ISSUE 01
MAY / JUNE 2017

HIGHER STATE

THE MAGAZINE FOR HIGH PERFORMERS

SHINING THE SPOTLIGHT ON HUGH COLLIER

Step inside the head of a top Disney executive and learn how changing your mindset can change your world

GETTING TO THE CORE

Work your abs to improve your performance

BERRY GOOD BRAIN FUEL

Try this morning smoothie to take your focus to the next level

www.abigailireland.com

Ready for the next level?

Welcome to Edition #1 of Higher State magazine!

This is a new e-publication that introduces you to the world of high performance.

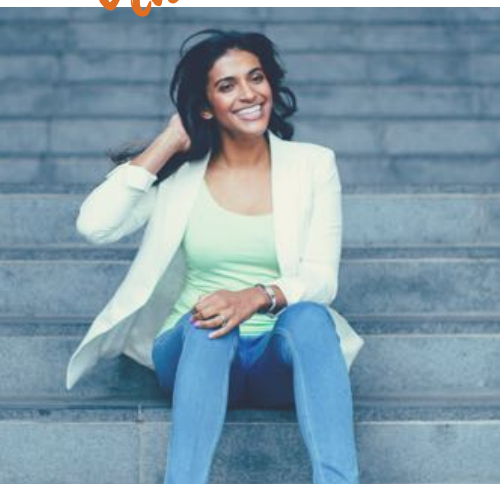
I'm sharing tips, tools and strategies to show you how perform at your best.

I'll bring you productivity and performance insights from the worlds of business and wellbeing – and I'll be sharing special guest features as I interview high performing leaders from across the world. We explore how they got to where they are today, what challenges they faced, and how they think, work and live.

If you want to raise your game and learn from other high performers, this is the place to be.

Have an amazing, productive day!

Abi



BE THE BEST VERSION OF YOU

Edition 1, May / June 2017

How can I help?

HELPING YOU TO PERFORM AT YOUR BEST

Abigail Ireland is a high performance consultant who takes a unique, integrated approach.

She spent a decade in financial services before building her own businesses in the education and wellbeing fields. Her banking career took her on a journey through private equity, corporate banking, strategy and business management with major banks in London and Sydney.

In her corporate and entrepreneurial roles, Abigail learned how effective business skills, mindset, fitness and nutrition made a huge difference to her energy, focus and ability to deliver results.

www.abigailireland.com

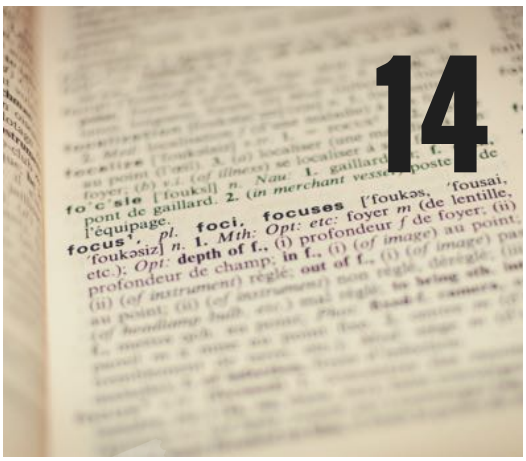
Abigail works with organisations to amplify staff performance and productivity through workshops, coaching and strategic programmes.

Whilst focusing on business productivity strategies, Abigail also incorporates mindset, nutrition and physical wellbeing strategies to optimise overall performance.

Abigail is a Chartered Banker with a 1st Class Honours Degree in International Management. She is also a qualified personal trainer, Pilates instructor and nutrition coach.

Contact Abi if you want to amplify staff performance, engagement & results in your organisation. Write to abi@abigailireland.com.

