The Only Way to Win
How building character drives higher achievement and greater fulfilment in business and life
Jim Loehr.

When Volkswagen revealed in September 2015 that it had installed software on millions of cars in order to trick the Environmental Protection Agency’s emissions testers into thinking that the cars were more environmentally friendly than they were, investors understandably deserted the company wiping roughly $US 20 billion of the market value. As the graph shows, the April 2016 share price has recovered to about that of 2012.

Jim Loehr brings sharply into focus how the drive and focus on Performance Character Strengths frequently blindsides us to the importance of Moral Character Strengths.

About Jim
Commencing a career in sports and moving to working with high achievers from many walks of life, Jim Loehr has discovered the false premise that many of us may have: “Great achievements will bring lasting happiness and fulfilment.” Through countless examples, Dr. Loehr uncovers the startling revelation that, often, winning changes nothing. He co-founded the Human Performance Institute, which provides leadership training to executives world-wide. His integration of the four forms of energy into personal and professional life was produced in the book, “The Power of Full Engagement” (written in conjunction with Tony Schwartz).

Structure
The book has 10 chapters grouped into three parts:
Part I: The False Promise of Achievement
Chapter 1 - A Parade of Failed Promises
Chapter 2 - How Did We Get Here?

Part II: The New Performance Scorecard
Chapter 3 - The Cry for a New Scorecard
Chapter 4 - Character Comes in Two Types
Chapter 5 - Building Your Scorecard and Training the Muscles of Character

Part III: Character in Action
Chapter 6 - It’s Never Just a Job
Chapter 7 - What Business Leaders Can Learn from Sport
Chapter 8 - Building Moral Character in Others: For Business Leaders, Parents, Teachers, and Coaches

Part IV: Back to Chasing Achievement Again—with the New Scorecard
Chapter 9 - Getting Your Story Straight About Achievement
Chapter 10 - Winning with Your New Scorecard
"I'll have a life when I retire, when my kids have left home, when my wife has divorced me, my health is failing, I've got no mates or interests left." Nigel Marsh, TedX Sydney, 2010\(^1\). This sarcastic observation by Marsh hides a deeper disconnect between what we think we want and what we actually design for ourselves. And this brings into sharp focus – what are the real character traits we want to live by each day.

Using real-life people, Loehr, demonstrates that winning/achieving at any cost can be very destructive.

“I've been let in on a dirty little secret: winning changes nothing.” “But I don’t feel that Wimbledon changed me. I feel, in fact, as if I’ve been let in on a dirty little secret: winning changes nothing. Now that I’ve won a slam, I know something that very few people on earth are permitted to know. A win doesn't feel as good as a loss feels bad, and the good feeling doesn't last as long as the bad. Not even close.” Andre Agassi.

Loehr states, “I literally came out of my chair when I read these words from Andre Agassi’s startlingly frank and insightful autobiography, Open. The words were almost verbatim what we’ve heard from the countless high achievers in our programs.”

Loehr is also very clear: he is not against achievement, wealth or recognition – he himself has been a very high achiever. However, he reminds us that we always need to ask ourselves why we’re investing so much time and energy in the activities that consume most of our waking lives—questions like:

- “When is the price of a goal attainment too high? What’s the potential cost to you or others for the achievement?
- Is the sacrifice that goes into the pursuit justified in terms of what really matters?
- If, as a consequence of the pursuit, you pay an incredibly steep price, perhaps even the ultimate price —compromise your character, lose your family, lose your health, lose your life—will that be okay? Can you still justify going after that goal?
- When is the payoff not worth the price?
- How far will you go to achieve your goal?
- How much control do you have over realising your achievement?
- Do you like who you are becoming as a consequence of the pursuit?
- Why are you seeking this achievement?
- What will happen to you and others if you fail?”

The drivers of meaningful achievement

Loehr calls for a new performance scorecard: one which is based on what he refers to as “the primacy of purpose”. With clarity of purpose, we fail to live a life of significance and meaning and, without this, we “hunger” for the next transient challenge or experience.

And in elaborating on the purpose, he neatly expands the Four Forms of Energy, which were the basis of his earlier work, The Power of Full Engagement.

