



Kim Rhode is one of my Olympic memories. She only nailed 99 of the 100 clay pigeons they threw her way, some 8 clays better than her nearest competition. She is the only American to win a medal in 5 consecutive Olympic Games, this time gold. Her parents are still paying off mortgages on their house they took out to support her shooting efforts (a clay is \$.60 per, even for Olympic champions and she takes down between 500 and 1,000 at each practice event). "But what do you do when your child has a dream?" Richard Rhode continued. "I think people do that. They sacrifice for their kids. And we wouldn't change a minute of it. All we can do, pardon the pun here, is bite the bullet."

But for her celebrity, she is in many ways like any person in our industry. She restores antique cars. She drives a pickup truck. And you'd likely not pick her out in a crowd at the mall. She just happens to be the greatest skeet shooter of all time.

Like Michael Phelps or LeBron James, she had to work at her craft. Long hours of practice. Alone. Unrecognized. And yet she had the confidence that she could do it. The Associated Press reported that, as a kid, Rhode got invited to stay and work at the Olympic Training Center in Colorado Springs, Colo. And one day, athletes in residence were asked to write down everything they could not do.

Rhode didn't move.

"The coach says to her, 'Why aren't you writing?'" Richard Rhode said. "And she goes, 'Well, I don't think there's anything I can't do if I put my mind to it.' And he stopped everybody from writing and says, 'That's what will make an Olympic champion.'"¹

Being a catalyst for transforming the design and construction industry using lean principles seems small potatoes compared to what Kim Rhode was able to do. Yet, we continue to chip away at it. We have more requests for community of practice formation, recently from Bill Black of Hayworth and others in Canada and elsewhere around the globe. Next week we're working with a variety of influential trade associations in D.C., trying to craft some educational programs going forward. The Congress this year will be full of public owners talking about challenges in procurement that make lean construction practices more difficult. We've received more than 50 presentation ideas for the Congress, up substantially from years past. Our efforts are bearing fruit and we're moving forwards.

But that's really institutionally. The Kim Rhodes of the world remind us that champions are amongst us. They're the ones that go the extra mile, that take heart that there is nothing "I can't do if I put my mind to it." These are the leaders among us. They're the designers that are convinced the lean practices will free up budget room for really important spaces that create a better built environment. They're the owners that are not content with the way programs are developed and implemented—owners who seek real value for their investment and mean that

¹ See, http://espn.go.com/olympics/summer/2012/shooting/story/_/id/8210910/2012-summer-olympics-us-kimberly-rhode-wins-skeet-gold-fifth-straight-medal for the complete story.



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investment to add value to their companies, their employees and their communities. They're the general contractors that ask how they can drive value to owners through greater commitment to planning and to, well, reliable commitments. But mostly, from what I've seen, they're the General Superintendents and the Foremen, the rod-buster in the hole that ties rebar like rodeo cowboys tie steers, the drywaller who crafts a wall so that it is straighter than the material allows, the millworker that is never satisfied with "good enough." These are the Kim Rhodes that surround us every day. We don't give out medals (very often) but we can recognize their work.

Tomorrow, thank the champion that's made your team successful. Thank her for putting quality first. Thank him for tying off his co-workers, even on the last pull of the day. We all work for them. And we should take some time to thank them for their quiet, unrecognized, world records. And if you see Kim Rhode, thank her for reminding us what makes a champion.