WHAT'S IN STORE



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GET YOUR EVENING RITUAL CHECKLIST HERE

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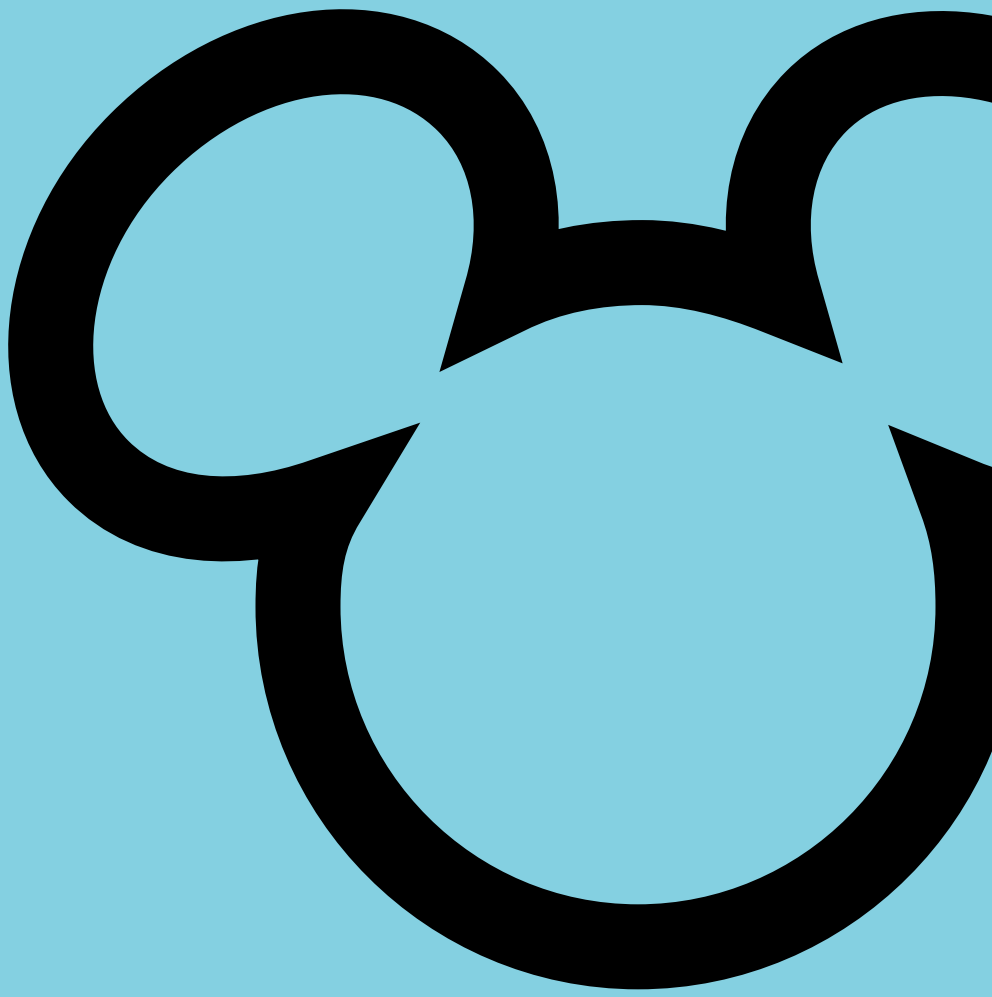
IF YOU CAN DREAM IT, YOU CAN DO IT.

WALT DISNEY



In this edition of *Higher State*, Abigail chats to **Hugh Collier**, CFO for The Walt Disney Company Italia.

Keep reading to get into the mind of a high flying finance executive...

BELIEVE YOU CAN, THEN YOU WILL.

MULAN

Hugh Collier is the CFO for Disney Italy. He lives in Milan, Italy, after having relocated from London in late 2015. Read on for a trip inside his world.

Abi's Observations: *What really struck me about Hugh was his positive outlook and the appreciation he has for everything in his life. Hugh's determination, values and mindset enable him to make the most of opportunities that come his way. His attitude allows him to manage a demanding job with passion and high energy. He uses positive language and emits upbeat vibes, enabling him to see the silver lining and not waste time dwelling on what might have been or what went wrong.*

Whilst Hugh appears to have a naturally laid back style, he is no Mickey Mouse. Hugh is energising and inspiring – taking responsibility to manage himself, his career, his personal life and his wellbeing to get results.

Key Takeaway: Having a positive outlook makes all the difference in life. If you have a demanding job but love what you do, it doesn't have to feel like 'work'. Work can be play if you want it to be. And what better play environment than the magical world of Disney?

INTRODUCING HUGH

Can you tell me a bit about your career path and how you got to where you are today?

