

C A N   Y O U   G O

**B E Y O N D**

H I G H   P E R F O R M A N C E ?

BY JASON JAGGARD AND DAN LEFFELAAR

NOVUS  GLOBAL





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To remain relevant in the  
21st century you will have to  
reinvent yourself, not just once

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but **repeatedly.**

- Yuval Noah Harari -

# Most of what people think about unleashing human performance is **WRONG.**

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**R**ecently I (Dan) was watching a National Hockey League (NHL) team play in this 2020 Stanley Cup playoffs. This team was loaded with talented high performing players who often light up the goal light on a regular basis. On this night they were not performing as many had hoped. They were supposed to go

deep, this was the year they had been building for with key talent and depth players. They were eliminated. Finished. Immediately the players, the staff and the media began a postmortem to understand what went wrong. There are many answers offered to the reason for their underwhelming performance. I asked a few players on the team about what had happened, their responses

were almost predictable - "We didn't play as a team, we played as individuals and guys were playing for themselves." This team will continue to underperform if they stay locked into a high-performance mindset and culture. You read that correctly, a culture of high-performance can lock players and teams into patterns of underperformance.

Current models of performance typically divide athletes into three general categories and athletes tend to ask different types of questions of themselves in each category.

## HIGH-PERFORMERS

Ask the question, ***"How can I be the best?"***

Billions of dollars have been spent getting these high performers on to teams and even more to retain them. But at Novus Global we believe attracting and retaining high-performers is a mistake and doing so creates a predictable set of problems for teams and individual performance.

## PERFORMERS

Ask the question, ***"How can I do a good job?"***

These athletes don't want to be horrible but they don't want to be great either. They put in enough to feel they gave effort to stay in the middle of the pack.

## LOW-PERFORMERS

Ask the question, ***"What's the least amount of work or effort I can do and not get cut?"***

They don't usually say this out loud, but it guides their behavior and those watching can often see it.



# Two problems with **HIGH - PERFORMERS**

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Recently I (Dan) spoke with a professional athlete in the top league of his sport. I asked him to describe some players in his league and he was quick to say, "they are high-performers."

"Great," I said. "So, what's the problem?"

"Well," he said, his voice getting quieter as if he was telling me a secret, "It's like this..."

The conversation sounded exactly like what I had heard from dozens of other high-performing

athletes and teams across various sports.

Let's see if any of these sound familiar.

They're resistant to feedback (*This is because any feedback threatens their identity as a high-performer*). They develop resentment from and for other teammates/training partners that are not performing as well. (*But do nothing to help them –because that would require growth*). They get jealous of others who surpass them and view

others as threats (*Sometimes consciously conspiring against other's growth*). They can become both simultaneously overwhelmed and bored. (*Overwhelmed, because they feel like their plate is full. Bored, because they don't feel like they're growing or being truly challenged*). This creates what we call the arrogance of limited success. And we see this in our work every day. But this isn't the only problem with high-performance.



# The other problem is

## HIGH- PERFORMANCE IS ATTAINABLE

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You can be the best. In your division. In the league. In the world. And simply knowing that fact tends to keep athletes from attaining it. Ever notice how most competitors and teams hit a little below where they aim? This is because accomplishment comes with its own burden: the burden of having to discover what comes next. This burden creates a magnetic push away from accomplishment.

It's what creates an experience that many feel but few articulate: avoiding the pain of success. And both these psychological barriers – **the arrogance of limited success** and **fear of the pain of success** – are present but invisible, and consequently harder to deal with, in high-performers and high performing teams. What is perhaps even more frustrating is when

an athlete or team is able to achieve being the best it leaves a nagging question, what comes after? Often athletes and teams that achieve the ultimate goal of being the best encounter, shortly after, a paradoxical depression. They are at the top of the mountain and nothing tends to grow at the top of mountains. Not to mention there is the added pressure of holding on to the top spot.



# What to **DO ABOUT IT?**

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TO OVERCOME THESE CHALLENGES, YOU MUST BECOME OBSESSED WITH A QUESTION FEW COMPETITORS ASK:

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## **What comes after high performance?**

**Highlight, memorize, brand this next sentence into your mind:**

*If your team doesn't have a clear and compelling answer to the question "What comes after high performance?" then you absolutely have an unnecessary cap on the possibilities of your performance and the results of you or your team.*



# So, what comes after **HIGH PERFORMANCE?**

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LET ME (JASON) BE THE FIRST TO INTRODUCE YOU TO THE IDEA OF

## **META PERFORMANCE™**

Not “meta” like “meta-data” but “meta” as in “metamorphosis.”  
Like a caterpillar transforming into a butterfly.



