

The Hero's Elixir of Jürgen Klinsmann

As with any hero, Klinsmann applied an *elixir* (Greek for magic potion) in his quest for winning the world cup. In the final analysis, his revolutionary conquest of the highest honors bestowed upon a soccer coach – that of standing ovations and a national petition to stay on – can be traced back to the following seven success factors which he applied to re-invent the way soccer is played and how the beautiful game has become a catalyst for nation building and country branding.

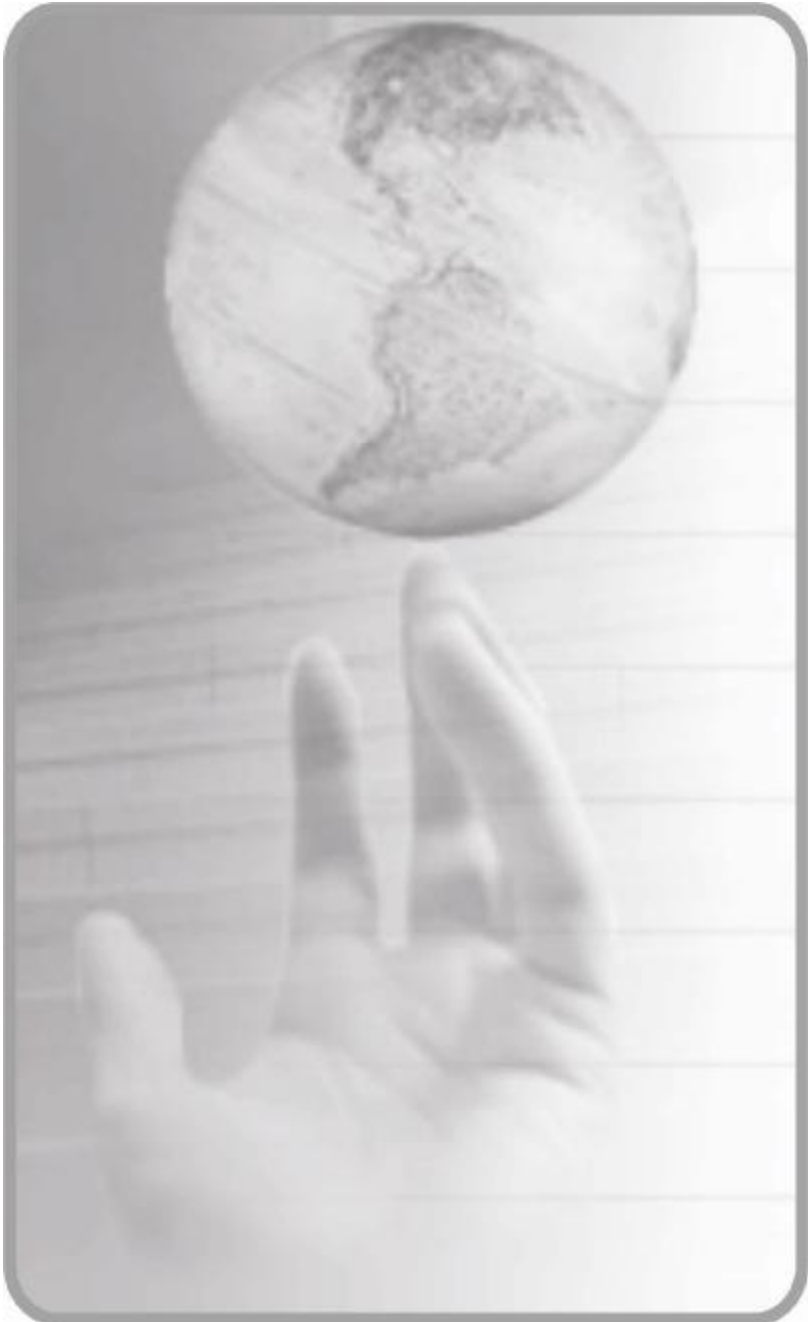


- I. **NICHTS DEM ZUFALL ÜBERLASSEN** - LEAVE NO ROOM FOR ERROR: As with any endeavor in life, failing to plan is planning to fail. Klinsmann went to great lengths to ensure that every detail, no matter how small, was attended to and optimized in the quest for the great goal. Whether it was the choice of the quarter, the

color of the tricots or the site for training, Klinsmann got involved personally in turning these supposedly minor factors into winning points. Comparing the pre-game planning to the workings of a Swiss chronometer, the coach made sure that no room was left for error. Says Klinsmann: “Für das grosse Ziel muss alles passen!” “For the great goal, everything has to fit together!”



