



FROM THE FINN TO THE BOARDROOM: A JOURNEY OF GROWTH AND PURPOSE

For over a decade, my life revolved around the Finn dinghy, a boat that demanded not only physical strength and technical precision but also an unshakable mental resolve. Competing at the highest levels of this iconic Olympic discipline taught me invaluable lessons about resilience, adaptability, and the relentless pursuit of excellence. However, as my career in the Finn class progressed, I began to see parallels between the challenges of competitive sailing and those faced in other high-pressure environments, such as business and management.

After retiring from active competition, I found myself at a crossroads. Like many athletes, I had to answer the question: What comes next? For me, the answer lay in taking the lessons I had learned on the water and applying them in a new context. Transitioning into management consulting was not an obvious choice, but it was a deeply intentional one.

In the Finn, every race demands strategic thinking, quick decision-making, and the ability to perform under intense pressure, all skills that are equally critical in the corporate world. As I began coaching other athletes and working with teams, I realised that my experiences could also resonate with leaders and professionals outside of sport. Businesses, much like sailing teams, face unpredictable conditions and need to navigate complex environments to succeed.

This shift in focus allowed me to channel my passion for performance and growth into helping others excel in their own fields. Today, as a management consultant and coach, I continue to draw on my Finn sailing roots, whether it's in developing leadership strategies, fostering teamwork, or teaching individuals how to thrive under pressure.

In this article, I'll share how the principles of Finn sailing can inspire and benefit the next generation of sailors, both on and off the water. From mental toughness to teamwork and beyond, the lessons I've learned are not just confined to the sport, they are a toolkit for life.

MENTAL TOUGHNESS: THRIVING UNDER PRESSURE

The Finn is a demanding class where races can be won or lost in split seconds. The ability to manage stress, stay focused, and recover quickly from setbacks is often the difference between victory and defeat. During my time as an athlete, I developed mental strategies that became critical not just on the water but also in my professional life.



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One of the key lessons I learned is that pressure isn't something to fear; it's an opportunity to grow. To perform under pressure, you need to embrace discomfort and build routines that create a sense of stability even in chaotic situations. For example, before major competitions, I would break down my preparation into small, manageable tasks, focusing on what I could control rather than worrying about unpredictable factors like weather or the competition.

For Finn sailors, developing mental toughness starts with self-awareness. Recognise your triggers and understand how stress impacts your performance. Techniques like mindfulness, visualisation, and controlled breathing can help you stay present and calm when the stakes are high. Breathing, in particular, was a game-changer for me. Before a race, I took the time to breathe deeply and connect with my feelings to better align with my environment. This practice gave me confidence and prepared me to handle the unexpected.



TEAMWORK IN AN INDIVIDUAL SPORT

While Finn sailing is technically a solo sport, no athlete succeeds alone. Behind every medal and championship is a network of coaches, training partners, and support staff who make success possible. One of the most valuable lessons I learned during my career is the importance of building and nurturing this support system.

In training, my closest competitors were often my greatest allies. By pushing each other to improve, we elevated the entire fleet's level of performance. This collaborative mindset is equally important in the business world, where leaders must learn to build strong, trusting relationships with their teams to achieve shared goals.

For Finn sailors, cultivating a culture of collaboration starts with communication. Be open to feedback, share your own insights generously, and recognise the strengths of those around you. Whether you're on the water or in a boardroom, mutual respect and a shared commitment to excellence create an environment where everyone thrives.

DRIVING INNOVATION THROUGH CROSS-DISCIPLINARY COLLABORATION: EXCELLENCE IN R&D

Throughout my career, I've had the privilege of working with some of the most innovative minds in the sailing and engineering worlds. One of the most rewarding aspects of my journey was the

time I spent collaborating with WB-Sails on sail development and working closely with the engineering teams at Dassault Systemes. These experiences allowed me to bridge the gap between cutting-edge technology and real-world performance, creating solutions that not only enhanced my competitive edge but also pushed the boundaries of what was possible in the Finn class.

With WB-Sails, I was deeply involved in refining the design and performance of sails for the Finn dinghy. The work required an acute attention to detail analysing the impact of every curve, seam, and material choice to optimise speed and handling. This process taught me the importance of iteration and feedback. Each adjustment on the water fed into our understanding of what worked and what didn't, leading to sails that gave sailors a tangible edge in competition.

