

Explorer Patrick Degerman: “Rethink the way you think”

Patrick “Pata” Degerman is a Finnish explorer and an inspirational lecturer, who has led dozens of expeditions to some of the most fascinating places on our planet. Pata’s leading idea in life is that the barriers we put up for ourselves are usually just a product of our mind, not real. He wants to demonstrate that if we challenge ourselves, boldly develop new ideas and adopt new ways of thinking, anything is possible.

It’s about the journey

What is it that drives Pata forward and makes him pack his bags again and again? The challenge, he says, and the fascination of finding new places. All his expeditions are different, and every project has a beginning and an end. For Pata, each stage of a project is important – he enjoys the whole journey from the initial idea to returning home at the end.

“You plan and prepare for years, then climb and stand on the mountain top for fifteen minutes before going home. Some might not see the point, but for me it’s about the whole process, rather than just reaching the summit”, he explains.

Pata organizes expeditions to Greenland almost every year to film and take photographs of the pristine Arctic nature and its wildlife. At the moment, Pata is also working on various other projects, including books, exhibitions, TV series and school collaborations. His dream project is to document disappearing places around the world and species that are vanishing from our planet every day. Pata has already put the wheels in motion and, knowing him, will see it to the end.

Practice makes perfect

A successful explorer has good social skills, persistence and a passion for nature. Setting out on demanding expeditions year after year requires explorers to constantly develop their skillset, be able to sell their ideas, take care of logistics, have good language skills and be in top physical form. It requires commitment and motivation for countless hours of practice. Pata spends a lot of his time in Finland practicing, making sure his training sessions are tougher than the actual performance. That way it becomes a routine task, which improves safety substantially.

When planning an expedition, it’s crucial to prepare for anything and everything by creating various scenarios. In the planning stages, Pata and his team come up with a long list of “what ifs”. Together they prepare, gather information, train and get hold of the right equipment for managing the risks involved. If they can’t find answers to a particular question or cannot decide on appropriate measures, the expedition may prove too risky and end up being cancelled. This has happened to Pata a couple of times.

“Through practice, anyone can do extraordinary things that are not part of everyday life. Of course there are always risks involved, but by assessing them, preparing and practicing different solutions, the risks diminish substantially”, Pata explains.

What can we learn from Pata?

The business world can learn a lot from explorers. Being an explorer means having to think about things from different angles and developing new ways of going forward. Stepping into the unknown and conquering new areas requires innovation and a readiness to change and adapt old ways of thinking and doing. In today’s challenging financial situation, this applies to business leaders as well.

“A lot of our actions are limited by barriers we’ve created in our mind, but we can learn to ignore them, because they’re not real. You shouldn’t hold yourself back just because an idea seems impossible at first. We’re doing things today that seemed impossible fifty years ago! Remember that a new idea is never good, unless you share it”, Pata concludes.