2. **GROSSE ZIELE FORMULIEREN** - TO ENABLE THE LAW OF EXPECTATION: At his very first press conference as national coach, just weeks after the German team had been eliminated from the Euro 2004 in the first round, Klinsmann declared that his goal was to win the world cup. This ambitious goal was first met with incredulity by the press and the public who had indulged in ridiculing the national team’s chances for 2006, but throughout his tenure Klinsmann kept proclaiming that his team had got what it took to reach the highest laurels. It was Klinsmann’s vision that enabled the German players to go all out and get the best out of





every individual. Like many of his fellow coaches, Klinsmann could have easily hid himself behind setting low targets such as reaching the second round. However, he knew that such low-balling would send the wrong message to players and the public alike, **enacting the law of expectation**; a law which the ancient Greeks named after the famous sculptor Pygmalion.

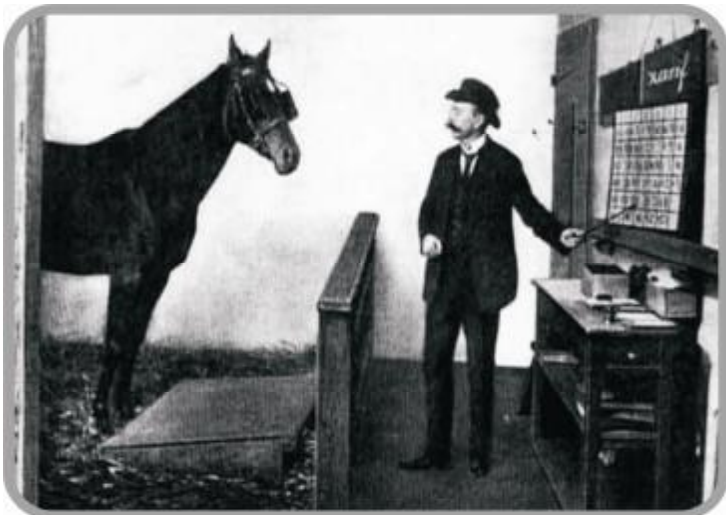
The latter, a prince from Cyprus, sought to create an ivory statue of the ideal woman. The result which he called Galatea, was so beautiful that Pygmalion fell desperately in love with his own creation. He prayed to the goddess Venus to bring Galatea to life. His prayer was granted and the couple lived happily ever thereafter.

As Professor Robert Merton observed, the Pygmalion Effect occurs in organizations today when an expectation is set by management regarding the performance of their employees. In

other words, once an expectation is set, even if it is inaccurate, we tend to act in ways that are consistent with that expectation.

The ‘Law of Expectations’ was also observed in nature by two German sociologists, called Stumpt and Pfungst. In their research, they came across a horse called ‘Clever Hans’. To their surprise, Clever Hans could add, subtract, multiply and divide, by tapping the ground the correct number of times.

Said Pfungst: “Among the discoveries made was that if the horse could not see the questioner, Hans was not clever at all. Similarly, if the questioner did not know the answer himself, Hans could not answer either. A forward inclination of the head of the questioner would start Hans tapping, and as the experimenter straightened up, Hans would stop tapping. **Even the dilation of the questioner’s nostrils** was a cue for Hans to stop tapping.” Clearly, Clever Hans took his cues from the expectations he observed.



3. **TATEN MÜSSEN FOLGEN** - IT IS ALL ABOUT TAKING ACTION: From the very beginning, Klinsmann made it clear that the great goal can only be achieved, if the tried and tested is discarded and new ideas are implemented. He hired a team of US fitness experts, fired goal keeper coach Sepp Maier and relieved Oliver Kahn of the captaincy. This way, he created internal competition even for established positions such as the goalie's. And Klinsmann did not stop there – he even overthrew long-held traditions such as providing the players with a hot water jacuzzi after the game – switching to cold water, since muscle regeneration is sped up by cold rather than hot temperatures.

By acting rather than re-acting and taking unpopular decisions, Klinsmann signaled that he was serious about reforming German soccer and that he was prepared to walk the talk. This is why the players followed him throughout and gave their all, even when the going got tough.





4. **BEGEISTERUNG, LEIDENSCHAFT UND GEFÜHL ZEIGEN** – TO SHOW ENTHUSIASM, PASSION AND EMOTIONS: Part of the new face of the German team was the never seen before ability to have fun and elicit an emotion that is normally rather associated with Mediterranean and Latin American spectators – euphoria.

Euphoria and enthusiasm were the emotions that infected an entire nation, and this is what media observers called ‘the spark’ –



‘Der Funke ist übergesprungen!’, ‘The spark that ignited the nation’, the highest achievement of nation branding.

