



AthleteBiz Launches “Your Next Success,” a Career Mentoring Program for Professional Track & Field Athletes

11/08/2017

Williamsburg, VA (November 8, 2017) – AthleteBiz, a Williamsburg, VA-based nonprofit that helps support and empower Olympic-caliber, track and field athletes, recently launched Your Next Success, a career mentoring program that eases the transition of athletes into the business world.

The co-directors of Your Next Success are Jack Wickens, founder of Athlete Biz, and Bob Fleshner, founder of EPICOACH, a professional career coaching firm in Bethesda, MD.

A series of studies by the USA Track & Field Foundation estimates that over 50% of the top track and field athletes earn less than \$15,000 a year from the sport, and they have no retirement or pension plans. In addition, the United States is one of the only countries that does not provide any government support to Olympic-level athletes.

“We love to celebrate our world-class athletes and admire their extraordinary achievements in their sport, but what happens when they leave the track?” says Wickens. “It’s no secret that pro athletes often struggle, practically and emotionally, with the transition to the next chapter of their lives. We created Your Next Success to help them continue their success off the track.”

Your Next Success is a two-part program consisting of career coaching and consulting. Incoming athletes, some of whom may still be competing, complete an online questionnaire reviewed by the co-directors, who determine whether the athletes will be referred to a career coach or a consultant. For career coaching, the athletes are assigned one of the 15 affiliated coaches to help them confidentially figure out the next steps in their career. Once the coaches determine the athletes are ready for the next phase, they pass them on to one of the more than 150 career consultants. These consultants have volunteered to share, free of charge, the insights and connections they’ve gained in their successful careers across a wide array of business and sports professions.

“Throughout my tenure at AthleteBiz, I have seen firsthand that Olympic-caliber athletes exhibit the

qualities and personal characteristics that so many employers are seeking,” says Wickens. “Many people don’t realize how tough it is to represent the USA at the Olympics, with few, if any, financial rewards. These athletes draw on their work ethic, competitive drive, winning attitude, and, perhaps most of all, their resilience in the face of challenges. They are great role models.”

To engage partners, Your Next Success is actively recruiting employers, headhunters, sponsors, and additional coaches and consultants. “This is a grassroots effort, and we’re finding that many of our partners, some of whom are former elite athletes and Olympians, are passionate about sports, compassionate about challenges facing these athletes, and willing to give back,” says Fleshner. “There are many avid fans out there who want to empower these impressive young women and men.”

Wickens and Fleshner met when Wickens was the national president of United Healthcare’s commercial health plan business, and Fleshner was CEO for United Healthcare of the Mid-Atlantic. Wickens and Fleshner have been longtime volunteer advocates of sports-related programs. Fleshner, a board member of AthleteBiz, was formerly the race director of the American Odyssey Relay and the Old Glory Relay, where he still serves as consulting race director.

“The athletes we are working with are all focused not only on their track and field careers and dreams, but on what comes next as well,” says Fleshner. “Your Next Success allows athletes to advance beyond training into the next phase of their careers. Based on the structure of Your Next Success, athletes can take advantage of the program at virtually any point of their athletic careers.”

Your Next Success estimates approximately 100 track and field athletes will join the first year, with several hundred participating within three years.

According to Liz Podominick, a recently retired discus thrower who missed making the 2016 Olympic team by just two inches, “I am very excited about Your Next Success. It is the most responsive program available to help athletes like me pursue their career goals beyond track and field.”

Wickens and Fleshner encourage all interested parties to connect with them. For more information, contact support@athletebiz.com. Athletes may visit <https://www.athletebiz.us/pages/yournextsuccess>.

AthleteBiz is a nonprofit platform that helps people and businesses find, follow, hire and support world-class track and field athletes. The organization aims to inspire fans and empower the world's best track and field athletes as they pursue their Olympic dreams. From All-Americans to Olympians, athletes join the platform to engage with fans, tell their story, and diversify their income. For more information, visit www.athletebiz.us.

EPICOACH, LLC is a career coaching firm based in Bethesda, MD, specializing in Executive, Professional, and Individual Coaching. Serving the Greater Washington D.C. area and beyond, EPICOACH helps clients unlock their career potential by providing the tools to help them reach their own conclusions. The firm provides a range of services, including individual and group coaching, consulting, and speaking

opportunities. EPICOACH was founded by Bob Fleshner, a former CEO with more than 30 years' experience. Fleshner is certified to administer DiSC (Dominance, Influence, Steadiness, and Conscientiousness), an assessment tool based on behavioral traits and designed to improve performance. He is also co-director of Your Next Success, a nonprofit that helps former Olympians find employment. For more information, visit www.epi.coach.