

Secrets of the Masters: Raymond Aaron



The Polar Race: An Extraordinary Experience

The Polar Race is a biennial event that involves a really special group of people. The grueling race takes a month, and starts from Resolute Bay in the former Northwest Territories of Canada. Contestants race approximately 350 miles, by ski or foot, pulling a sled of provisions, across some of the most desolate terrain in the world to the Magnetic North Pole. Survival alone in this environment takes courage—racing requires extraordinary commitment and determination.

Jim talked with Raymond Aaron, success and investment coach, about his participation in the 2007 Polar Race, about what went into his preparation, how the race was conducted, and how the experience has impacted him—as well as how the experience translate to our own lives and businesses.

Raymond's Story: Making the Commitment

At the age of 60, I found out about the Polar Race from a friend of mine was actually going to be in it. She dared me to join her. I said, "Okay, I'll do it. What is it?"

I had not been physically active for 25 years. I used to do things before, but I got involved as a professional speaker, and I hadn't been active. I stretched and exercised a bit, but I hadn't done the things that I did 25 years ago.

Message in the Story

Raymond wasn't 100% clear what it was when he committed to this thing. Think about this in your own life. Are there things that you commit to, and you really don't know the "how?" There's a big message in this. He didn't even know what it was, and he committed to this thing, and he definitely had not been prepared for it.

Raymond's Story: Following Through

I went to the website, and found that it cost 19,000 British Pounds. That's \$40,000 US, just for the fee. Now that covers all the food and the airfare, and the guidance and the lessons, but there are other expenses like hiring a trainer and hiring a chiropractor when you throw your back out, and you've just got to be there no matter what. I had injury after injury, and I just had to get better, and I did. For two years, I worked with my trainer several days a week, and we just got me stronger and stronger and stronger. We worked on my legs because I had to pull. We worked on my core so I didn't get any back injuries, and I just worked really hard with my trainer, and that cost a lot of money.

I also trained on my own by running up stairs to simulate the drag of the provision sled I would have to haul. It took me about three months to be able to get up to thirty or forty flights of stairs regularly.

Message in the Story

Once he committed, Raymond did what it took to prepare himself, and it took time. How do you follow through on a commitment you make even when you don't know the full picture of what it will take to achieve? Do you allow sufficient time to make it happen? Do you devote enough time, energy, and monetary resources to set yourself up for success?

Raymond's Story: That Value of Transparency

I set up a blog where I documented my training and then every day of the race. I let my clients and everyone close to me know what I was doing and how to get to my blog. Around 25,000 people checked in to the blog every week or so to see how I was doing.

Every couple of days, I'd say, "What am I doing?" And I would answer, "I'm being a leader. There are clients of mine around the world who are watching me, and I want to show them what's possible. I'm the leader."

There was no way I could fail. There was no way I could stop.

Message in the Story

If you commit to a goal, don't keep it to yourself. Share it with your fans. Share it with your friends. Share it with the people who are going to support you, but also share it with the people who are going to say, 'Hey, did you do your thing today?' How can you set yourself up for complete transparency, complete authenticity? How can you commit to something so that everybody who knows you will be able to cheer you on and support you?

Raymond's Story: Making Your Own Rules

During my two years of training for the race, I had rules. For example, never use an elevator or an escalator, no matter what. It doesn't matter how high – if I'm going up to the thirtieth floor for a business meeting, I walk up. I walk down.

Message in the Story

this is another important insight when you're taking a look at your financial goals, health goals, or relationship goals. There are certain things that you'll have to eliminate because it doesn't prepare you for the race that you're up for. The other piece to understand here is that you've got to put in boundaries with yourself. You're the only one who can enforce those boundaries. It's like watching TV or hanging out with people who gossip, or these kinds of things. Those are not going to get you to your goal. What is it that you need to eliminate in your life in order to ensure that you can reach your goal?

Raymond's Story: Things Are Not Always How They Appear

The final day of the first leg, the fifth day was my worst day. My fingers were frozen. I was scared silly. I was totally debilitated from being hypothermic the day before. I tried to quit the race but there was no way out. I got about a mile from the check point, and I could count the number of tents that were there. There were six teams, and I counted five tents. I said, "Oh, we're the last team to get there. I'm a loser. I'm slow. No matter how fast I go, I'm the dead slowest person. I'm nothing. I'm a waste of time. I shouldn't have done this."

My negative self talk went berserk. I finally get to the finish line of the first checkpoint, and the other competitors who already finished raced up to me, hugged me, congratulated me, lifted me in the air with their hugs, congratulating me with such enthusiasm, and I said, "Well, it's very nice, but I'm such a loser. Why are you congratulating me?" They said, "You're third. You beat three teams. You beat younger teams. You beat three younger teams. You're amazing. We can't believe that it's you."

I said, "But there are five tents here." They said, "Two of them are the race organizer tents that were flown in."

The best day was my worst day. At the age of 62, in the Arctic, I beat three teams with two 27-year-old professional hockey players at the peak of their athletic and sports prowess. I beat them by an hour and a half because I had better training and better mentors, and better psychology.

Message in the Story

Raymond failed at being able to give up, and his worst day in the race was also his best day. So many times in our lives when we commit to something, we have too many outs. We have too many opportunities to give up. We need to eliminate any outs, so that we can fail at being able to give up. And we need to understand that things are not always as they appear to be.

For more information about Raymond's Polar Race experience, go to: <http://raymondsblog.com>