

Heinrich, Beckham, Player and Mozart

Submitted by Kellie Mundell on Mon, 2016-01-11 12:17

I was recently challenged with the question how do you convince a board that simply won't listen? We discussed the notion of investment rather than cost, win: win; the use of data and illustration, messages that target the rational *and* primal brain. But then cynically agreed that sometimes *you just can't*. No matter what you say you'll simply get defensive rationalisations or worse because you just can't convince someone who won't engage with an open mind.

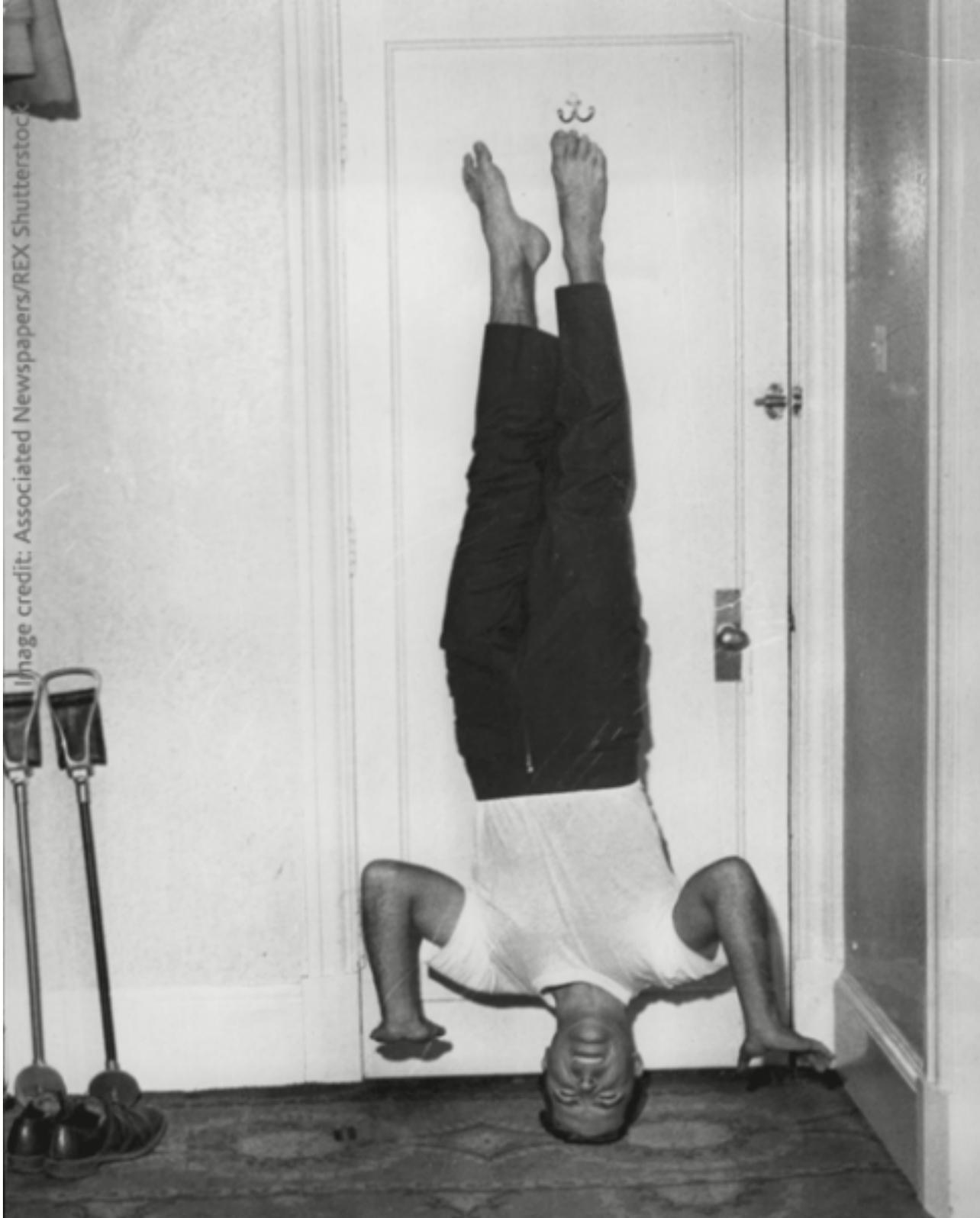


Image credit: Associated Newspapers/REX Shutterstock

Books like Malcom Gladwell's *Outliers* and Matthew Syed's *Bounce* offer case study after case study that confirm the only way to get to excellence is to graft for it. Golf star Gary Player (above) quipped that it was funny how he seemed to get luckier the harder he practiced. I always imagined him practicing bunker shots at dusk until his hands bled but it transpires this photo of him limbering up for a day of golf decades before any other golfers worked out is a better metaphor. This point isn't new; the Heinrich principle is that we get no guarantees either way but that we can affect how much luck we need.

David Beckham's record for "keepie-uppy" after his first week's practice? Ten. Even the poster boy for the idea of the born genius, Mozart, wasn't one. His father was a strict disciplinarian and one of the world's leading music teachers. Yes, he was composing while in short trousers but most of it was crap and he didn't write anything genuinely good until he was in his early 20s. (Some musical experts consider him "a bit of a late developer, considering").

The Dalai Llama says that his appearing to be happy all the time might have something to do with him "practicing hard at it every day for 60 years now".

No exceptions. If you want excellence you need to work for it so it's an eternal frustration of the safety professional to work for board executives that say they do ... but who in effect want sporting excellence based on a gentle jog in the park once a week.

Here's a related story to console and amuse in the meantime.

