

Athletes' potential goes beyond sports, research finds

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Credit: University of Stirling

Athletes have great potential beyond sport, according to new research from the University of Stirling presented at the Dame Kelly Holmes Trust's inaugural More Than Medals conference.

Professor David Lavalley joined the Olympic gold medallist in London as she launched a new campaign to highlight the value and skills of retiring athletes, explaining athletes' ability to perform to a high level in a diverse range of roles.

Stirling research showed how engaging in elite sport raises employers' evaluations of potential job candidates and how athletes making the transition into work possess desirable employability skills.

The sport researcher explained that employers should view elite athletes in transition as valuable resources and encouraged them to capitalise on this group's extraordinary skills and ability to manage challenging economic times.

Professor David Lavalley of the University of Stirling, said: "We are at the dawn of an unparalleled skills crisis across the world and witnessing a significant transformation of the workforce. Jobs are changing rapidly and people are required to adapt and develop to keep up with the needs of the business.

"We wanted to gauge whether elite athletes who have made the transition from sport into work have this employability potential and discovered the positive impact athletes can have within the workplace, and their potential to be future leaders and influencers."

Researchers asked employers to evaluate curricula vitae for a typical entry-level graduate position in their organisation and found candidates engaged in sport were evaluated more highly.

The experts then compared elite athletes who had made the transition from sport into employment with matched employees who had not participated in sport.

Elite athletes were found to be more confident in their ability to carry out broader roles in the workplace through, for example, being more open to organisational changes.

These individuals were better at identifying opportunities, taking action,

and persevering until they brought about meaningful change and performed better in the role than their non-sporting equivalents.

The research also highlights athletes' potential to be future leaders and influencers and to deliver indirect benefits to the performance of their colleagues, which leads to whole teams raising their game.

Professor Lavalée added: "These results demonstrate the value of world-class athletes beyond sport and unlocks something that could have a significant impact on our workforce and bring benefits to businesses.

"In the same way athletes can inspire the nation performing on the world stage, these individuals can thrive in the world of work and have huge potential to motivate others around them. The greatest legacy of Rio could perhaps be the employability skills developed by the [elite athletes](#) which our society desperately needs."

'More Than Medals' has been established by the Dame Kelly Holmes Trust to encourage athletes to use their attitudes, behaviours and experiences to work with young disadvantaged individuals after leaving their sport.

More information: Winning students are employable students.
hdl.handle.net/1893/21104

Provided by University of Stirling

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