Expanding on the Dalai Lama’s key mantra for Happiness: *If you want to be happy, practice compassion*, Loehr encourages us to become skillful in the use of “Self Determination Theory,” which prescribes three elements for sustained, intrinsic motivation and subsequent character development:

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\(^1\) This short (10 min) video is worth watching. [https://nigelmarsh.com/](https://nigelmarsh.com/)
1. **Autonomy.** You decide. You choose your work, actions, life and goals.
2. **Mastery.** After you select what to do, you naturally want to do it well. You’re happy as you learn, practice and apply the skills you need in your chosen pursuits.
3. **Relatedness.** You link your pursuits to a meaningful purpose.

### The Power of Character

*Watch your thoughts, they become your beliefs.*
*Watch your beliefs, they become your words.*
*Watch your words, they become your actions.*
*Watch your actions, they become your habits.*
*Watch your habits, they become your character.*

— Vince Lombardi

There are a multitude of definitions around character. We like to think of character simply being your beliefs and values in action. Loehr provides a nice distinction between two primary types of character:

- **Moral** character strengths assist in meeting spiritual needs and therefore define the values that govern our relationship with others.
- **Performance** character strengths assist in meeting emotional and mental needs and thus pertain to the values that govern our relationship with ourselves.

As Lickona and Davidson conclude in Smart & Good High Schools, “Whereas moral virtues are intrinsically good, performance virtues can be used for bad ends.”

### The Hierarchy of Character Strengths

Are moral character traits realistic in today’s highly competitive world?

In our professional career working with many organisations, we see far too much tolerance of business performance over the organisation’s stated values and/or behaviours. Sadly, it is only when things go really pear-shaped, does action eventuate. Events such as criminal behaviour (eg. VW illustrated at the beginning of this article) are some of the most published high profile cases.
However, bullying or other psychopathic dysfunctional behaviour regularly are not dealt with promptly or proactively.

Building a new scorecard

Starting with Purpose, Loehr encourages us to flesh out what is important to each of us.

- What legacy do you want to leave behind?
- How do you want to be remembered?
- How do you want people to describe you?
- Who do you want to be in life—who is your best self?
- Who and what matters most to you?

What are your deepest values?

- How would you define true success for your life?
- What makes your life really worth living?

Look at energy quality

Our emotions drive so much of our behaviour. Our highest quality energy comes from our positive emotions such as hope, optimism and challenge. On the other hand, our lowest quality energy comes from hormonal releases generated by emotions such as fear, anger, guilt, jealousy and revenge.

The Ultimate 10 steps to redefining WHO you are going to be……or HOW you want your organisation to operate

These steps basically follow a common pattern used in HABIT breaking.

These steps are elaborated on significantly within the book and practical “how to” steps with examples provided. The steps are the foundation to many behavioural-based and culture-building workshops.
## Establishing Character-Driven Performance