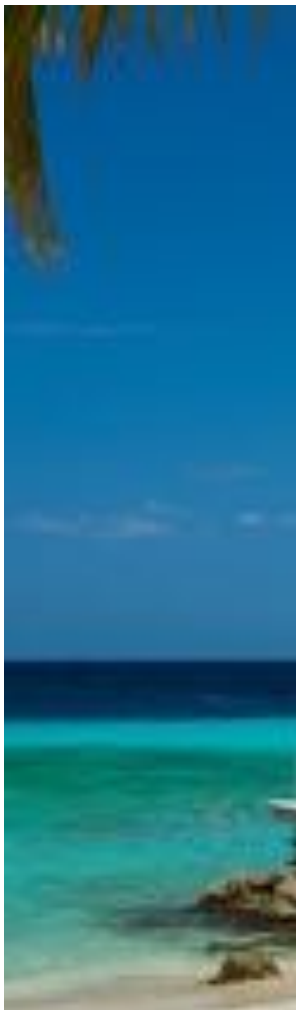
So, I spent my formative years in the Caribbean, in Tobago, and I returned to the UK for A-Levels when I was 17/18 years old.

After A-Levels, I worked for a year in an actuarial team. I wasn't sure what I wanted to do but I was quite good at maths and it was a very analytical role. It was interesting but not really for me.

I then went to Kent University in Canterbury, still not knowing what I wanted to do...so I went down the maths and economics route. When I left university, I still didn't know what I wanted to do!

I worked in London with a friend and we started a business in the telecoms space – I enjoyed that.

I had a friend in Paris at the time, so I decided to move over for 6-9 months...and ended up spending a couple of years there as a waiter!



I couldn't spend the rest of my life in Paris as a waiter, so I returned to the UK and started a Chartered Accountancy course.

I began work at a small practice in North London before joining another firm in the City. That firm was later acquired by BDO Stoy Hayward and I qualified through BDO.

As an auditor, I specialised in the entertainment industry, working on things such as Robbie Williams' royalty audits.

I was drawn towards music....my two brothers are both singers so I've always been interested in that type of thing.

After qualifying, I wanted to stay in the entertainment business. I was offered the job at Disney and, at the time, I didn't realise the huge breadth of what the organisation covered. I joined Disney's accountancy department when DVDs were fairly new and we couldn't make them fast enough! It was a very successful business.

I went from audit into the accounting world – it was all very new to me.

I stayed in the DVD field for a couple of years and then joined Finance in Disney's theatrical/cinema releasing department. I stayed in that area for 10 years, moving around the business, and I saw the entertainment industry go through a lot of change.

I was then given the stage business to work with, which was amazing.

One thing I really enjoy is dealing with different types of people and business partnering with different stakeholders - from interacting with the US and Broadway teams to working with the music and motion picture cinema businesses.

Within the last 6 years, Disney has gone through fundamental change – the whole business is now integrated (no longer in silos), so it's fascinating to deal with colleagues and business partners all over the UK and learn about the different segments that Disney operates in. And now trying to understand what the new digital world entails – plus the move towards social.

So, 18 months ago, a role came up in Italy for CFO – I applied and here I am today!

Could you speak Italian before moving to Italy?

No, Italy is probably the only market in Europe where you don't need to know the language. Plus, everyone at Disney speaks English.

But.... I'm the only non-Italian speaker in the office so I'm desperately trying to learn and have lessons.

I'm here for a while and there is so much added value when you meet people and can speak the language.

"...people can trust my decisions even if they don't really like them."

-HUGH COLLIER

Did you encounter any barriers or obstacles on your career path?

I've always conformed a bit.

I'm half English and half West Indian so I have a mixed heritage. I haven't come across much prejudice in that sense. Disney is so international, as is London – such a melting pot and not a huge amount of prejudice.

Also, my personality is outgoing and I put people at ease - so that works for me. My management style is fair and trustworthy, so people can trust my decisions even if they don't really like them.

I suppose, maybe as my background is Caribbean, some people might say I'm laid back – in evaluations, people have questioned if I have the backbone to make hard decisions. However, you build trust and people can see beyond the surface and know that, ok yes, he can make difficult decisions when he needs to.

I try to do things as fairly as possible but I do tow the company line when I need to.

I also don't fight battles I know I can't win. One, don't fight it and two, have a positive outlook.

It's important to make sure people don't go down the route of complaining and having bad blood.

