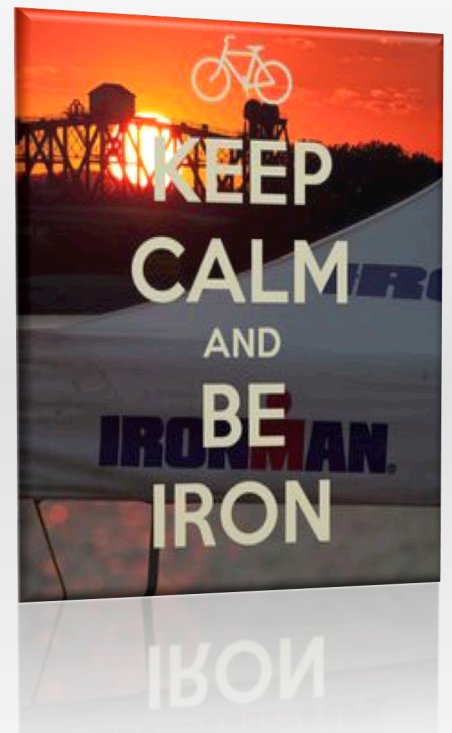


# Entrepreneurship Lessons From **IRONMAN**

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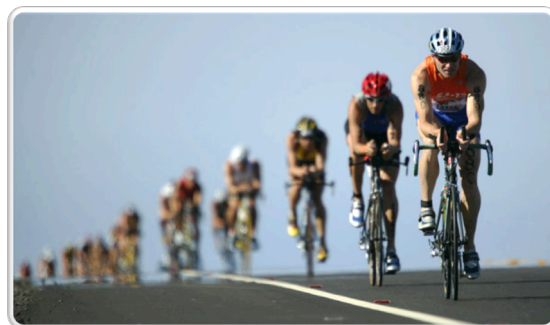
Swim 2.4 miles! Bike 112 miles! Run 26.2 miles! Brag for the rest of your life!

A triathlon is a multiple-stage competition involving the completion of three continuous and sequential endurance disciplines. There are four different lengths of triathlons, the longest being the Ironman competition. An Ironman triathlon is considered to be one of the ultimate endurance challenges, consisting of a 2.4 mile swim, 112 mile bike ride, followed by a 26.2 mile run, all of which are completed in less than 16 hours and 59 minutes. Most competitors prepare for 6-9 months for a single event. Having completed 11 myself, there are numerous parallels to entrepreneurship and lessons that entrepreneurs can take away from this competition to make them more successful. Three specific lessons will be expanded upon in this paper.



# 1. Buy Into and Trust Your Plan

To prepare for an Ironman triathlon, an athlete has to become proficient in three sports: swimming, biking, and running. A typical plan will cover 2,800 miles, 375 hours of training, and over 6 months of time spent in preparation. All of that commitment and preparation will culminate into one race, performed in one day. Before making that kind of commitment, the most important thing to do is to select and personally buy into a plan. You have to believe in the 'big picture' of your goal because it is difficult to see results in the day-to-day activities. It is essential not to deviate from your plan, because each day and its activities serve a purpose toward pushing you towards your final goal. As an entrepreneur, build a plan that you and your team can buy into. Remind yourself, that every day and every activity as mundane as it might seem, will serve a



purpose towards achieving your goals. Being in alignment and believing in the mission, vision and values of your company, is essential. You should strongly believe and work toward the problem you are solving. Stand firm behind what you are accomplishing. No matter how tough it gets, stick to it.



## 2. Focus On What You Can Control

Ironman events are usually held during the summer months to maximize sunlight hours. Despite all of the training and preparation, you will not have the perfect race. A multitude of things can and will most likely go wrong. The weather could be too hot, too humid, too cold, or too windy. You may get a flat tire, lose your nutrition, or your bike computer may break. These are all elements that are out of your control. To counteract these potential problems, a major component of the Ironman Triathlon is mental state and attitude. This will be the difference when things go wrong. Focus on what you can control and don't dwell on what you can't. The same holds true for entrepreneurship. The market can be unpredictable. Things will go wrong. Timelines will be longer than expected. Keep as much of your business' progress under the direct control of your team versus in the hands of partners - especially in the early stage. When things get tough, try not to dwell on the problems, and instead have the attitude to persevere. Focus on what you can control, keep a positive mindset and a mental state that remembers that the unexpected is a big part of the entrepreneurial world.



## 3. Never Give Up!

Lastly, during the course of a race, you will most likely feel like quitting 10+ times. You might even question your sanity, and ask yourself if you have the desire to complete the goal you originally set out to accomplish. An Ironman athlete has the mental toughness to push through these mini walls and get to the next stage. We have a saying, "never give up". Good things can happen to entrepreneurs that push through obstacles that sometimes appear to be game ending. It is essential to remember that setbacks don't mean the end. They may even in turn help the company pivot and achieve success another way. Going through hardships, just like in a long race, will make finish line will look even sweeter - never give up.



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