

# 5 Things Entrepreneurs Can Learn from Simone Biles



As spectators of the current Rio 2016 Olympics, we're again being amazed by elite athletes with record-breaking performances. Of special interest has been the gymnastic performance of nineteen-year-old Simone Biles. Her performances have been breathtaking in their execution and perfection.

Prior to entering the Olympics, Biles was already a three-time World Champion and brain scientists were quick to analyze her seemingly unique motor coordination.

The neuroscientist, [Thomas Jessell](#), is the co-director of the Columbia University's Mortimer B. Zuckerman Mind Brain Behavior Institute. He suggests that elite athletes like Biles and Michael Jordan may have a birth advantage of "... a slightly better-wired motor system" and their brain plasticity becomes more refined with training.

[What makes a great performance is brain plasticity. Click To Tweet](#)

## **Brain Plasticity**

All of us have the quality of brain plasticity.

It means that one's neural connections and structures are not fixed but are able to change, for the most part, throughout one's life. Changes can occur in the connection between neurons or within neurons themselves. It means we may gain greater skills in certain areas due to new learning and repetition.

In elite athletes, it's thought various types of physical and cognitive visual training affect brain plasticity and subsequent performance.

Research shows strong neural connections between the brain cortex and the spinal cord, and more efficient integration of different brain areas for better sensory and motor function.

## **5 Things Elite Athlete Simone Biles' brain performs**

According to Jessell, who has studied body movement for over 30 years, Biles' brain moves through 5 stages to create her performance agility.

As entrepreneurs, we can take these same 5 stages and apply them to our own business brain performance without having to do any of these gymnastic gyrations.

### **Stage 1 Sensing Her Limbs**

Simone is attentive to her sensory feedback system. Neurons are sending messages from muscle fibers as to what is happening as she moves her arms and legs. This helps her to know where she is in space and to coordinate the next body movement.

Being entrepreneurs means we need to pay attention to feedback as well. We need to know where we are in the process of what we are doing and where we are going next. Feedback may come from others or from our own inner intuition. Either way, it helps us coordinate different part of our business into an effective next move

## **Stage 2 Gripping the Beam**

This is where physical contact is made with the structure she will be interacting with i.e., the balance beam. Sensory messages from her hands will reach the interneurons in her spinal cord. They in turn will relay to muscle fibers. This sensory network acts to control the desired muscles for maximum performance.

It's the same for each entrepreneur. We want to be in control of our business for maximum performance. In order to do so, we need to stay in touch with our mission statement, business goals, and brand identity. This allows us to guide and control our business as we originally intended rather than being distracted by all the bright and shiny objects that come our way.

## **Stage 3 Measuring Acceleration**

When Simone's body leaves the beam, her body enters a specific pattern of movement. As she does so, her brain is monitoring for body coordination and balance. When her body is moving through space, awareness of balance comes primarily from the fluid filled tubes of the inner ear.

Balance among the different parts of a business is important for entrepreneurs as well. Monitoring tools can make sure all parts are supporting one another and progress is being made in the intended direction. They include checklists, scheduled assessments or coaching reviews. Results are immediate indicators if you're in or out-of-balance in your business.

## **Stage 4 Sticking the Landing**

This means when Simone is getting ready to land, her eye movements (tracking) are conveying information to her visual cortex. This info is then coordinated with muscle movement to land in the intended manner and place.

As entrepreneurs, it's our intent to land at the points we've set as our goals. Therefore, as we move through the different part of our business, it's important for us to keep our eye on the goal and make sure our efforts are taking us in that direction.

## **Stage 5 Corrective Movements**

When Simone is progressing through her performance her inner guidance system, the fluid-filled tubes of her inner ear, is making minute and instantaneous adjustments to keep her on track and in balance.

Entrepreneurs also need a corrective guidance system. As with any business, things do not always go smoothly or as expected. By having a plan or strategy for dealing with potential problems it allows for course corrections sooner than later.

To recap. What entrepreneurs can learn from high profile performances of Simon Biles is that:

1. We need a feedback system so we can be effective in our next business move.
2. In order to be in control, we need to stay in touch with

our original business intentions.

3. We can use monitoring tools to make sure the different parts of our business are supportive and creating a business that's balanced
4. If we want to land at our intended goal. We need to keep an eye on our efforts to get us there.
5. We need a plan or strategy to course correct for any potential problems.

Is there anything you observed from athletic performances that you could apply to your business?

Resources:

[http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/neuroscience-of-athletes\\_us\\_57a395f1e4b021fd9877f6bc](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/neuroscience-of-athletes_us_57a395f1e4b021fd9877f6bc)

<http://zuckermaninstitute.columbia.edu/news/inside-mind-athlete-how-simone-biles-keeps-her-balance>

<http://www.scientificamerican.com/article/understanding-elite-athlete/>

<http://dailyburn.com/life/tech/brain-training-sports/>

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