Do you have any mentors, coaches or people you look up to?

I've had a couple of mentors at Disney over the years. And I've been a mentor twice before.

As a mentee, you get out what you put in.

Mentors are ultra busy and resource light, so mentees need to drive things. It's an opportunity to think and assess your development.

"You get out what you put in."

Do you think it's important to have a mentor?

It definitely depends on the purpose.

Some people are so focused on promotion and how they can get it, rather than trying to more deeply understand what they want in their personal development.

Ok, what are your top 3 values?

Hmmm, interesting one!

Firstly, **honesty** – I've had amazing bosses over time and one massive factor is good communication to the team, so everyone understands the strategy, goals, objectives and conversations happening in the company.

Secondly, **humility** – all companies have different values and themes, and Disney is definitely one where everyone is very generous with their time. Plus, people don't bitch and moan about things.

Finally, **determination**. There are ups and downs, but when the job has to be done, then deliver it.

You are married to the job sometimes, but that's how you progress really.

And what does success mean to you?

Having a good, balanced lifestyle…work-life balance, and good development personally and emotionally.

How do you prioritise things on a daily basis?

I work in a matrix structure – so you don't have one boss, you have about 10! Things are often up against each other. It's all about managing everyone's expectations.

People shouldn't be sitting in the dark wondering when they're going to get something from you.

You need to set reasonable and achievable goals, then follow up with everyone so they understand when everything is going to be delivered.

You need to check that the timeline you have in mind is in line with the stakeholder's expectations. If they want

something earlier, you might need to adjust other things to conform.

The key thing is to ensure everyone has visibility on timelines so they can feed back into them.

How do you stay focused when at work (or do you multitask)?

I multitask a bit too much sometimes!

But…I am also able to put my head down, turn everything off and just do one thing. I do need to multitask sometimes – and that is the beauty of this role.

So many different things come my way constantly and my door is always open.

One of my traits is having an open door policy. No matter who it is, I want them to feel welcome if they want a chat.

Sometimes I do have to stop things and go with it. If I get side-tracked, I catch up later.

Do you find that because you enjoy work, it doesn't feel like work?

Exactly. I appreciate the opportunity I've got. To come to Italy, learn a new language…

I love London but having this opportunity means I can leave after 13 or 14 hours with a smile on my face because it's a good day. It's really rewarding.

"I appreciate the opportunity I've got."

How do you stay calm under pressure?

I exercise.

If I have a hard day, I run home. It takes 30 minutes but it really does help. I also do yoga to calm myself down. I do this when I get home if stressed. There are some amazing apps out there.

In the office, even when I feel under pressure, I try to relax and focus on what I'm doing - and not get too stressed.

I find myself running all the time. Sometimes, I run from meeting to meeting and I'm always in rush but I try not to let it affect my mental state.

Is there any particular way you do that? Is it just your nature?

It's partly because of my nature but I also have an Apple watch that gives breathing updates - so I breathe!

It detects your pulse and, every now and then, tells you to stand up and do breathing exercises. A wellbeing thing.

My boss also believes in not sweating the small stuff, so it helps to put things into perspective. Be thankful for what you've got healthwise.

Do you have a morning ritual?

I get up at 6.15am. I take the kids to the bus at 7.30am – it's a 10 minute ride to the bus – and then I walk to work.

At the office, I spend 15 minutes doing my Italian homework. I then spend 15 minutes reading the Times with a coffee and my breakfast. And then, I check my emails at around 8.45am.

If you look at emails as soon as you get in, 2 hours have passed before you put your head up. So I avoid that unless I have something urgent to do – in which case, I'll focus on that immediately.

And do you get your inbox down to zero every day?

I don't, but that isn't really one of my focus points.

Some fun ones now! Do you have a role model?

My first role model was my boss when I was growing up in Tobago. He was a Chuck Norris, scuba diving, hunting type of guy!

Other than that, I take a few things from different people – I'd say a combination of a few bosses and I take some attributes from each. The way they communicate, motivate people, and so on.

"If you look at your emails as soon as you get in, 2 hours have passed before you put your head up."

And what did you want to be growing up?

I wanted to be an architect! My great uncle in Trinidad was an amazing architect.

I thought architecture involved a good combination of technical skills (maths) and creativity, but that all went out the window!

