Athletes from around the world have gathered in London for the 2012 Olympic Games to create one of the world’s largest events. What risk management lessons can the Seventh-day Adventist Church learn from the planners and athletes of this summer’s Olympics? Let’s look at seven gold medal lessons...read more
Athletes from around the world have gathered in London for the 2012 Olympic Games to create one of the world’s largest events. What risk management lessons can the Seventh-day Adventist Church learn from the planners and athletes of this summer’s Olympics? Let’s look at seven gold medal lessons:

1. **Advanced Planning & Preparation** – Planning for the 2012 London Olympics began years before the actual event was awarded to London in July 2005. Since 2005, the preparations and planning have been undertaken on a non-stop basis to assure a safe and successful Olympics.

   Similarly, the Adventist Church undertakes large events around the world. A General Conference Session, International Pathfinder Camporees, Impact Youth Congress, NY13 Evangelistic Campaign, NAD Teachers Convention, local conference camp meetings, and other events host hundreds, thousands, and tens of thousands to worship, study, and fellowship together. How much advance planning and preparation time are we scheduling for these types of events?
2. **Training and Practice** – All athletes from Olympic champions to amateur joggers understand the importance of training and practice before undertaking the main event. Proper warm-up exercises are part of every athletic training routine. Athletes practice individual tasks repeatedly, in differing scenarios to fine-tune their skills in preparation so they are ready for the starter’s whistle.

   How are we doing in the areas of training and practice? Before the church undertakes a major event – have we taken time to properly train our staff members and volunteers? Do they know what to expect and are they prepared for the unexpected? Has there been a practice run? Is everything ready or are we still trying to complete last minute adjustments before the game begins?

3. **Safety & Security** – The safety of the Olympic athletes and the public is of utmost importance in the planning of the London Olympics. The world has witnessed tragic events in previous Olympics and the lessons learned are being applied throughout the city of London and at all venues.

   What about us? The church has held large events throughout our history too. What lessons have we learned from prior events? Have we taken the appropriate steps to make sure the safety and security of all participants is our highest priority? Have we considered the special needs for the safety of children, disabled, and senior members? If not, why not?

4. **Contingency Planning** – No one wishes for a tragic occurrence during any kind of event. However, accidents and tragic events can happen at any time to any organization, even the Seventh-day Adventist Church. The Olympic planners bring together contingency planners from numerous disciplines to monitor events so they can be ready to act in almost any type of situation that might arise.

   How about your event’s contingency plans? Do you know how you would get someone to appropriate medical treatment on a mission trip? Do you have security and crowd control adequate for the size group your event anticipates? Have you sought the counsel and guidance of experts to help guide your planning process? Follow this biblical principle: “Where there is no counsel, the people fall; but in a multitude of counselors there is safety.” Proverbs 11:14  {NKJV}
5. **Power of Teamwork** – As we watch this year’s Olympics we will witness both individual and team effort. We will be drawn in to cheer for our favorites. There is nothing like seeing your country’s national team as it enters the Olympic Stadium. Teamwork is an essential element for Olympic success. It’s amazing to watch how carefully the teams plan to have the right athlete in the right position to do their part at the right time.

Teamwork is an essential risk management element within our church as well. No single individual can shoulder all the risk management and safety responsibilities. This requires a team effort. Reach out and recruit others to join you in handling the ministry of risk management.

6. **Take Appropriate Actions** – Throughout and even before the Olympic Games begin, officials are monitoring the athletes on critical aspects of personal conduct, sportsmanship, and fair play. If an athlete is found to be in violation it can result in disqualification or removal from the team. All athletes have been trained in the rules of the game and the expected code of conduct they are to follow as an Olympian and member of their country’s team.

Shouldn’t the church likewise hold the same high standards of our employees and volunteers who participate in our denominationally sponsored events? As leaders have we appropriately trained our people? Do they understand the potential consequences of their personal actions? Ask yourself, are you willing to hold people accountable to uphold the reputation and principles of the Seventh-day Adventist Church or will you just look the other way?

7. **Going For Gold** – Every Olympic athlete has his or her eye on one objective – to win a gold medal. They have trained their entire life for this moment. They now have the privilege and opportunity to fulfill their lifelong dream. They understand it requires their best effort. By keeping their eyes focused on the goal, they lay it all out on the field and give it their best.

Can the same be said of us? We too have a mission. Our mission is to provide Christ-centered ministries to a world in need of a Savior. Part of our mission is to assure that these ministries are done safely at all times. Do we give safety and risk management priority attention? Do we keep our eye on the goal or do we allow apathy to take hold by saying, “I’m too busy, God will watch over this event and protect it from danger.”
May the counsel of the Prophet Moses, guide us as we plan all our ministry activities: “Just make sure you stay alert. Keep close watch over yourselves. Don’t forget anything of what you’ve seen. Don’t let your heart wonder off. Stay vigilant as long as you live.” Deuteronomy 4:9 {The Message}

Adventist Risk Management considers it our privilege to be part of Team SDA as we work together to achieve a “Gold Medal” by having safe Christ-centered ministries. Discover the resources ARM can offer to help your organization achieve success at www.adventistrisk.org. Because…our ministry is to protect your ministry!

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