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<th>Step</th>
<th>Self</th>
<th>Organisation</th>
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<tr>
<td>Step 1</td>
<td>Create your <em>Ultimate Mission</em> statement.</td>
<td>Ensure all team members have a copy and are familiar with the Mission Statement. Discuss and context goals with your values and character strengths.</td>
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<td>Step 2</td>
<td>Write about your “best self” for ten to fifteen minutes.</td>
<td>Ask team members to write “life mission” statements. Have them reflect on their lives and list the values and character qualities that matter most to them.</td>
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<td>Step 3</td>
<td>Identify eight to ten character strengths (moral or performance) that are aligned with your Ultimate Mission and most represent who you want to be in life.</td>
<td>Review the statements with your team – Connect your team’s purpose with the company’s mission.</td>
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<td>Step 4</td>
<td>Prioritise your eight to ten character strengths from one to ten. Choose the top five character strengths you feel you most want and need to grow to achieve real success in life.</td>
<td>Have people describe their “best self” – Ask people to write for about 10 minutes on who they are at their finest and how that benefits those people around them at home and at work.</td>
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<td>Step 5</td>
<td>Select the highest priority character strength you wish to target for growth for the next two weeks (e.g. gratitude, compassion, kindness, truthfulness, optimism, respect for others)</td>
<td>Ask them to build their scorecards. Have them use their purpose statements and best-self descriptions to construct personal scorecards of the top six character traits they each want to work on to become the person they want to be.</td>
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<td>Step 6</td>
<td>Determine how you will make energy investments in the targeted character “muscle.” For example, to build gratefulness, spend three minutes every morning for fourteen days writing a list of all the things you are grateful for. For kindness, do eight acts of kindness over the next fourteen days.</td>
<td>Have your team maintain a “character-based training log”. Have them track their efforts to develop their values and character traits. How often do they thank a colleague, treat someone kindly or humbly share credit with their team?</td>
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<td>Step 7</td>
<td>Prepare a simple training log where you record every training deposit you make in the targeted character strength during the fourteen days (e.g., number of gratitude lists, acts of kindness).</td>
<td>Advise people to “script...critical conversations” ahead of time. Documenting what they want to say will help them exercise crucial values and attributes.</td>
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<td>Step 8</td>
<td>Put prompts and notes everywhere to remind you of your commitment to build the targeted character trait (e.g., put the word “positive” or “grateful” or “humble” on your bathroom mirror, screensaver, or smartphone).</td>
<td>Be true to your personal mission – You are your team’s model, so make sure your actions always align with your purpose statement and your organisation’s values. Consistently demonstrate the behaviours you want to encourage in others.</td>
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<td>Step 9</td>
<td>At the end of two weeks, select another character strength you wish to grow. Repeat steps 6, 7 and 8. If you choose, you may continue to repeat the training rituals you used to build previously targeted character “muscles,” but your training efforts should be focused intensely on the new one to be strengthened.</td>
<td>Recognise achievement. Praise people whose actions support the corporate mission and their own purpose statements.</td>
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<td>Step 10</td>
<td>Once the first five character strengths that you targeted for growth have received the two weeks of training, prepare a new list of five and repeat the steps again. You can keep the same five or select new ones.</td>
<td>Remove people who will not grow – Have the courage to dismiss those who you cannot trust to adhere to ethics, personal purpose or your firm’s mission.</td>
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Practice, Practice, Practice

Each day will present many opportunities to strengthen your character. Over time, action leads to habit. To get there, practice the following (and these apply to your workplace, your associates and friends and, most importantly, your family):

1. **Modeling.** Consciously practice the values and character strengths you’ve chosen to build. For example, demonstrate patience and show compassion. Your effort to develop your abilities will influence those around you.

2. **Talking.** Speak about the traits you admire, cite them in your conversations, point to examples and openly praise those who demonstrate these attributes. “Writing” – Capture your purpose statement on paper; list your crucial values. Describe your gratitude to those who have helped you along the way. Writing your purpose accelerates change and reinforces memory.

3. **Reading.** Seek books, stories and articles that reinforce your prized values. Novels with courageous protagonists and stories of honesty in the face of great temptation will give you fortitude in your own journey.

4. **Storytelling.** People relate to stories. A good story uniquely taps your emotions. Hearing an inspirational story about character and values can give you a powerful lift when you need it most.

5. **Debating moral dilemmas.** Work with others to create, discuss and examine imaginary situations involving value judgments. To carry out this exercise alone, write about such a situation and draft a variety of values-based solutions.

6. **Role-Playing.** To use this “surprisingly effective learning tool” with your staff or kids, stage situations in which each person demonstrates a character trait.

7. **Doing.** For maximum impact, just carry out the character trait itself. Volunteer, perform “random acts of kindness” or discuss the reasons you feel grateful.

In summary

The “Only Way to Win” is a valuable resource on many levels. Individuals wishing to review how to get focus and strengthen their character attributes will get value, even if they skim read the book. The section on “how parents, teachers, and coaches can build character in children” is very worthwhile and provides a focus on balance in these days of high achievement at any cost. Finally, organisations seeking to get buy-in with their staff and team members have solid frameworks and great examples of how to go about this.

Do you use your job and your hobbies to make you a better person.......if so, you are a winner!

“The only way to win “ is available in good bookstores.

**David Hanlon** is the founder of the Right Mind International Pty Ltd. He conducts his consulting and training activities globally. His leadership program, Conversations for Growth®, was a 2010 finalist in the Australian Institute of Training and Development’s Australian Learning Innovation award.