

WARREN KENNAUGH

# FIT

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JUST WON'T  
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First published in 2016 by John Wiley & Sons Australia, Ltd  
42 McDougall St, Milton Qld 4064  
Office also in Melbourne

Typeset in 11/13.5 pt Goudy Oldstyle Std by Aptara, India

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National Library of Australia Cataloguing-in-Publication data:

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Creator:	Kennaugh, Warren, author.
Title:	Fit: When Talent and Intelligence Just Won't Cut It / Warren Kennaugh.
ISBN:	9780730324942 (pbk.) 9780730324959 (ebook)
Notes:	Includes index.
Subjects:	Hogan Personality Inventory. Personality tests. Personality assessment.
Dewey Number:	155.283

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Cover design by Wiley

Printed in Singapore by C.O.S. Printers Pte Ltd

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

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Warren Kennaugh is one of Australia's elite coaches. I particularly admire the parallels he makes between business and sports coaching. Business and sport have a lot to learn from each other. Warren has a deep understanding of Hogan assessments which is accurately captured in this book. For anyone wanting some keen insights into what makes for a high performing team, this book is a must read.

—**Peter Berry**, Managing Director and Hogan Consultant,  
Peter Berry Consulting

Most sports, and certainly the one I am involved with (rugby), include considerable physical mastery and significant technical skill. But of course, to be a true champion of your chosen profession, you have to know who you are and how you respond under pressure situations, be in control of yourself and know how you best operate. This book exposes the absolute importance of the performance mindset of the athlete and that as managers and coaches we simply cannot afford to ignore this critical area. To do so would be negligent! This book 'fits' with me!

—**Lyndon Bray**, SANZAR Game Manager,  
former Test Match Rugby Referee

For some time now I have struggled with the overly prescriptive view taken on talent and leadership. In *Fit*, Kennaugh sheds light on why and the inherent risk of adopting a one size fits all approach to high performance. What makes this piece eminently readable is the rich portfolio of experience that Kennaugh draws on to bring the theory of high performance to life; at all times backed up by a solid body of theory and research. Kennaugh clearly brings a deep passion for the field and it shows in *Fit*.

—**Mark Busine**, Managing Director, Australia,  
DDI-Asia/Pacific International, Ltd

Thanks Warren, at last a simple approach that makes sense and cuts through high performance hype. *Fit* shows simply and impactfully how to put yourself in your own sweet spot of high performance.

—**Leanne Christie**, CEO,  
Ovation Speakers Bureau

I can't remember the last time I was so excited about a book. It's frank, refreshing and just plain honest about what makes high performance. It has great real life examples, backed up by extensive research and cross referencing. Before reading any other book on performance, read *Fit*.

—**Angela Howard**, Chief Human Resource Officer, Metcash Ltd

As in most businesses, the great challenge of high performance is managing and understanding what makes different people tick. In order to achieve consistency in this, you have to understand the complexities of human behaviour. In my role as the head coach of a professional cricket team, I spend most of my time managing people. In *Fit*, Warren Kennaugh is able to simplify man management; a concept which is often confusing, and always challenging. *Fit* is frank, refreshing and honest and an interesting guide to high performance.

—**Justin Langer AM**, Head Coach, Western Warriors and  
Perth Scorchers cricket teams

Not only does *Fit* challenge conventional thinking about performance, it actually provides the formula about how YOU best fit. Once you start reading you won't be able to put it down as you begin to identify yourself within this book—well done Warren for cracking the high performance code.

—**David Mathlin**, Director and Senior Principal,  
Sinclair, Knight & Merz (Australia)

Wow, what a magical piece of writing on the complexities of human performance. Frankly, from the moment I started to read *Fit*, I couldn't stop until the final page. Warren has clearly 'tilted the lance at some sacred cows', but so what, this is exactly why this is a must-read for everyone and every team leader who wants to perform consistently better.

—**Tony Pensabene**, former CEO, Johnson & Johnson Medical,  
Taiwan and New Zealand

Warren Kennaugh is more committed to enabling high performance in individuals and teams than any other person on the planet. His no-nonsense, at times humorous approach is reflected throughout this great book. Kennaugh makes it powerful yet simple to understand and provides

direction for everyone to be a high performer in all aspects of life—if you're interested in exceptional performance then this book is for you.