# A meta performer isn't committed to be the best...

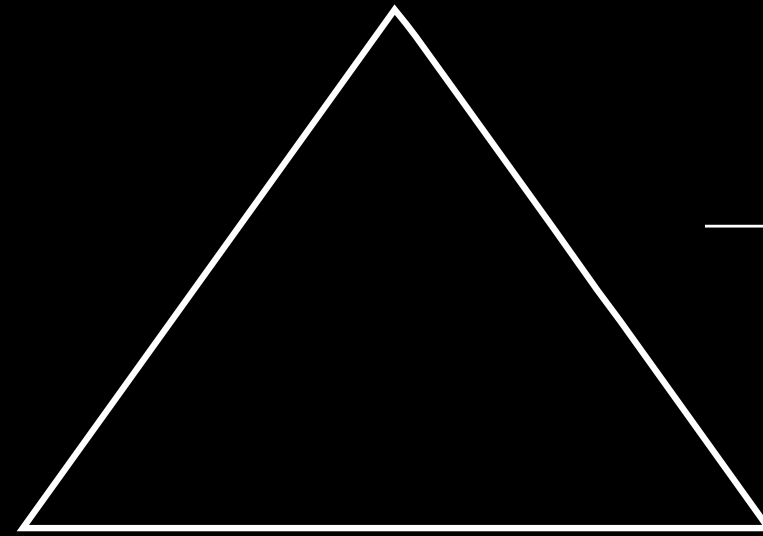
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## ... a meta performer is committed to constantly **exploring capabilities.**

While answering the question, "How can I be the best?" has a finite answer, asking, **"What am I capable of accomplishing"** has infinite answers. Because human potential has fewer limits than human competition. Meta-performers are never done. Not only do they have room to grow but they relish and create new opportunities to grow. You probably know the story now made popular in "Money Ball." Billy Bean tossed out conventional baseball wisdom to embrace new ways of building a team that no one had ever done before. He created

a team that defied what was believe to be possible and in the process transformed the way in which Baseball teams are now built. Billy didn't simply attempt to do the job of General Manager better than others, he pushed himself to explore what would be possible and took some major risks in the process. Billy bean is a Meta-performer. After unprecedented success Tiger Woods has repeatedly deconstructed and then reconstructed the vehicle of his success, his swing. In a 2004 interview with ESPN Wood's said that "I felt like I could get better.

People thought it was asinine for me to change my swing after I won the Masters by 12 shots. ... Why would you want to change that? Well, I thought I could become better. "If I play my best, I'm pretty tough to beat. I'd like to play my best more frequently, and that's the whole idea. That's why you make changes. I thought I could become more consistent and play at a higher level more often. ... I've always taken risks to try to become a better golfer, and that's one of the things that has gotten me this far." Tiger Woods is a Meta-performer.



## META-PERFORMERS

Ask the question ***“What are we capable of?”***

A Meta-Performer is committed to constantly exploring and expanding capabilities. Meta-Performer’s are committed to growth regardless of where they are in the pecking order and are willing to risk looking good and feeling comfortable to find a new level of performance. In short, they commit to reinventing themselves in order to explore their next level.



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wayne Johnson is in many ways the ultimate example of a meta-performer. He was a failed football player who changed his name to Rocky Maivia for the WWF and then changed his name to The Rock to become one of

the most famous professional wrestlers in the world. Then he left professional wrestling and changed his name to Dwayne The Rock Johnson to become one of the world's most famous actors. Then he changed his name again back to just Dwayne Johnson, as one of the most powerful media producers in the world. He may run for President of the most powerful

country in the world. Mr. Johnson is a man who consistently expands his horizons to explore his capabilities. Just imagine what it would look like if you were a meta-performer and were leading a meta-performing team.

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So how do you begin to do that?

# How to: (SELF) MANAGE FOR META PERFORMANCE™

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**C**reate goals where you're fully committed to paying the price to reinvent yourself and accomplish the impossible. This is often challenging for athletes who often find comfort in something that works for a time and stick with that routine or system. What often happens is that routine, which at a time elevated performance, becomes a limiter to an athletes ability to find their next level.

To find new levels of performance athletes and teams need to reinvent themselves **through risking failure and then learning** rather than sticking with how it worked in the past. This is how rapid learning and development works - ask any high school coach. This is a seismic shift for many coaches, teams, and athletes at the highest levels. The problem is at the highest levels **winning is elevated over learning.**

Can you see the paradox?

Teams that celebrate learning through failure are truly rare at this level. But imagine a team of athletes that is more committed to exploring what they are capable rather than if they win. That's a dream team. If that was their goal I wouldn't want to bet or play against them.



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xploring what you are capable of will result in bolder moves that most athletes avoid for fear of not looking good to others. Being willing to crash before clearing the jump. It also requires athletes to be hungry to notice their gaps and areas of improvement. Meta Performers are

hungry to have conversations about their growth not because they might be beat but because they want to see how good they could truly be. Our firm culture is model on this principle; every single coach in our firm is on a performance improvement plan from the second they get hired. We don't do this because people start in trouble. We do this because we have a base assumption

about coaches in our firm that they want to grow. They don't want to be the best. They want to explore what their capabilities. The best athletes in the world are committed to this process regardless of whether they are at the top of the standings or not.