At Dassault Systemes, I collaborated with teams of engineers who brought cutting-edge simulation technology to the sailing world. Using advanced 3D modeling tools and computational fluid dynamics, we explored ways to optimise the interaction between the sailor, the boat, and the environment. This deep dive into the technical side of sailing gave me a new appreciation for the value of data-driven decision-making. The ability to test and refine designs in a virtual environment saved time and resources while delivering innovations that could be trusted on the water.

COLLABORATION ACROSS EXPERTISE: UNLOCKING EXTRAORDINARY RESULTS

Through these experiences, I came to understand a powerful truth: individuals with vastly different backgrounds and expertise can achieve extraordinary results when they learn to communicate, understand each other, and become mutual resources for growth.

Working with WB-Sails and Dassault Systemes, our success relied on bridging gaps between disciplines. Sailmakers, sailors, and engineers often spoke different 'languages', but by finding common ground, we turned diverse insights into practical solutions. I saw first hand how mutual understanding and collaboration enabled us to surpass our goals and deliver results that none of us could have achieved alone.

This synergy, where diverse skill sets intersect, leads not only to achieving goals but often to surpassing them entirely. I



realized that mutual understanding doesn't come naturally; it requires effort, curiosity, and a willingness to see the value in perspectives that differ from your own. But when this connection is achieved, the results can exceed even the loftiest expectations.

For Finn sailors, this lesson is invaluable. Success on the water doesn't just come from personal effort; it comes from leveraging the strengths of those around you like coaches, training partners, and even competitors. By embracing diverse inputs and creating an environment of trust and collaboration, you can discover solutions and improvements that might otherwise remain out of reach.

In my current role as a consultant and coach, I apply this principle to help leaders and teams achieve their potential. Whether I'm working with executives or athletes, I encourage them to foster environments where different perspectives are welcomed and celebrated. It's in these spaces that innovation flourishes, performance skyrockets, and growth becomes exponential.

By learning to communicate and collaborate across disciplines, we unlock the ability to achieve results far beyond what we thought possible. Whether you're developing cutting-edge sails, leading a team, or competing in the Finn, the key is the same: growth comes from the connections we build and the resources we become for each other.

THE RICHNESS OF EXPERIENCES: LESSONS FROM TRAVEL AND COLLABORATION ACROSS CULTURES

The Finn doesn't just shape athletes; it opens doors to the world. During my years of competition, I was fortunate to sail in some of the most iconic and diverse locations on the planet. From the windy bays of San Francisco to the subtle and technical challenges of Lake Garda, and the unpredictable conditions of Mediterranean waters. Each venue brought its unique character and required constant adaptation. But beyond the technical demands of the sport, what truly enriched my journey were the cultures I encountered and the people with whom I collaborated.

Competing internationally meant being immersed in a global community united by a shared passion for sailing, yet each culture brought its own perspective and approach. For example, working with French engineers who were new to the world of sailing challenged me to bridge the gap between their technical



expertise and the realities of performance on the water. Explaining the nuances of the Finn, the balance between speed and manoeuvrability, and the importance of details that might seem trivial at first glance required patience, clarity, and mutual respect.

These collaborations were profoundly rewarding. The engineers brought fresh perspectives and cutting-edge methodologies, which, when combined with my hands-on experience, led to innovations that pushed the boundaries of what was possible. I learned to translate the language of sailing into the language of engineering, creating a common ground where insights could flow freely. This process taught me the value of clear communication and the importance of seeing challenges through the eyes of others.

Traveling also gave me a sense of humility and curiosity. Every destination brought not only new waters to master but also new customs, languages, and ways of thinking. Being in unfamiliar environments forced me out of my comfort zone, whether it was adjusting to different training styles or simply learning to connect with people from vastly different backgrounds. In these moments of discomfort, I grew the most.

For Finn sailors, and sailors in general, the message is clear: the value of your journey goes far beyond the regattas or the waters you sail on. Take full advantage of the opportunities that come with traveling and working with people from different walks of life. Embrace the diversity of thought, expertise, and culture that you encounter along the way.