—**Brett Rumford**, PGA Golfer,  
five times winner on the EPGA Tour

Compelling. *Fit* challenges years of tightly held theory on talent which has left business poorer financially and culturally. Kennaugh provides an inspiring science-based solution presented in a humanistic way, an engaging must-read for anyone in business.

—**Mark Smith**, Group Executive, Perpetual Private

This book is an interesting and informative read for anyone who is passionate and committed to improving their individual and team performance. There is something for everyone who wants to try and reach their potential because it focuses on the individual personality and challenges you to engage with the exercises, reflect and learn from the experience of Warren's work. Never hesitate at the price of a book, please think about the value that it can give you—and there is plenty of value in this one.

—**Simon Taufel**, ICC Umpire Performance & Training Manager,  
ICC Umpire of the Year 2004–2008

It's like getting stock tips from Warren Buffett. Warren Kennaugh's experience and work in high performance is to be envied. He hasn't just studied high performance, the elite ask him to work with them. If you want to understand high performance learn from the best.

—**Chris Webb**, High Performance Manager, Australian Equestrian  
Team, former General Manager High Performance,  
Emirates Western Force and Rugby WA

Warren Kennaugh has written the definitive book on high performance. His research, compelling case studies and experience share insights that are profoundly true. I recommend this to managers, leaders, and any individuals interested in performing at their highest levels.

—**Steve Weston**, CEO, Mortgages,  
Barclays UK

To all those who have found their  
'FIT' and to those still looking.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'A. K. Singh'.

# ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Warren is a behavioural strategist specialising in the coaching and development of elite performance. Harvard-trained and a Fellow of the Institute of Coaching (Harvard Medical School Affiliate), Warren assesses individual and team capability and designs and implements bespoke coaching programs for professional athletes, sport officials and senior executives.

Warren has conducted over 14 000 hours in projects ranging from coaching elite coaches, advanced leadership, human capital due diligence, athlete profiling for performance enhancement and consistency, personal career planning, sales and strategy development, and team development in both sports and business.

Past and present clients include AMP, ANZ Bank, Aon, ARU Wallabies, Australian Cricketers Association, Australian Federal Police, BT Financial Group, BUPA, Colonial First State, Cricket Australia, Equestrian Australia, European PGA, Fairfax, Herbert Smith Freehills, Hewlett Packard, ING Group, Jacobs Engineering, Johnson & Johnson, KPMG, Macquarie Group, Manpower Services, Melbourne Storm (NRL), Merck Sharp & Dohme, NSW Waratahs, Pfizer, PricewaterhouseCoopers, Smith & Nephew, Sydney Roosters (NRL), Thiess Construction, Toyota Motor Company and Westpac Banking Corporation.

The tools outlined in this book, and 21 years of experience helping others unlock their highest potential, have given Warren an uncanny knack for getting to the ‘seed’ of an issue and uncovering accurate predictors of behaviours, and therefore outcomes. These insights make it possible for individuals—whether elite sports stars, senior executives or business



leaders—to appreciate what sets them apart, how to enhance that ‘bright side’ capability, understand their internal drivers and manage their ‘dark side’, which can, if left unchecked or unappreciated, so easily derail even the most promising career.

Once understood it is then possible to orchestrate ‘best fit’ in terms of the individual, team role and the environment, accelerating consistent high performance through feedback and subtle behaviour modification.

Warren writes regularly on LinkedIn (@warrenkennaugh) and blogs regularly on his website [www.warrenkennaugh.com](http://www.warrenkennaugh.com). If you’ve ever watched sports stars implode or senior executives make poor business decisions and wondered why, then be sure to follow Warren on LinkedIn and Twitter (@Warren\_Kennaugh). His engaging, witty and direct approach shines a light on human behaviour that is not only fascinating but also extremely useful for personal discovery and improved performance.

