

10 Running With What You Have

Waiting for ideal conditions before committing fully is one of the most common and most costly habits in organisational life. Leaders wait for the right team before pushing forward with the strategy. Organisations wait for the right market conditions before investing in development. Individuals wait for greater clarity before taking the risk that would produce the clarity they are waiting for.

The conditions being waited for are almost always plausible. More experience in a particular domain would genuinely be useful. A stronger team would genuinely improve the odds. Better resources would genuinely open options. The question is not whether they are real but whether they are the actual obstacle to performance, or whether they are providing a frame within which performance can be postponed without the postponement needing to be named as avoidance. The two look identical from the inside. The difference tends to become visible only over time, when the conditions that were being waited for either arrive and the performance does not follow, or when someone who did not wait produces the results that waiting was supposed to make more likely.

Usain Bolt's career, in the specific and less familiar detail of how it actually developed, offers a direct and somewhat counterintuitive challenge to this habit.

The Most Imperfect Perfect Sprinter

Usain Bolt is the fastest human being the sport of sprinting has ever recorded. Eight Olympic gold medals across three Games. World records over 100 metres and 200 metres that remain untouched more than a decade after they were set. A way of running, in full flight, that seemed to defy both the physics of the event and the psychological laws that usually govern elite competition. The image of him at around the 80-metre mark of a 100-metre final, relaxed and apparently effortless while the athletes