In the 1970s the Hungarian Laszlo Polgar suggested that his ideas about learning and excellence should be adopted by the government. They gave him short shrift so he sought to prove his theories by having children to experiment on, advertising for a wife to provide said children in the paper! (Even more weirdly, though not unimportantly, he got a really nice, sane and supportive one who found his ideas intriguing!)

He decided he would get them to excel at chess, because scores and ranking points don't lie and the training was free. He used a variety of innovative and empowering training techniques that had his three daughters relishing every moment they practised. The experiment went OK, to put it mildly: Judit is the highest rank female player of *all time* and both her sisters were also world class, Susan also in the all-time top 10.

Pity the chap who approached him at a conference to say: "you must be the luckiest man on the whole planet. You have all these crackpot ideas about learning and excellence ... you name chess specifically as the thing your kids will excel at – then you only go and father the bloody Polgar sisters!"

You can't win an argument with an idiot – or executives that simply will not engage with data and logic and won't embrace the eternal logic that excellence always requires effort.

Challenge. *If you feel that the will simply isn't there no matter how many different ways you try to convince management that more effort is required, why not ask them for one thing (before moving on, perhaps). Ask that they back up their confidence they are doing enough with a promise to visit an injured employee every day that they are in hospital and to personally give a reading at any funeral.*

Thumbnail Image:

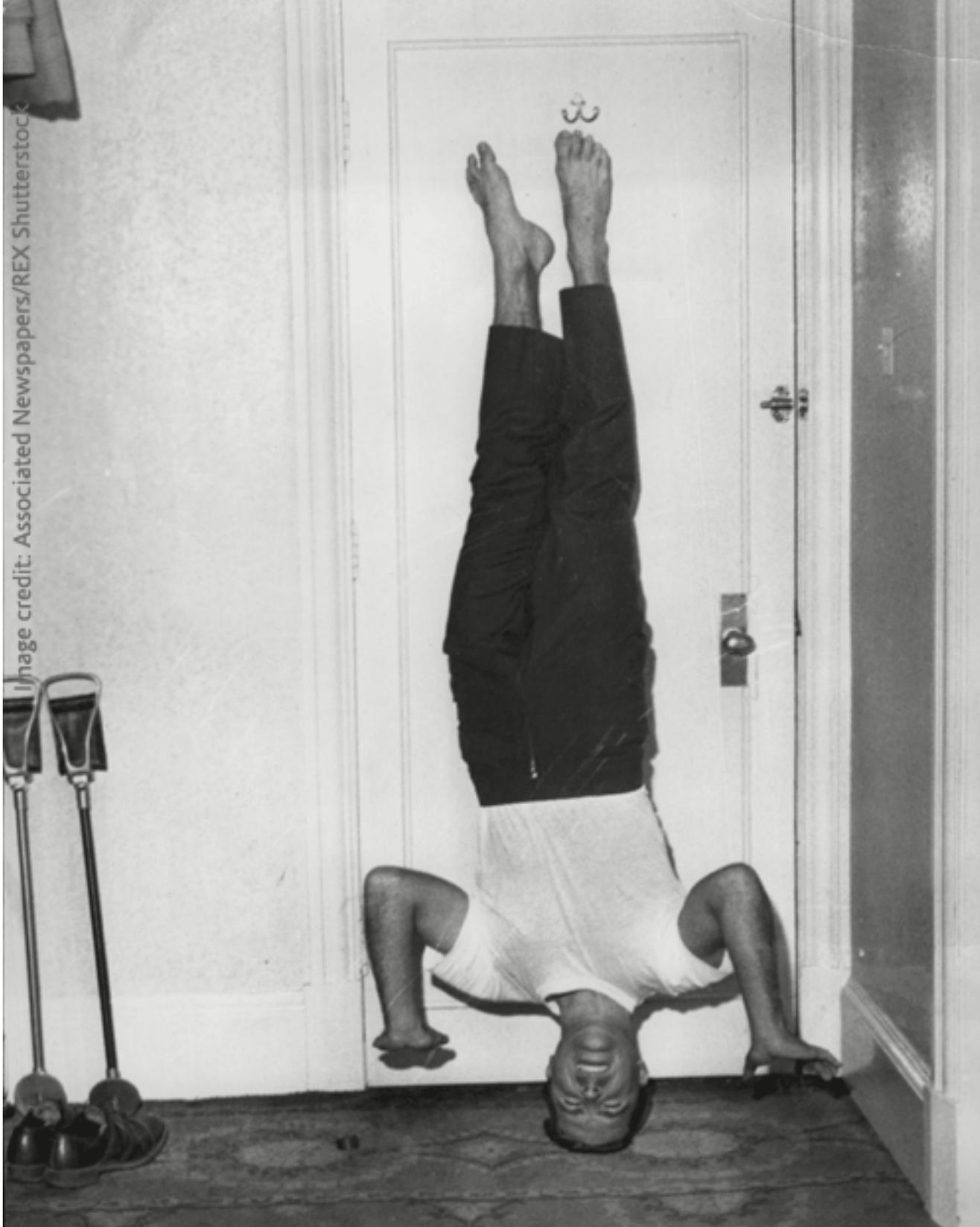


Image credit: Associated Newspapers/REX Shutterstock

Recommended posts:

The guru, the magician and the Ping Pong Player

Sex and the safety message

Latino Workers in the US — or 'Chico and the Man'

Add to Carousel:

no

Blog Type:

[Tim Marsh's blog](#) [1]

Author:

Tim Marsh

*/

Source URL: <https://www.healthandsafetyatwork.com/tim-marsh-blog/heinrich-beckham-player-and-mozart>

Links

[1] <https://www.healthandsafetyatwork.com/blog-author/tim-marsh>