Warren has also been published in *The Wall Street Journal*, *HRMonthly*, *INTHEBLACK*, *Business Review Weekly*, *AIM Magazine*, *The Australian Financial Review* and *AGSM Magazine*.

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Writing a book can be a daunting challenge: collecting thoughts, theories, research and practical examples, and distilling it into a body of work that is simple, adds value and enriches the lives of those that read it. It's a task that has glorious moments and many mind-numbing challenges; it's a task that I couldn't have completed without assistance and support from a band of loved ones, friends and colleagues.

It's these groups of believers who over many years have provided insight, challenged my thinking and kept me on the path. I'd like to acknowledge their contribution.

**Business leaders**—More than 60 large corporations and hundreds of senior executives have contributed, over many years, to my bank of knowledge. Special thanks for their support go to David Mathlin; Steve Weston; Brian Benari; Trent Alston; Jennifer Wheatley; Mark Smith; Anna Gladman; Cheryl Williams; Varina Nissen; Leanne Christie; Angela Howard; Drew Hall; Andre Szarukan; Trevor Scott; Dean Nalder; Russell Peace; Neil Duncan; Steve Cullen; Jeremy Topple; Quentin Jones; Lincoln Crawley; Gary Waldron; and Mark Busine.

**Sports leaders**—The elite sporting community has been a crucial partner in the development and practice of FIT. Their willingness to explore, provide feedback and focus on sporting outcomes provided strong direction; and excellent support has seen this material tested at the highest level on the world stage. Thank you to the coaches, players, managers and support staff in cricket, rugby union, equestrian, rugby league and golf. Special mention goes to Ben Smith and his PDMs; Sean Easey; Bob Parry; the NUP and UHPP; Simon Taufel; Andrew Coles;

Lyndon Bray; Scott Young; Steve Walsh; SANZAR PMT; SANZAR Referee Panel; Joel Jutge; John Connelly; Robbie Deans; Chris Hickey; Mike Foley; Phil Waugh; Phil Thomson; Chris Webb; Prue Barrett; Eventing WEG and Olympic Teams; Tim Horan; Grant Hackett; Justin Langer; David Gallop; Paul Heptonstall; David Rollo; Brett and Sally Rumford; Ian Davies; Andrew and Ashley Dodt; and Pat Wilson.

**Hogan Partners**—Without a strong, credible tool FIT would just be a difficult-to-prove concept. The team at Hogan Assessment Systems has supported my efforts over the past ten years and allowed me to take their inventories into areas where fit really matters. I'd like to especially thank Shayne Nealon; Peter Berry; Elliot Sparkes; Sam Fowler; Daniel Yee; Lynn Taravel; Trisha Haly; all the team at PBC in Australia; Bob Hogan; Tomas Chamorro-Premuzic; and the HAS Team.

**Professional colleagues**—Sharing ideas and striving for accuracy and excellence would not have been possible without a strong peer network. Thank you to the team at Melbourne Business School, and for enduring support from Tony Pensabene, Ross Anderson, Terri Mandler, Doug MacKie, Michael Donovan, Craig Hawke, Michael Curtain, Peter Bryant, Ross Reekie, Murray Kelly and Stephen Balogh. A special thanks to Karen McCreadie for her wonderful editing skills and ability to assist in crystallising concepts, for providing guidance in times of chaos and for challenging my thinking as this book took shape.

**Family**—My father, Lance, who has always seen my bright side; and my mother, Norma, who gave her loving support but passed before seeing the final manuscript published.

And finally to my wonderful girls Jennifer and Sophia. Thank you for your support and encouragement in times when I needed it most, for your insightful perspectives and for believing in me.

# FOREWORD

Few psychological topics have attracted as much lay interests as *talent*, and nowhere is talent more visible and astonishing than in professional sports. Yet the question of why top athletes, and indeed businesspeople, achieve such exceptional levels of performance is still widely debated, and there is no universal formula to turn an average human into the next Tiger Woods, Roger Federer or Richard Branson. One of the reasons for this disappointing state of affairs is that evaluations of talent tend to rely mostly on improvised, intuitive, and experience-based observations. In other words, there is no clear theoretical framework, no robust measurement tool, and, above all, an absence of objective, data-driven, facts about talent and human potential. As a consequence, even most experts play it by ear and we are left with interesting but anecdotal stories about top performers, which amount to mythological rather than scientific views on the subject.

