. I also offer free talks to running groups and host the VO₂max Distance Running Clinic for runners and coaches, as well as the San Diego Personal Training Summit for personal trainers and fitness professionals.”

Winning the Gold. At the end of the day, Karp knows that challenges often reap grand rewards, and he has found that inspiration abounds when working with clients. “I try to get them to make exercise a part of who they are, rather than something they do. I challenge them to be something better than they currently are. When I say these things to them, it inspires me to be or do what I’m telling my clients to be or do.” It is this emphasis on challenge that creates great athletes, he adds.

Without challenge, Karp finds, people will always seek the path of least resistance, a path that condones a second-place attitude, as opposed to the mindset of a gold medalist. “In a society where we often reward mediocrity, where ‘everyone is a winner,’ people respond to the standards we set. If we set them low, people don’t achieve much. People can achieve more than they think, but they need to be challenged to do so.” ■

Ryan Halvorson is the associate editor for IDEA and a certified personal trainer at the Wave House Athletic Club in San Diego.

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