Klinsmann and his team truly unleashed a phenomenon that is known in branding psychology as ‘Massenpsyche’ or ‘Public Psyche’. First identified by the ‘Urfaust in Branding’ (Wharton School of Management) and the father of branding science, Hans Domizlaff (1892-1971) deciphered the laws that govern the public psyche and that determine when and how an idea or case goes viral and infects an entire community.

As a German newspaper titled, “Niemand kann so schön jubeln wie Klinsi”, “**Nobody can jubilate as beautifully as Klinsi.**” Celebrating all wins and sharing the glory of victory was key to Germany’s success.

As a symbol of the new-found passion for Germany was Klinsmann’s decision to change the century old color of the

national tricolor from white (and at times, green) to the most emotive color of all – red, the color of love, fire, dynamism and assertiveness. The message was clear: Germany's competitors better watch out, here is a team that will fight to the last bullet for victory.





Klinsmann's positive attitude did not stop with the German team though – during the world cup it spilled over into the stadia, the media and the German people as a whole. According to Germany's leading political magazine, *Der Spiegel*, "the soccer spectacle has altered the way the world sees the Germans and even how the Germans see themselves ... **The world cup has unleashed a torrent of feel-good vibes** from Hamburg to Munich that has stunned the locals even more than all the foreigners from around the globe. Germans – long shy about expressing positive attitudes toward their country in light of their difficult history – have experienced four weeks of unabashed fun and pride decked out in the national colors black, red and gold."

"And Germans are not the only ones. The black, red and gold flag fest has been a boon for the country's integration of its citizens with immigrant backgrounds. Many Turks and Arabs flew the German colors at their shops or on their cars. A small gesture

perhaps, but an important one to those Germans concerned about integration and those immigrants acknowledging that this is their home too.”

Concluded the country’s most read newspaper, BILD: “Even the last misery-guts has to admit: Germany is livable and loveable. The country is beautiful and full of opportunity. That is why the party must go on. We have to keep up our sense of renewal, the self confidence, the good mood for our everyday lives. This is just the momentum we so urgently need to face the tough tasks ahead.”

5. **EIN ECHTES WIR-GEFÜHL ETABLIEREN** – TO ESTABLISH A REAL FEELING OF US: Before each game, not only was the German Eleven singing the national anthem arm in arm, but the entire team, including the coaches, reserve players and the medical staff stood arm in arm, demonstrating their total solidarity to the world.





Supported by their wives and girlfriends who were sporting the national tricot while watching the games in the stands, the German players extended the team spirit to the fans in a unique way. At the farewell party at Brandenburg Gate, in front of nearly one million supporters, the entire German team was sporting national shirts that had their names replaced with 'Teamgeist' ('team spirit') and the number eightytwo (referring to the 82 million German populace).

From the very beginning, Klinsmann had made it clear that only a team effort would be able to bring the winning ways back to Germany. This is why he either demoted a super star like Oliver Kahn (by relieving him of the captancy) or relegated a Michael Ballack to the bench, after the latter had publicly declared that his calf injury was sorted and that he would lead the German team into their first game against Costa Rica.

The 'Teamgeist 82' was in stark contrast to the prevailing attitude of top European clubs like Real Madrid who build their entire organization around a few super stars.

In the case of Real Madrid, the so-called *galactico* system (made up of Beckham, Figo, Ronaldo, Zidane and Raúl) created a hierarchy that made for discomfort in the dressing room, some players feeling others had an untouchable status. Individuals would ironically refer to themselves as the "middle-class". Even the great Raúl declared that **"the word *galactico* has done us most damage"**, the captain having opened up a tetchy relationship with Ronaldo, who had publicly complained a week earlier that "the fans don't show me much affection".

After three successive seasons without a major trophy and getting through five head coaches, Real's *galactico* system clearly backfired in the face of mounting criticism from players and supporters alike. Said Luis Figo, the dashing Portuguese winger, when he left Real: "Madrid have become more interested in making money than winning trophies."



6. **WEGE ZUM ZIEL AUFZEIGEN** - TO SHOW THE WAY FORWARD:
Klinsmann did not just set a great vision, i.e. to win the world cup 2006, but went out of his way to show the way to each and every player. This is why he insisted that every member of the German team undergo a series of physical and mental tests, convinced that a rigorous analysis of the status quo (“Der Ist Zustand”) would yield significant improvements of at least 15-20%, even in the case of the best and fittest players.