That's why this book is so important. Warren Kennaugh is unlike any other author in this area because of his vast expertise, not only in sports sciences, but also in personality assessment. He has pioneered the use of scientific profiling tools in competitive sports and in business, evaluating hundreds of athletes and managers, linking dozens of personal qualities, competencies, and traits, to actual performance metrics. He achieved this in a variety of business sectors and sports and with a level of rigour uncommon outside of academia, not only understanding, but also advancing the science in this field. More importantly, this book is an unprecedented attempt to digest all this evidence and present it in an accessible, non-technical, and user-friendly way. *Fit* is bound to become a benchmark work in sports psychology and in business, essential for anyone interested in understanding the key determinants of athletic and organisational performance, at the

individual, team and corporate level. In addition, it will be an extremely useful resource for athletes and managers themselves, given the wealth of evidence-based advice on coaching and self-coaching. I also believe that *Fit* can be a game-changer when it comes to furthering people's interests in assessment-based solutions for professional sports. We have long assumed that rigorous profiling tools can be applied to enhancing performance in sports, much like they are in the world of education, human resources, and the military — thanks to this book, we now know it.

Finally, *Fit* will no doubt surprise readers with one of its main postulates: the idea that talent is overrated, particularly compared to personality. Although this idea is counterintuitive, it mirrors our own conclusions from assessing millions of individuals across different domains of competencies and industries over the past three decades. In fact, one could take this idea further and argue that talent is little more than personality in the right place. That is, once we can decode what people typically do, what their default emotional and behavioural tendencies are, and how they consistently differ from others, all we need to do is put them in the right context, and their natural habits — which we can call character or personality — will turn into strengths. In other words, the only reason for not having talent is failing to find where you fit.

**Tomas Chamorro-Premuzic**

CEO at Hogan Assessments & Professor of Business Psychology at  
University College London and Columbia University

# INTRODUCTION

Everyone is looking for high performance but no one seems to know definitively what it is or, perhaps most importantly, how to achieve it consistently.

Having worked with over 3000 elite sports stars, athletes and business people over 21 years I felt sure that if we looked hard enough we would find a psychological profile or a set of characteristics, behavioural strategies and personality traits that underpin top-flight performance in any domain.

My thinking was that if I were able to unravel the performance DNA of individuals who excel far beyond their peers, the rest of us would know the recipe for high performance and would be better able to emulate their success. I was so sure that there was something different about these individuals that I started to collect detailed psychological profiles with a view to analysing them so I could identify the key elements of their success. Only, that independent research indicated no formula. There were no statistically significant correlations that marked certain traits as must-have characteristics or processes for achieving high performance.

At first I was quite disappointed, and my ambition to write this book started to fade. But the more I thought about it the more I realised this was good news, not bad. After all, what if the research *had* identified a specific high-performance recipe of personality traits and characteristics? What if the rest of us didn't have those ingredients? Were we meant to go crawl under a rock and accept a life of mediocrity? That didn't seem right (or helpful) —and, as it happens, it's not!

It turns out that star performance comes in all shapes and sizes. The fact that there is no performance lottery was actually an exciting realisation.

Not only does this research finally disprove the often-touted theory that the alpha male, A Type personality is the *only* route to success, but it offers real hope for a solution that could massively impact performance for the many, not just the few.

So. If performance isn't a collection of strengths, characteristics and a specific skill set, what is it that makes elite performers elite performers?

In a word: fit!

The more an individual's natural strengths, characteristics, skill set and values fit with the requirements of a role, and with the organisation itself, the higher the performance will be. And yet the notion of fit is almost exclusively ignored in favour of talent, intelligence or some other holy grail of performance.