# CREATE GOALS WHERE YOU'RE FULLY COMMITTED TO PAYING THE PRICE TO REINVENT YOURSELF.

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Our company not only promotes Meta-performance™, we practice it ourselves. For example, every fourth quarter we start looking at next year's goals and hold a space for our coaches to get clear on what they're committed to achieve. Our coaches can pick whatever goals they want, but they have to meet two criteria:



1.

The goal has to seem improbable  
or impossible to them.

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2 .

The goal has to be worth the cost of whatever it would take for them to grow to achieve it.

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One of the greatest joys of leading Novus Global is seeing how year after year our coaches grow to achieve in December what they thought was impossible twelve months earlier. That's the first step to becoming meta-performing:

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create goals where you're fully committed  
to paying the price to reinvent yourself and  
accomplish the impossible.



# How it feels to **DO THE IMPOSSIBLE.**

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In the summer of 2019 one of our coaches, David Gerber, was speaking to one of our young athletes, Joel, a junior goaltender and draft pick of the St. Louis Blues. They began talking about goals for the upcoming season when Joel admitted what he really wanted to see happen was to win a gold medal as the starting goaltender at the IIHF World Junior tournament which was 6 months away. The only problem was that Joel hadn't even been invited to the selection camp let alone on the roster to make the team. To beat out the other already high

touted prospects to make the team would be a feat, to steal the number one spot seemed like a pipe dream. High performance was not going to cut it. No, this would require Meta-performance™. With David in his corner Joel mapped out what he would need to do and how his game would need to evolve to both get invited and then start a game in tournament. Joel also prepared his mind to handle the enormous pressure that would come if given the opportunity to play while millions of people watched. As his season progress Joel started

to get noticed, his consistent play and determination was turning heads. When the next selection camp was announced Joel was invited to tryout. Joel entered the tournament as the back up goalie but after the starter faltered Joel was given the crease and never looked back. He lead Team Canada to Gold in the 2020 tournament. What seemed impossible in the summer was now hanging around his neck in January.

One of my (Jason) favorite quotes from Walt Disney is,

**“It’s kind of fun to do the impossible.”**

Most people think he’s using understatement. We think, “Kind of fun? Are you kidding? I think it would be really fun to do the impossible.” That’s because they’ve never done the impossible.

To those who have never done the impossible, it feels daunting.

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CAN YOU GO BEYOND HIGH PERFORMANCE?

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What I called “**impossible**”  
is what I now call “Tuesday”.

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# TUESDAY

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To those who regularly do the impossible, it feels like any other day. What I called 'impossible' is what I now call 'Tuesday.'  
The greatest thrill of our work is when our clients tell us,  
"If you would have told us a year ago these would be the results

from our work together, we would have told you– impossible.  
But now what we used to call 'impossible' we call 'Tuesday.'  
That's what meta-performers do. They turn the impossible into Tuesday. As you look at your goals for 2021, ask yourself:

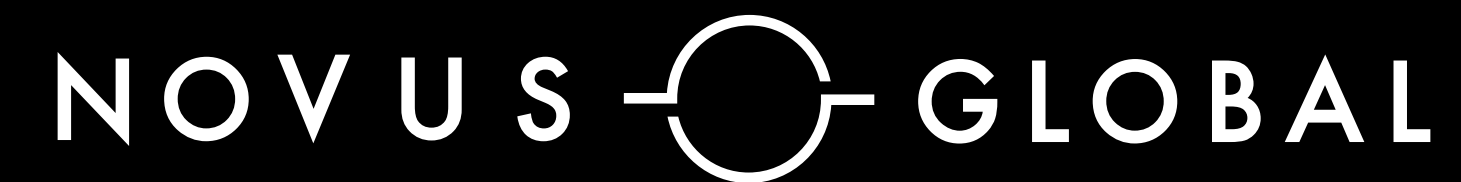
are my goals performing, high-performing or meta-performing?  
And may you discover the rush of exploring what you're capable of. May you all look back when this year is over and say,  
**"What I called 'impossible' is what I now call 'Tuesday.'"**

May you all go beyond high-performance. May you all become a

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**META-PERFORMER.**

CAN YOU GO BEYOND HIGH PERFORMANCE?



*Novus Global is a firm of elite executive coaches. We help professional athletes, world-renowned artists, business leaders and Fortune 500 companies create lives, teams, and companies that go beyond high performance.*

*When professional athletes define themselves as 'high performing', they tend to face a predictable set of challenges. We help them overcome these by introducing them to the concept of Meta Performance™.*

Set up an exploratory intake call email: [sport@novus.global](mailto:sport@novus.global)