Ok, nearly done….what's your favourite movie?

My favourite movie has to be Once Upon a Time in the West.

It's called a western opera - because the music in it is amazing. I love everything about it. The director (Sergio Leoni) also did The Good, the Bad and The Ugly.

It's amazing. It really is.

Do you have a good book recommendation?

I used to read a lot but I haven't read for years and years….

I really liked the Rum Diary, which was made into a movie. When I was reading the book, it reminded me of Tobago - with the chaos that comes with a Caribbean island. A very vibrant story.

I read the Times, FT and Economist. I want to consolidate all of this into one so I can keep in touch with the business world.

The Economist is something I've been reading for years and I find it really fulfilling.

Thanks Hugh! It's been really fascinating to hear how you think. I'm especially impressed by your positive attitude.

I've always been like that – I never look back, always look forward and have a positive outlook. Maybe I'm too much like that!

Out of curiosity, did you ever have times when things didn't go your way in terms of life and work?

Oh yes, definitely!

When things don't go my way in life, I just carry on. **There's no point procrastinating about things that don't happen the way you want them to.**

For example, when I came to London after Paris, it was a really tough time for jobs and I worked at smaller accounting firm for not much money at all.

It's a case of acknowledging that, when you can't get what you want, it's a stepping stone to something else.

So just do it.

And it will get you closer to where you want to be.

~ THE END ~

If you know a leader who lives and breathes high performance, we want to hear from you. Write to abi@abigailireland.com to learn more about the superstars we feature in Higher State magazine.

PRODUCTIVITY: THE ONE THING

Focus, focus, focus...

Most people know by now that the ability to multitask is not something to be proud of.

Switching from one task to another, and often back again, means that you never truly immerse yourself in something. You use more brainpower than necessary just by flitting back and forth, trying to recall where you were up to with each task.

The best way to get things done effectively and with more speed is to FOCUS on ONE THING at a time. This means blocking out chunks of time for each activity, so you can give it your full attention.

And...ACTION!

What's your "One Thing" for today? This week? This month?

Write down your non-negotiable tasks and schedule time into your calendar to complete these.

In her banking roles, a core component of Abigail's work involved advising senior executives on corporate and business unit strategies, process improvement and effectiveness of business operations. To learn how Abi can help your people to perform at a higher level, write to abi@abigailireland.com.

MINDSET: THE POWER OF WORDS

Pay close attention to your language

The old saying goes, “Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words cannot hurt me.” Very true, although there is a lot to be said about the language we use in everyday life and the impact it has on the way we live our lives.

Studies show that higher stress levels are exhibited when using swear words than when using milder alternatives. Negative words increase activity of the amygdala – which is the part of our brains that deals with emotions. In turn, stress hormones are released that reduce our brain’s ability to think logically. Words do, in fact, have a physiological impact on us.

By introducing positive and action-oriented words into our vocabulary, we can shift our perception of life – work, challenges, people and surroundings – to create conditions for performance at a higher level.

So, “I’ve got so much work on and I’m really stressed” could become “I’m got some really exciting challenges to focus on today and I’m looking forward to resolving them.”

Which sentence puts you in a more focused and productive state of mind?

Mindset is the key to performing at a higher level. To start introducing small and effective productivity habits into your life, ***take part in the FREE 10 Day Productivity Challenge that kicks off every Monday. Register here to get started.***

FITNESS: CORE STRENGTH

What's all the fuss about?

If you spend a large chunk of your working day sitting down - whether at a desk, in meetings or in cars, trains and planes - it makes sense to get fit. Strong core muscles help to support your spine, maintain a good posture, facilitate effective breathing and promote a healthy back.

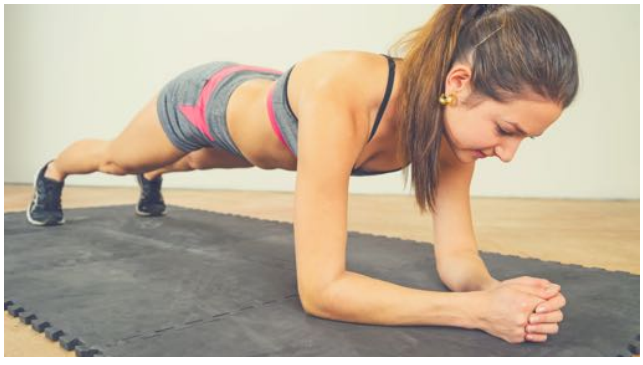
You rely on your core to maintain a nice, tall position when sitting down. Strong muscles take longer to fatigue, so you keep the pressure off your spine and avoid neck/back aches and pains.