Whereas previously a training camp at the German National Team, according to the words of an anonymous player, resembled more of a holiday, with getting up late and having cake and coffee every afternoon, **Klinsmann turned these camps into strenuous and demanding affairs.**

Sensing that the fitness levels of the German players had slipped in recent years, Klinsmann hired US Athletes’ Performance coach Mark Verstegen to convert the same old training routine into best practice from other contact sports (such as American Football and Baseball).

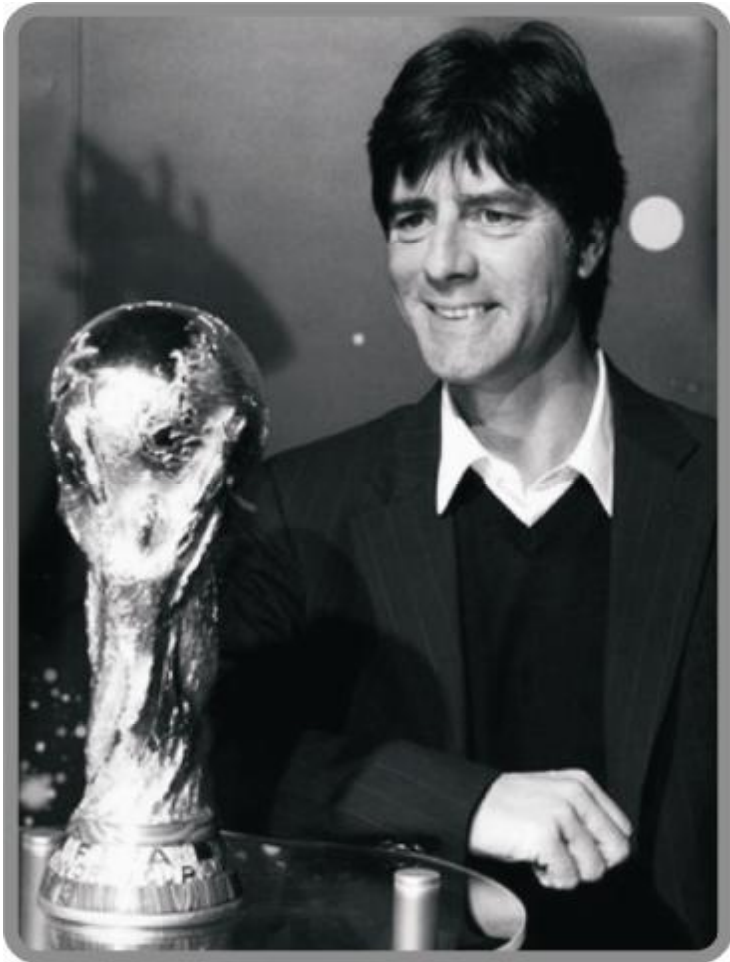




A secret weapon of Klinsmann's in the run-up to the world cup was an activity that most of us abhor – a 5,800 mile commute between continents. Klinsmann's commute between the sunny Orange County California and Germany proved to be packed with benefits.

Besides being able to play for the local 'Orange County Blue Star' soccer team, he was able to enjoy complete anonymity from the press while enjoying the amazing Los Angeles sun. Says American soccer coach Bruce Arena, 'He's just another good looking blonde guy walking around LA.' Fortunately Klinsmann came along in a technologically sophisticated era when such a massive commute could be made possible. He simply would teleconference his assistant coaches when necessary and ensure his players didn't forget their email passwords.

7. **NIEDERLAGEN ALS CHANCE ZUR WEITERENTWICKLUNG NUTZEN** - TO CONVERT DEFEAT INTO A SPRINGBOARD FOR VICTORY: When Germany lost the semi-final to Italy in the last two minutes of extra time, an entire nation went into collective mourning. For many spectators, this was the end of Germany's new brand image – trying hard, but not good enough to win the world cup. Traditionally, the game for the third place was always





considered a non-event – the two losers of the semis slugging it out against each other, amidst the legions of their disappointed fans. Hardly anybody ever got excited about these ‘little finals’, and certainly the host nation, if ending up in this dreaded spot (like Italy at the 1990’s World Cup), would place little value on winning the bronze medal – as opposed to World Cup Gold.

However, Klinsmann turned this paradigm around – determined to end the tournament on a high note and to emerge a victor, not a loser, he motivated his disheartened players to seize the opportunity and treat the German fans to an unseen display of passionate soccer. When the German team entered the Gottlieb Daimler arena in Stuttgart on 8 July 2006, their eyes glistened with determination – and the Portuguese team was no match to the waves of attack rolled out by the German machine.

The euphoria created on that day has now spilt over into the Euro 2008 qualification, with Germany winning all five games to date, with an unparalleled 23-1 goals.