The weird thing is that we have all experienced or witnessed what happens when fit is ignored. Take sport, for example: how many times has a ridiculously expensive, highly talented sports star moved to a new club, only to fall flat and never really reach their expected potential? The player is still playing the same sport in the same position. He still has the talent and IQ he arrived with, but he just doesn't fit in the new team. It may be that they coach differently and he doesn't respond to the new style; perhaps he's allowed more free rein in this club and gets into trouble off field. Whatever the reason, he doesn't fit and is eventually moved on or 'kicked upstairs' to a well-paid, senior, but largely ineffectual position. This also happens in business, where individuals are headhunted for huge recruitment fees and yet never reach their previous heights. It can be extremely difficult to get rid of those people once they're in, so they are moved around the organisation or shipped off to a new territory. Whatever the outcome, they just never seem to realise the promise they were hired to deliver.

\* \* \*

So what does *fit* actually mean? Surely there are a huge range of circumstances that can cause someone to fit or *not* fit—in which case

fit becomes as useless as talent or IQ, because its impact comes down to chance? Not so.

What I discovered was that while the *content* of fit is different between individuals, the *context* of fit, and therefore its role in star performance, is not. In other words, while there may be thousands of ways that a person can fit into a particular role or organisation there are only three areas you need to look at in order to ascertain fit. These three areas effectively create a structure or framework that makes high performance possible, and this framework is common to all elite performers.

Think of this framework like the skeleton in the human body. Everyone has a skeleton underneath their skin and muscles. Every skeleton has exactly the same number of bones that do exactly the same job. The skeleton is our framework, or context.

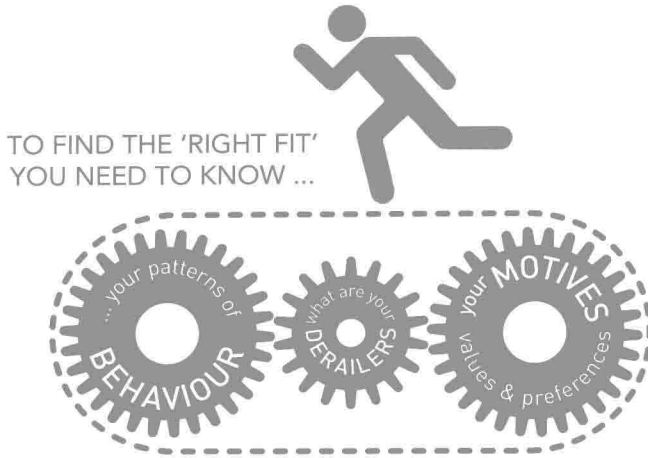
The content—height, weight, skin, hair and eye colour and so on—is what makes us all look different on the outside. On the inside, though, we all have the same bones, in the same place, doing the same job.

It's the same with high performance. All the elite performers studied in the research looked very different from the outside—playing different sports or working in different professions in different industries. And while I didn't discover an identikit profile of what someone capable of high performance looks like, I did discover that underneath their outward appearance there was a framework that, when understood, can help us all achieve elite performance by ensuring we are in the right place, doing the right thing, in the right team or organisation *for us*. In short, ensuring we fit.

What I've discovered is that star performance is not so much about *what* you do (which, incidentally, is what almost all performance improvement programs focus on) but about *how* you do it, *why* you do it and *where* you do it (see figure I.1, overleaf). In fact, the only important thing about *what* you do is what you do to screw things up.



**Figure I.1:** the three components of fit



The reason high performance is so mysterious and inconsistent for so many people is that we are almost solely focused on improving behaviour, skills, knowledge and experience that an individual brings to a sporting or corporate team. As a result we completely dismiss the impact of personality on performance.

When we look at individuals we see a seemingly infinite array of complex and unpredictable thoughts, emotions and behaviours. This apparent randomness is too overwhelming, too daunting and too confusing, and as a result most performance improvement theories don't dig deeply enough into wiring or personality. If there is any focus at all on this internal invisible world it tends to be on visualisation or meditation techniques, or on making a person comfortable and happy so that their natural ability can express itself unhindered by negativity or upset. If, however, we go further than the superficial and seek to identify the unique wiring, we can very quickly uncover and understand the process that an individual uses time and time again to deliver results. And when we do a great deal of that, overwhelming randomness disappears and predictable, consistent process emerges from the chaos.