The lessons I've gained through these experiences have proven invaluable not only on the water but also in my professional life. Collaboration across disciplines and cultures teaches adaptability, deepens understanding, and fosters innovation. These qualities are just as critical in the boardroom or on a project team as they are in the cockpit of a Finn.

LESSONS FROM PARIS 2024: INSIGHTS FROM BEHIND THE SCENES

As a television commentator for the French broadcast of the Paris 2024 Olympic sailing events, I had the unique privilege of following the competition up close. This role allowed me to immerse myself in the action, analysing the performances of the world's best sailors, understanding their strategies, and observing the dynamics that set champions apart from the rest.

One of the key insights I gained was the value of meticulous preparation. The athletes who stood out were those who left nothing to chance. From analysing weather conditions to fine-tuning equipment





WHAT I'M DOING NOW: TRANSFORMATIONAL EXPERIENCES FOR LEADERS AND TEAMS

Today, I work in France and internationally, partnering with leaders and their teams to create truly transformational experiences. Drawing from my career as a professional athlete and Finn sailor, I bring a unique approach that blends the precision of elite sport with the emotional and strategic depth needed to excel in business and life.

What makes my approach truly singular is the way I immerse participants in the world of competitive sailing, a powerful metaphor for business and life. The high-pressure environment of regattas, the need for strategic decision-making, adaptability, and teamwork all serves as rich parallels to the challenges leaders and organisations face daily. By drawing on my academic background and combining it with the lessons learned

as an Olympian and Finn sailor, I offer a perspective that is both deeply personal and universally relatable.

Through these talks and sessions, participants don't just gain insights—they live the experience. They are guided to see their challenges differently, harness their potential, and develop the mindset of a top performer. This is not just a training program; it's a journey that empowers individuals and teams to transform the way they think, work, and celebrate their success.

THE LEGACY OF THE FINN

The Finn class has a unique place in the world of sailing. It's a boat that demands everything from its sailors: strength, strategy, and heart. But it also gives back in equal measure, shaping those who sail it into better athletes, leaders, and individuals.

As I reflect on my own journey, I'm grateful for everything the Finn has taught me. Its lessons continue to shape my life, and I hope to pass them on to others.

To all the Finn sailors: sail hard, dream big, and never stop learning. The Finn will give you friends forever and will take you further than you can imagine both on the water and beyond.

and perfecting race strategies, they approached every detail with a mindset of continuous improvement. This level of commitment reminded me of my own days in the Finn, where small adjustments often made the difference between winning and losing.

Another striking observation was how successful sailors adapted to changing conditions. The racing at Paris 2024 showcased the unpredictability of the sport, with shifts in wind and currents challenging even the most experienced competitors. Those who thrived were not necessarily the strongest or fastest but the most adaptable athletes who could pivot their strategy mid-race and maintain focus under pressure.

A lesson that particularly resonated with me was the power of simplicity. Many of the top performers at Paris 2024 achieved success not by doing more but by doing things more simply and effectively. They focused on getting the basics right: clean starts, consistent speed, and smart positioning, and avoided overcomplicating their approach. By staying calm and executing a clear plan, they created opportunities for others to make mistakes. Watching this unfold reaffirmed the importance of simplicity in both sailing and life: when you focus on what truly matters, you increase your chances of success and let your competitors be the ones who overthink and falter.

The teamwork behind the scenes also stood out. While sailing may appear to be an individual effort on the water, the influence of coaches, meteorologists, and support staff was undeniable. These professionals provided crucial insights and guidance, enabling athletes to perform at their best. This reinforced the idea that even in a sport like Finn sailing, success is a collective effort built on trust and collaboration.

For Finn sailors looking to elevate their game, the lessons from Paris 2024 are clear:

- **Preparation is everything:** Master the details, from your equipment to your mindset.
- **Stay adaptable:** Conditions will change your ability to adjust quickly can define your success.
- **Focus on simplicity:** Perfect the fundamentals and let others make the mistakes.
- **Build your team:** Surround yourself with people who push you to be better and provide the expertise you need to succeed.

By embracing these principles, Finn sailors can not only excel on the water but also prepare themselves for any challenge life throws their way.