A good posture also enhances your executive presence, but more on that another time.

Exercise of the Day: The Plank

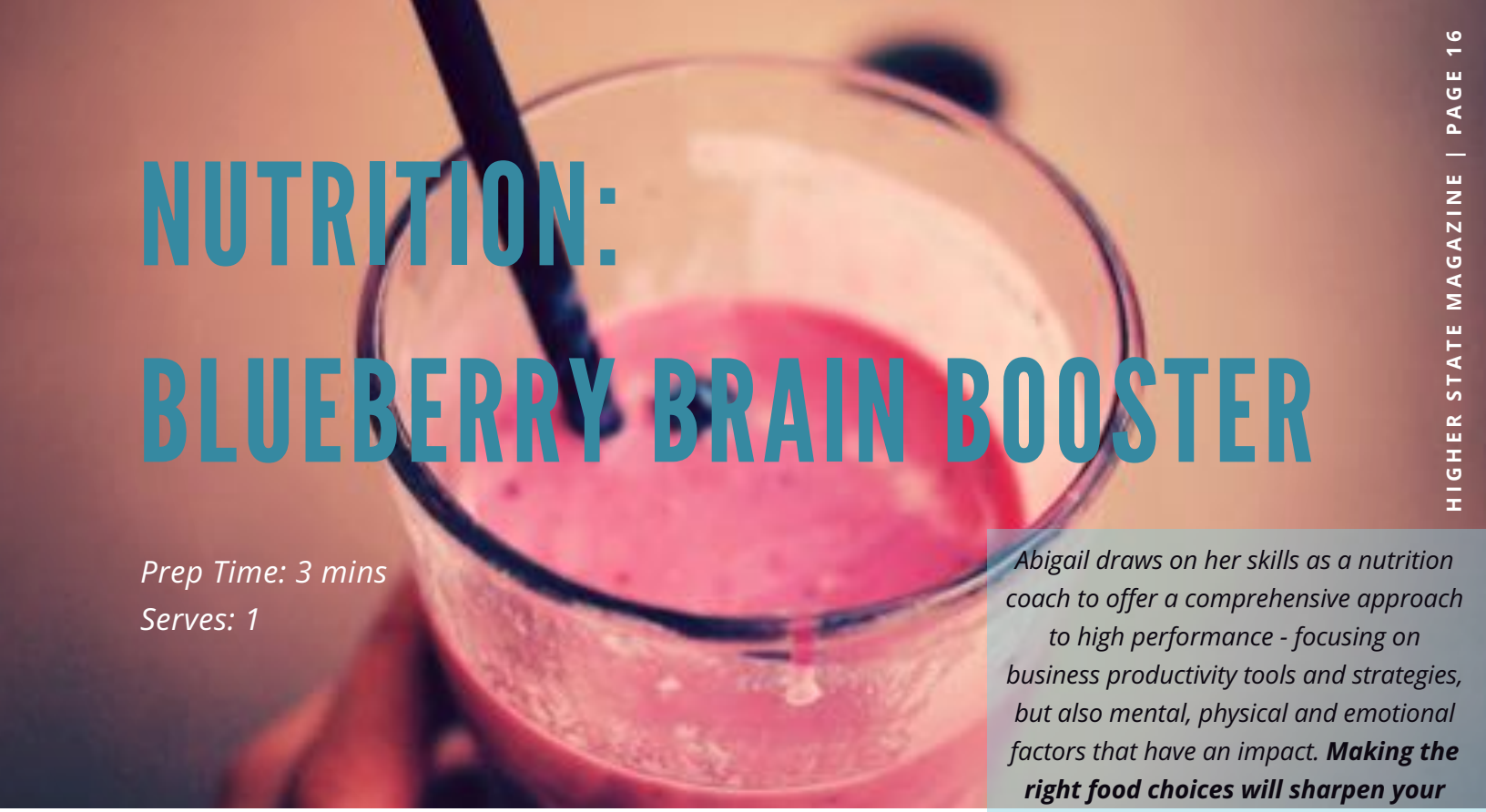
Often mistaken for a beginner exercise and frequently performed incorrectly, here are some tips to plank with good technique and work that core:

- Elbows directly under shoulders
- Tighten your abs and butt muscles
- Keep your neck in line with your spine (look down)
- Think straight line from head to toe
- Keep your butt down and hold for 60 seconds



Abigail Ireland is a qualified Personal Trainer, Pilates instructor and nutrition coach. Write to abi@abigailireland.com for more info on strategy development, workshops, training and coaching to boost staff productivity, performance, results and engagement.

www.abigailireland.com



NUTRITION: BLUEBERRY BRAIN BOOSTER

Prep Time: 3 mins
Serves: 1

Abigail draws on her skills as a nutrition coach to offer a comprehensive approach to high performance - focusing on business productivity tools and strategies, but also mental, physical and emotional factors that have an impact. ***Making the right food choices will sharpen your mind. Find out more: abi@abigailireland.com***

Blueberries contain a high level of antioxidants that enhance blood and oxygen flow to the brain, improving concentration and memory as a result.

Studies show that blueberries also help to reverse age-related declines in balance and coordination.

Add blueberries to your diet so you can stay alert and youthful.

For an extra energy boost, throw some chia seeds into the mix.

INGREDIENTS

- 1 cup water or coconut water
- 1 cup baby spinach
- 1/2 cup blueberries
- 1/2 cup frozen raspberries
- Squeeze of fresh lime juice
- 2-3 fresh mint leaves
- Sprinkling of chia seeds (optional)

PREPARATION

1. Place water and spinach in blender.
2. Puree until mixture is smooth.
3. Add all other ingredients and blend.
4. Serve.

WORK WITH ABI

Talk to Abi if you're looking for fresh, innovative ways to spark higher performance, productivity, engagement and (of course!) results in your organisation.

Rather than focusing only on business aspects of productivity, Abi recognises that other factors also play a major part in optimising performance - mental, physical and emotional drivers.

Abigail delivers integrated solutions that incorporate business productivity, nutrition, fitness and mindset strategies. She draws on her experience and qualifications in business and wellbeing to help staff achieve next level performance. Abigail recognises that every business is different and each individual has unique needs.

Read on for the full list of consultancy, training and coaching solutions offered to organisations, executives and teams.

PERFORMANCE COACHING

Tailored productivity & performance coaching sessions for individuals and small groups - an opportunity to work through issues and roadblocks that restrict performance at the highest level. Accountability and goal setting to drive results. <<CLICK HERE TO LEARN MORE>>

"P&P" STRATEGY DEVELOPMENT

For organisations seeking to develop in-house programmes and initiatives to boost staff performance. Development of tailored solutions to increase productivity, lift engagement and achieve business objectives. <<CLICK HERE TO LEARN MORE>>

PRODUCTIVITY WORKSHOPS

Practical and value-packed 90 minute workshops designed to have an immediate impact on personal productivity and create a lasting, high performance mindset. Choose from foundation level workshops focused on Business Strategies, Nutrition, Body or Mindset OR tailored staff/executive workshops. <<CLICK HERE TO LEARN MORE>>

FITNESS & NUTRITION COACHING

Drive performance to the next level by taking care of your body, inside and out. Coaching sessions for individuals and small groups - providing tools, education and guidance to build healthy habits and boost energy levels.. <<CLICK HERE TO LEARN MORE>>

121 JUMPSTART SESSIONS

This punchy, 45-minute coaching session is for individuals who want to tackle one specific performance issue and take action towards a resolution - a short, sharp, tailored session to reset your focus and develop an action plan. Option for follow-on sessions to reinforce accountability and commitment to achieve key milestones. <<CLICK HERE TO LEARN MORE>>

"THE WAY TO GET STARTED IS TO QUIT TALKING AND BEGIN DOING."

WALT DISNEY

I hope you've enjoyed the first edition of Higher State magazine and take the opportunity to incorporate some of what you've learned into the way you work. I'd welcome your feedback (good and not so good!) so shoot me your thoughts at abi@abigailireland.com. Until next time, be your best self!

Abi

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Follow me on: