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<http://theinclusionclub.com>

This eBook has been written by Peter Downs as an Inclusion Club special report.

I would like to thank my many colleagues that have helped me form the ideas and concepts described in this report. On particular those that have contributed directly to its production, Ken Black - my fellow Director at The Inclusion Club, Jill Street, Kathy Tessier, David Swaine, Richard Nicholson and Chris Nunn,

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# Introduction

This eBook has come out of the keynote presentation that I presented at the 2011 International Symposium of Adapted Physical Activity (ISAPA) in Paris.

When I started to put together the concepts for the keynote in late 2010 I was pretty much overwhelmed at the prospect of trying to come up with something that made sense, was supported by sound research and, at the same time was practical and unique.

I did not see much point in regurgitating information that can be found elsewhere. I wanted to provide some original thought and ideas based on my 20 years experience in the field of disability sport, adapted physical activity and inclusion.

It seemed to me that this was an opportunity to pull a lot of my experiences together and present this to an international audience in an original way. The concepts here were borne out of a conversation I had one day with my long suffering colleagues. For over 10 years I have managed a small and highly talented team of people with the basic goal of creating new opportunities for people with disability in sport.

Between us we must have delivered thousands of workshops, in Australia and all over the world. We've attended thousands of meetings, attended countless conferences and seminars and had literally millions of conversations on the topic of sport, physical activity and disability.

Very often during our conversations we would say to each other, "*he gets it!*" or "*she doesn't get it!*". Or we might say about an organization something like "*they just don't get it*". We often referred to 'it' as a generic term for what we collectively understood as '*inclusion*'. But we have never really discussed what 'it' was - we just knew that we all knew what we were talking about.

That got me thinking. If 'it' was some kind of in-built understanding of inclusion - then how can we understand 'it' better and, perhaps, start to create environments and places where people would stand the best possible chance of getting 'it' more often.

I hope that makes sense because that's how the paper for ISAPA and this report has come about. It is an attempt to look at the environments and places that create the best possible chance for opportunities in sport and physical activity to flourish.

A couple of explanations before we start.

What do I mean by environments? Environments are the circumstances around which opportunities occur. They are the context that is necessary for people to come together to create activities and programs that include people with disability.

As an example of an environment consider the typical school playground. For things to happen in a playground we need an environment that is created, or at least influenced by, many different people. You need an education department that set guidelines; you need school principals that make sure those guidelines are adhered to; you need groundsman to make sure that playgrounds are in good order; you need teachers to supervise. Of course, you need students. The list goes on.

All of these people create an environment for a playground to exist.

So what's the difference between an environment and a place? Well, the *playground* is the place. The playground is where things happen. The teacher or supervisor is the gatekeeper of things happening in the playground.

You may have gathered by now that when I talk about environment and places I am really talking about *people*. Because it is people that make environment and places, not buildings, or guidelines, or equipment, or policies, or programs. It's people.

I hope this Report gives you some ideas and stimulates your thinking around how best to create more opportunities for people with disability to benefit from a sporting healthy life.

Oh, and thanks again for joining [The Inclusion Club](#). I hope you get 'it'!

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Peter Downs". The signature is stylized, with a large, looped "D" and the first name "Peter" written in a cursive-like script.

# Part 1: The environment

**Opportunity** – it's why you are reading this Report!

You are here because you believe that if you are able to provide more opportunities for people with disability to participate in sport and get more physically active then the world will be a better place.

It just would - you and me know that.

But let me ask you – how much do we **really know** about the environments and places that create opportunity?

I suggest that we don't know a great deal. At least, we have not really taken a look at what kind of people contribute most to creating the best environments and the best places for new opportunities.

Who do we need and what personal characteristics should these people have?

So, in this Report, I have three things I would like to look at closely.

1. the **environments** that create opportunity;
2. the **places** where opportunity happens, and
3. I will try to bring that together under one **model** of opportunity.

Let's first look at the environments that create opportunity for people with disability.

Here, we're going to consider three types of people that create environments that are ripe for opportunity.

The first is a **Connector**.

## Connectors

These are the people that Malcolm Gladwell, in his book *The Tipping Point*, described as essential in the creation of any form of social epidemic.

For that is what we want to create. We want to create an environment that has input from different, previously disconnected, people. We need someone to bring these people together. To create a mini social epidemic around the inclusion of people with disability into sport.



I have seen, time and time again, opportunities in sport and physical activity being created when people come together and discuss what needs to be done. You might need parents, teachers, physiotherapists, peers, support workers, sports officers ... the list goes on. When the right people come together opportunities are created.

Invariably, someone needs to be the glue for this to happen. Someone needs to be the *connector* of these communities. As Gladwell says:

*“the success of any kind of social epidemic is heavily dependent on the involvement of people with a particular and rare set of social gifts”<sup>1</sup>*

One such person with a rare set of social gifts is my friend Jill Street.

I interviewed Jill via Skype for this Report. Here are a few extracts:



Jill lives in the Queensland town of Rockhampton, in north Queensland. Rockhampton is a town of around 80,000 people. In terms of connections in the sport and disability area this is a remarkable community. A key to that community is people like Jill Street. Below are extracts from an interview I did with Jill for this report. It's difficult to do justice to the 'Connector' effect that Jill has had in this community here, but you will get some important clues just from the few quotes below.

***“I was in the disability field since 1983...I met most of the people through work - it was an incredible time. Because we were all mates we'd talk socially too - people were very passionate about their jobs and they cared about the kids.”***

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<sup>1</sup> Malcolm Gladwell in *The Tipping Point*, 33:2002

***“One of the very powerful catalysts for us was driving all those miles in the car. When you have all that time you do talk ‘shop’ a lot. We also had good leaders at the time. You could talk to them. It was a whole team effort with the right people at the right time.”***

***“A lot of people had the same values. Another factor was ‘Sporting Wheelies’ (a state wide disability sport group) and Access Recreation - so we had community involvement at the same time. It was all to do with networking.”***

***“We had meetings and seminars and every year we would meet other Advisory Visiting Teachers from across the state. So it gave us a state-wide network. So if you heard of somebody in Cairns doing something you would chat to them and pick their brains and adapt it to suit your own centre.”***

***“Everything seemed to come together between 1983 and 1993 and continued after. It was a whole community thing that was a very productive time. We also got the parents involved through a parents group. Bottom line was we empowered the parents to speak and take action.”***

***“To this day we are still good mates. We did keep in touch with a lot of people.”***

Clearly, a criteria to be a Connector is that you must know a lot of people. Jill knows a lot of people. She brings them together. When these social gifts work together in a small niche such as sport and disability, it can be extremely powerful.

Let me also introduce you to Kathy Tessier. I’ve known Kathy for 16 years. She is an incredible Connector. She was the Manager of a program that provided disability sport education training in the state of Victoria from 1995 to 2005. At its peak Kathy, almost single handedly, was responsible for training around 3,000 people annually in disability sport education. Purely on the strength of her connections. Even today, if I want to find someone in Victoria in sport, particularly in the disability sport, I call Kathy.



Below are extracts from an interview conducted with Kathy Tessier in June 2011. It’s easy to see from this how Kathy is an extraordinary Connector.

***“The key to any form of success is finding the right people. How I found them was using my existing networks. It didn’t really matter if they were not particularly involved in disability sport.”***



***“Everyone’s got a connection somehow so it was really just finding the right people. And I think, at the end of the day, it is really about their values and their philosophy on life.”***

***“You can see it a mile away even if you meet them for 5 minutes. So you find them and then it’s really easy to connect them because these are people with the same values and philosophies and they are instantly connected to each other.”***

***“So it becomes an army, or a team of people that are supported both professionally and personally to go ahead and really make a difference. So it’s the team that you create - this is much more important than anything else you do.”***

***“People had the values of the program in their hearts. They really believed in values around social justice.... it was relatively easy to find the people that really did believe in the program.”***

***“I thought long and hard about what it was that would support them. So we would get together in a professional development capacity but also we had a set of standards so they knew clearly what was expected of them when they were presenting. I was well organized and they knew what to expect.”***

***“The support I gave the network was beyond the professional support though. They knew that if they were sick or could not attend a workshop then someone would be organized to fill-in. I would send people messages on their birthday. Sometimes that stuff can be regarded as frivolous but it costs nothing and means a lot.”***

***“Just to say ‘thank you, you did a great job’ was important and it really motivates people. I think those little things mean a great deal.”***

***“It’s also important for people to feel they are part of something that is bigger than themselves and to feel connected and supported.”***

What we did not discuss was Kathy’s own personality. She has the same qualities as Jill. She has an infectious personality, one that almost compels people to follow her. Jill and Kathy have strong beliefs and are in touch with their beliefs to a high level. So when they come across people with similar beliefs they can immediately associate with them. They may not always agree with someone but the important thing is that core beliefs are intact.

Consider the quote from Kathy “you can see it a mile away even if you meet them for 5 minutes”. Exactly! Kathy has the ability to recognize values in people - very quickly. This is incredibly important for the way she connects to people.

You will also see in the interview that Kathy had both formal and informal ways of connecting people. She was organized and had guidelines in place. But she also had informal social meetings, parties, functions and events - all of which contributed significantly to developing the networks that she was managing.

Connectors do the little things to keep people connected. As Kathy says in this interview *“Just to say ‘thank you, you did a great job’ was important and it really motivates people. I think those little things mean a great deal.”*

Being a Connector is not simply ‘knowing’ a lot of people though.

We all have **strong and weak ties** to people. Our friends are our strong ties, many of our acquaintances and work colleagues are weak ties. We tend to let go of our weak ties over time as life moves on.

One thing that I notice in both Jill and Kathy is that they are able to attribute tremendous value to a casual meeting. They have an ability to see the worth of a chance meeting and to retain that connection for a purpose.

So Connectors retain their weak ties to an extraordinary level. This is important and key to developing niche social epidemics. We need people who have that extraordinary knack of retaining weak ties and using those ties for a particular purpose.

In this case, creating environments that, in turn, create opportunity.

So we need niche Connectors, and the good news is they are everywhere if we know what to look for. As Gladwell says:

*“Sprinkled among every walk of life, are a handful of people with a truly extraordinary knack of making friends and acquaintances. They are connectors.”*<sup>2</sup>

Connectors have many strong and weak ties to people, but they also have the type of personality that brings people together. They are infectious, motivated, have a sense of humor, are warm, generous and extremely likeable. People want to be with Connectors and will go out of their way to be with them and cooperate with them.

If you find Connectors in the sport and disability niche, people like Jill and Kathy, then you have gold-dust!

The second type of person we need to create great opportunities are the **Mavens**.

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<sup>2</sup> Malcom Gladwell in *The Tipping Point*, 41:2002

## Mavens

Mavens comes from a Yiddish word meaning “one who accumulates knowledge’  
These are the people that connectors often rely on for new information. While **connectors spread information**, Mavens have an insatiable desire to **find information**.

Linda Price is a marketing professor at the University of Nebraska and she has done a lot of research on Mavens. She says

*“a Maven is a person who has information on a lot of different things. This person likes to initiate discussions and respond to requests”<sup>3</sup>*

Now, similar to a Connector, if you can find a Maven in the sport and disability niche – a niche Maven – then you are onto a good thing.

Here is an example of someone who is one of the top Mavens in the world in the niche area of sport for people with disability, my colleague and friend Ken Black.



***“I started in the area of inclusive physical activity and sport in 1979. Through a background in swimming I got a job running the swim program at a college for disabled students near Cheltenham in Gloucestershire, England. In the 10 years I worked in special education, I was able to get involved in local, national and international disability sport, including coaching with the England Cerebral Palsy and Great Britain Paralympic swim teams.”***

***“Over the ensuing years, I worked for a disability sport organization, a city council sports development team as their disability sport officer, as inclusive activity specialist for a national youth sports agency, before moving to Australia.”***

***“On my return, I ran a research centre on disability sport for two years, and then began to work independently enabling me to get involved a wide range of inclusion projects.”***

***“Over the years I’ve developed numerous educational resources and workshop materials on inclusive physical activity, including the TOP Sportsability and Elements programs for the Youth Sport Trust (UK) and the Sportsability and Pacific Sport Ability programs for the Australian Sports Commission (ASC).”***

***“I’ve also developed numerous training and practical educational resources, including activity cards, interactive CD-ROM training manuals, books and journal***

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<sup>3</sup> Linda Price *The Market Maven: Diffuser of Marketplace Information*, 83-97; 1987

***material. I've been the UK representative, via Loughborough University, on the THENAPA adapted physical activity network, whose most recent project provided educational training and practical tools for those training or working with older disabled people in physical activity programs."***

***"I've been extremely fortunate to be asked to work extensively overseas, conducting practical workshops and seminars on every continent. This has included work on ICES (International community Coach Education Standards), a coach-education project targeting practitioners using sport for development as part of the wider International Inspirations London 2012 legacy program. I led a number of information gathering workshops in India and Zambia on behalf of UK Sport, The British Council and UNICEF UK and have continued this work with the Special Olympics Bharat program and a nationwide inclusion project in Indian schools."***

***"In 2002–2005 and was responsible for introducing the Sports Ability program in Australia, based on a UK model I had developed whilst at the Youth Sport Trust."***

***"More recently, in 2009-10, I was able to work on another project with the Disability Sport Unit conducting a national consultation exercise with disability services organizations to find how they can use physical activity and sport to provide more opportunities for their service users."***

But being a Maven is not just down to his vast experience and how much he subsequently knows. It's also to do with his personality. Ken likes to tell people what he knows. About lots of things!

Mavens like Ken have the knowledge and the social skills to start word-of-mouth epidemics. He does not tell people to show off or to improve his social status or ego. He tells people because he has a genuine desire to help and find a solution.

Again, as Gladwell says:

*"The fact that Mavens want to help, for no other reason than because they like to help, turns out to be an awfully effective way of getting someone's attention"<sup>4</sup>*

Ken definitely gets peoples attention!

Another Maven is Richard Nicholson. I first met Richard in 1997 when he was starting to train as a track wheelchair athlete for the 2000 Paralympic Games, having previously competed as a powerlifter. Richard worked as an athlete trainee with me on a part-time basis but went on to manage the highly successful Sports Ability program that has gone all over Australia and overseas.

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<sup>4</sup> Malcolm Gladwell in *The Tipping Point*, 67: 2002

Sports Ability was designed specifically to provide opportunities for young people with high support needs and included a number of specifically adapted sports and games. Many of these Richard designed and developed.



Richard built up an expertise over a period of about 10 years. You can see from below that he was involved in the development of some very specific resources. He not only developed them, he put them into practice too - designing all the training material developed from his own learning. Here, he talks about his role in the development of Sports Ability

***“Initially it was a school based program but over the last 6 or 7 years has expanded into much more of a community based program. In the set up and development of that program we went through a lot of trial and error in some ways and we developed a number of resources including some activity cards.”***

***“After we developed the activity cards we saw there was a good need to develop an instructional DVD to support the activity cards so that the entire package was self supportive if there wasn't available hands on training to go along with the Sports Ability program.”***

***“The second part of Sports Ability was targeting Indigenous communities so we looked at including some traditional Indigenous games in those cards. For that process I put together a small reference group of Indigenous people from around the country and we tested the games out to see which ones were going to work and which ones were not going to work and which ones were easily adaptable for people with different disability.”***

***“In my role with Sports Ability I have facilitated and run hundreds of workshops across the country. From in-service teachers to pre-service teachers, facility managers, school kids - a whole range of different people, all involved in the sport industry in some way.”***

***“Although I have had a great experience delivering a lot of workshops and seen a lot of adaptations and modifications to different games its really that you need to draw out of the participants and empower them to make these changes to the activities to make them more inclusive.”***

You can view the entire video interview with Richard Here:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Hk-5B9QRSNU>

And download the full interview transcript here:

[http://inclusionclub.s3.amazonaws.com/richard\\_nicholson\\_interview.pdf](http://inclusionclub.s3.amazonaws.com/richard_nicholson_interview.pdf)

Both Ken and Richard pass the 10,000 hours test. Professor Anders Ericsson<sup>5</sup> has studied many high achievers in life. People like Michael Jordan, David Beckham, The Beatles, Steve Jobs and Bill Gates. What do these people have in common with Ken and Richard? It's not their wealth I can tell you!

It's the fact that they have completed at least 10,000 hours practice in what makes them an expert - or a Maven. According to Ericsson:

*“Our research shows that even the most gifted performers need a minimum of ten years (or 10,000 hours) of intense training before they win international competition”*

Although this refers to athletic performance it is equally applicable for people that have specifically worked in any field and achieve excellence. Ken and Richard have achieved excellence in their field. One of the prime reasons for this is because they have both chalked up more than 10,000 hours working on the inclusion of people with disability.

So they are Mavens because of their personality but also because they have invested a huge amount of time in their chosen field.

There are some fascinating case studies of 10,000 hours theory in Malcolm Gladwell's book *Outliers*.

Generally though, the one thing that Mavens are not are *persuaders*.

Mavens are teachers. They are information brokers.

If social epidemics are to start though, someone needs to persuade you to do something. So while Connectors are our social glue and Mavens our data banks, we still need someone who is able to persuade us even if we are unconvinced.

Many people are unconvinced about the opportunities people with disability could have in sport and physical activity. They need persuading.

The person to do that is our third person for inclusive environments – the **Salesmen**.

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<sup>5</sup> K. Anders Ericsson, Michael J. Prietula and Edward T. Cokely in *The Making of an Expert* (1997)

## Salesmen

The Salesmen has something powerful and contagious. He or she is able to engage others in a way that inspires others and persuades them to do things they previously wouldn't. It's excitement, it's charm, it's energy.

One such person is Chris Nunn – one of the key people behind Australia's Paralympic successes in 2000.

While Chris is best known for his work at the elite end of athletics, he is also a passionate advocate and speaker around all things to do with sport and disability.

Chris could basically sell ice to the Eskimos. I have seen Chris talk in forums of moderately interested sports administrators and teachers and turn them into raving fans of all things disability sport within minutes.

I interviewed Chris for this Report. Extracts of the interview are below.

Similar to other interviewees in this Report it is difficult to do justice to the impact that people like Chris Nunn have on people. They have something very powerful - an ability to change lives. I've seen Chris do this.



***“I never really considered myself a Salesmen, I was always a teacher of sorts. And then it hit me going into Sydney (for the 2000 Paralympic Games) that in my whole professional life I had been a Salesperson. I was selling the concept of success to athletes; I was selling the challenge of coaching to people that had never coached; and I was selling the concept of Paralympic excellence to people that wanted to listen.”***

***“So any chance I get to talk to coaches or administrators or anybody about the most wonderful product in the world - which is athletes trying to reach their success - then I will go out and sell that product any day.”***

***“Am I a motivator? I don't think I'm a motivator. Motivation comes from within. What my role is - is to sell this idea that if you find the right environment then you can be successful. So yes, I love the product that I get to work with and I love selling it. I think we don't do enough selling of what we do.***

***“So are we teachers or are we motivators - I don't think so - we are Salespeople. I want to share my vision and embrace what we are doing because they can see that I am passionate about what I am doing and they***

***can see that I have a vision - and when people share your vision they come on board - and that's a simple sales technique. Having people embrace what you have and trying to buy in - so the more people buy in to what we do, the stronger the organisation will be across the world and the better off our children will be who don't have all the opportunities they could have."***

***"If you have the right attitude and you want people to come on board then they can clearly see from your approach to them, from your approach to what you're doing, to the approach to the business you are in, that if you have the right attitude then you create an environment that they feel safe and secure."***

You can view the full video interview here:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PgOctOaL15g>

And download the interview transcript here:

[http://inclusionclub.s3.amazonaws.com/chris\\_nunn\\_interview.pdf](http://inclusionclub.s3.amazonaws.com/chris_nunn_interview.pdf)

A large part of what Chris does is infect people with a quite blatant enthusiasm and authenticity. He wears his heart on his sleeve and is able to infect others with his emotions. *Emotional Contagion*<sup>6</sup> talks about mimicry as exactly that - the ability to infect others with our emotions. If I smile - you smile. If I laugh - you laugh. If I cry - you cry. Emotion is contagious. It's not just the physical reaction of mimicry, it's also an emotional one.

I have seen Chris in tears and 'choked up' during presentations. His authenticity in these situations is so transparent it emotionally effects others. Psychologists call people like Chris 'senders'. There is even a test for senders. It's called the *Affective Communications Test*<sup>7</sup> which measures the ability to send emotions. I guarantee that Chris Nunn has a very high score on the Affective Communications Test!

Chris is a brilliant example of a Salesmen of sport for people with disability. But Chris is a Salesmen from the sport sector.

What I think is even more powerful is if you have a Salesmen for sport within the disability sector.

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<sup>6</sup> *Emotional Contagion* by Elaine Hatfield, John Cacioppo and Richard Rapson (1994)

<sup>7</sup> *Affective Communications Test* - Howard Friedman, University of California



A Salesmen who works within the disability sector carries tremendous credibility. He or she is *on the inside* and, hence, knows the challenges and opportunities that disability sector agencies have. There is a presumed empathy for people in this position, be it real or otherwise.



David Swaine is the Manager of Community Development at SCOSA – The Spastic Centres of South Australia. SCOSA are a provider of day services for people with disabilities. Their aim is to provide and promote positive social inclusion and support people with disabilities in the community.

David has taken his love of sport and integrated that within the operations of SCOSA. He has worked tirelessly with the Department of Sport and Recreation to make sure that sport and physical activity is simply what SCOSA do on a regular basis

He has been particularly strong in trying to change perceptions around what people with high support needs can do when it comes to sport. He works directly with people with disabilities, their families and carers and creates positive links to local sporting organisations.

One of the main challenges has been solving the logistical problems of timeframes and accessibility. He thinks that the majority of sports are very open to including people with disabilities but need help in solving some timetabling and ensuring that people with disabilities have appropriate access to facilities.

***“it’s always a challenge – finding ways to do sport that suits everyone. If the willingness is there then we can usually find a way to make things happen.”***

Similar to Connectors and Mavens, Salesmen carry with them that extra something. Something almost indefinable. It’s the **ability to use words and gestures to convey belief**.

So I think that if you have a Salesman within the disability sector – a salesmen for sport – then you have great credibility. I think even more so than a Salesmen within the sport sector.

It’s easy for some people to come up with reasons not to do something. Not to look for ways to include people with disabilities in sport. There are potentially a million reasons – and I think I have heard most of them over the years.

But a Salesmen with Chris and David’s passion and belief, with their great powers of persuasion, can overcome all these excuses and reasons, simply with the strength of their conviction and their persuasive abilities.

Never underestimate the power of a great persuader – particularly one that is in our niche and carries credibility.

## Summary

So, to summarize. There are three elements to environments that create opportunity. Three types of people that, when they come together, can create environments that produce endless opportunities.

The **Connectors** are the glue that bind people together, the **Mavens** are the knowledge facilitators and the **Salesmen** are the motivators to make things happen.

So now let's move onto the actual places where things happen. If you have your environment in order and your ducks lined up ... you still need someone to deliver.

## Part 2: The place

This brings us onto the second part of our model of opportunity – the **places** where opportunities occur.

There are **seven characteristics** of places.

The first of these I call **vision**.

### Vision

In short, we need people with the vision to see that **little things can make a big difference**.

You may have been in this position. You are working with a group of people. You are exploring how adapting elements of an activity can make it more or less inclusive.

You adapt rules, you adapt equipment, you adapt teaching style. All is good but your activity is still not as inclusive as you think it could be.

Then suddenly, one person in your group makes a suggestion that changes the course of the activity entirely. It is suddenly completely inclusive. The idea may be simple. It may be the change in the color of a ball. Or a rule modification. Or simply using equipment slightly differently.

The idea does not change the integrity of the activity for the whole group but it makes a massive difference to the way that individuals are able to be included into it.

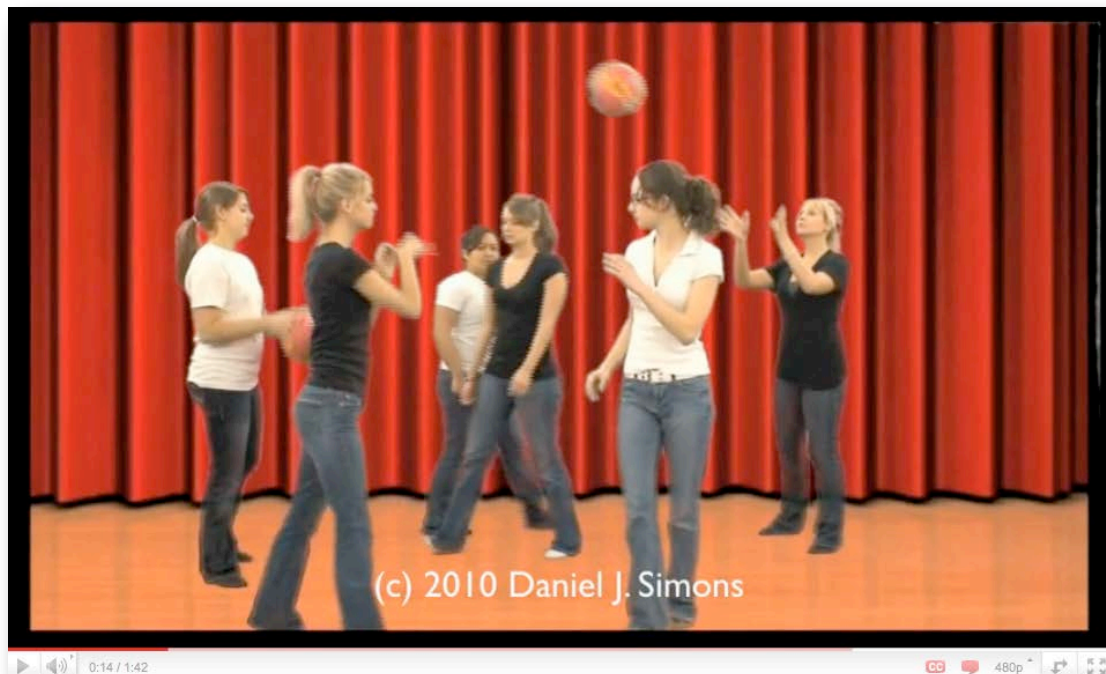
Was that one idea pure luck? Maybe! Was it a result of experience and education? Maybe. Was it a result of the natural progression of thoughts that you were promoting. Yes, maybe!

But, I'd suggest it's more likely that some people have a special kind of *vision*. The vision to see that small things can make a big difference. Not everybody has this.

But, I'd suggest it's more likely that some people have this special *vision*. The vision to see that small things can make a big difference. These people have very good broad attention.

So why don't we all see these things?

Take a look at the video below. It comes from experiments conducted by Dan Simons<sup>8</sup> in 2010. Here you have two teams of 3 passing a basketball to each other. One team is wearing white and one team is wearing black. What I want you to do is to count the number of passes of the white team. The video goes for about 30 seconds. Just count the passes of the white team in your head.



[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IGQmdoK\\_ZfY](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IGQmdoK_ZfY)

It's incredible isn't it. How so many people miss what is so obvious after you have seen it once! It is demonstrating something known as 'inattention blindness'.

This means that if we are not paying attention to something then we are blind to it. The thing is, in the place where activity happens there is usually lots going on. It's so easy to just 'cope' in this situation and not pay attention to the little things that can make a big difference.

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<sup>8</sup> Taken from *The Invisible Gorilla*, by Christopher Chabris and Daniel Simons (<http://www.theinvisiblegorilla.com/videos.html> )

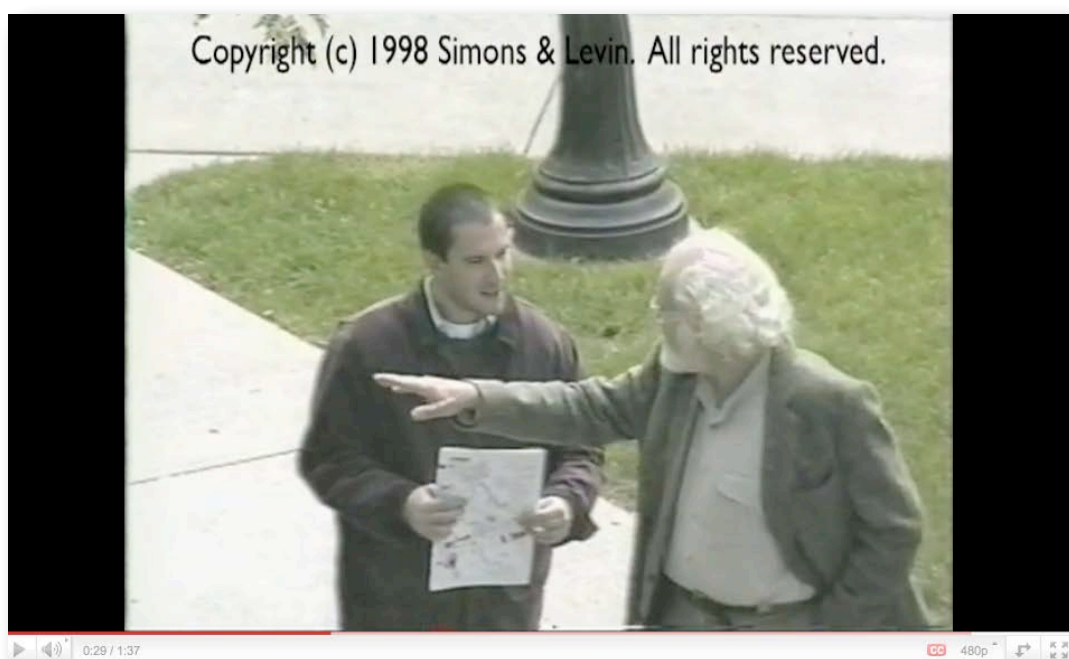
Also, in sport and activity places we tend to ‘track the ball’ and keep our eyes on the play. We tend not to pay much attention to the entire scene. We are often inattentionally blind a lot of the time.

Dan Simons also refers to something called ‘the illusion of attention’. This is when we think we are paying attention when we actually are not. People think they are paying attention to the road when they are using their mobile phones whilst driving. They are not paying as much attention as they think they are and that’s why accidents happen.

Inclusion, particularly *ad hoc* inclusion, can depend on the small changes. Those small changes can be deliberate or non-deliberate. The challenge is attributing those changes to greater levels of inclusion. Say, you change the rules of a practice volleyball game – making sure that the ball ‘can’ bounce before setting and spiking. This clearly helps a person in a wheelchair be more included into the volleyball practice. The change is obvious and it results in greater levels of inclusion.

But say you make a rule that a throw-in for football can be underarm, not always overarm. It’s a less obvious change but no less significant to an individual. Here, it is more likely that we would have what Dan Simons calls ‘change blindness’.

Just to illustrate this concept take a look at this video by Dan Simons and Dan Levin.



<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FWSxSQsspiQ>

Interesting thing about this video, that even for the people that noticed the change they still continued to give directions! We can be blind to the changes around us if our attention is not immediately drawn to the change as it happens. This is especially so in rapidly changing places where there is a lot happening. A momentary distraction is all that is necessary.

In the place where sport and physical activity happens there are hundreds of distractions. It's hardly surprising therefore that we miss the important little things that can make a big difference.

It takes a special kind of vision to see the little things.

This also has implications for how we organize our activity places, which brings us to the next characteristic.

## **Order**

One of the things that will help us see the little things is if we minimize the possibility of *ad hoc, spur of the moment* adaptations by planning and being ordered. While we will never completely get rid of the need to adapt in an ad hoc and experimental way, nor would we want to, being well planned will help us be more inclusive.

Of course, good teachers and coaches are well planned and have the ability to create order from chaos. But it is wrong to assume that we all have the ability to plan and create order from chaos.

Again, I will borrow terminology from Dan Simons who talks about the 'illusion of knowledge'. This is when we assume we know more than we do. In this case it's often assumed that we know how to plan and create order. This is a poor assumption for grass roots sport especially. Grass roots sport is run by volunteers who receive little or no training. We expect them to be able to plan and cover all eventualities. It's not the case.

Even if we do receive training there is no guarantee that we will be good at planning. I'd say it is more dependent on your personality type than on training.

You may have heard of the *Myers-Briggs Type Indicator* personality test. They love this in the public service! Basically, it's a test to help people identify their own personality type – their strengths and weaknesses. There are four key variables and two elements to each variable.

For example, you can be extrovert (E) or introvert (I). Or you can be sensing (S) or intuitive (N). I will not go into too much detail here but once you have completed the battery of questions you end up with a Myers-Briggs Type Indicator signified by four letters.

For example, if you are ISTJ then you are **I**ntrovert – you focus on your own inner world – **S**ensing – you focus on basic information you take in – **T**hinking – you prefer logic – and **J**udging – you like to make firm decisions.

Generally, people that are good at planning and that like structure are the ISTJ personality types. If you are the opposite to this - an ENFP – it is highly unlikely you are a good planner.

The good side of this is that ENFP people are likely to be more creative and able to adapt to ad hoc situations better.

The point here though is that we need the personality types that create ordered and planned sport and physical activity programs. Not to the detriment of creativity and innovation however, but to give us a place where we can see opportunity.

## **Time**

This is really important. Slow learning has fallen into disuse. There's a time pressure on our teachers, our coaches, our volunteers to do things quickly.

To meet the performance indicators, to achieve our outputs and outcomes. In modern society we are losing the ability to contemplate and reflect.

Only a decade ago the Ladakhi people of Tibet would take two weeks for a wedding. Now, it's all over in a day. Automation and productivity have come to the hill tribes



of Tibet. They have to get back to work. Time, for them, is now a commodity, as it is for us.

Our default mode or *d-mode*<sup>9</sup> (where *d* stands for *deliberation*), as Guy Claxton in his book *Hare Brain – Tortoise Mind* calls it, is all about fast food solutions. Quick, shallow and often not very good.

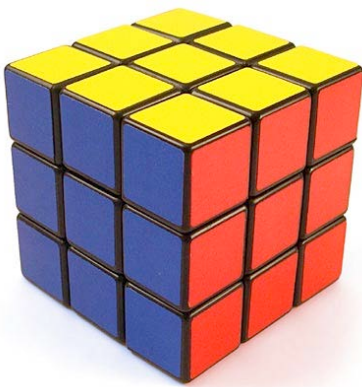


Part of the reason for the decline in slow learning is what social critic Neil Postman calls “technopoly”. In short this is –

*“The widespread view that every ill is a problem which has a potential solution”*<sup>10</sup>

Technopoly has created a culture whereby examining the question is only beneficial if it leads to a quick solution. Time is too precious to spend dwelling on the question. We need solutions and we need them fast.

Take a look at the old favorite ‘the Rubik Cube’. There is a solution. We know there is one. But it is not a fast solution. It takes time. It would be an interesting statistic



wouldn't it? How many people took the time to solve the Rubik Cube when it first came out compared to how many people take the time to solve it now.

Most people would give up within minutes nowadays. There simply is not the time.

Yet, inclusion often requires time. It requires people to be clever, to be innovative and creative, to be wise and to have our wits about us. We need time to reflect and consult. This is contrary to *d-mode* when we often seek out the expert to find our solution for us and to put things right.

Our places are usually very busy, we have many distractions and our thoughts can easily wander to other things.

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<sup>9</sup> Guy Claxton in *Hare Brain - Tortoise Mind*, 2: 2000

<sup>10</sup> Neil Postmen in *Technopoly*, 1992



To illustrate this, here's video demonstrating how even Beethoven found it hard to find quiet time for his genius to work.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9YkyI2MMhA>



I promise you there were now birds harmed in the making of the video! I'm sure we can all relate to Beethoven's predicament here – there are far too many distractions for us to make enough time to be inclusive. We need to make time.

## Responsibility

We need to take responsibility to find the time to create an opportunity.

When things are a bit hard or require some lateral thinking, often it is all too easy to pass on responsibility. This has to do with what psychologists call **locus of control**.

Which is “*the extent to which individuals believe that they can control events that affect them*”<sup>11</sup>

Basically, individuals with a high internal locus of control believe that events result primarily from their own behavior and actions. Those with a high **external locus**

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<sup>11</sup> Taken from *Wikipedia* definition

**of control** believe that powerful others, fate, or chance primarily determine results.

If people that are in charge of places that have potential opportunity have a high external locus of control, it is unlikely that they will take responsibility for finding that opportunity in the first instance.

It's all too easy to see reasons why things don't work. This is also tied to beliefs around the **medical and social model** of disability. I suspect that people that have a high external locus of control can use medical model beliefs as a reason to abdicate responsibility for inclusion.

“oh, he's in a wheelchair, he can't play football”

Or

“she can't play softball, she is blind”

Conversely, someone with an **internal locus of control** looks within themselves to search for solutions. They take responsibility. Again, this can be equated with someone who adopts a social model belief system.

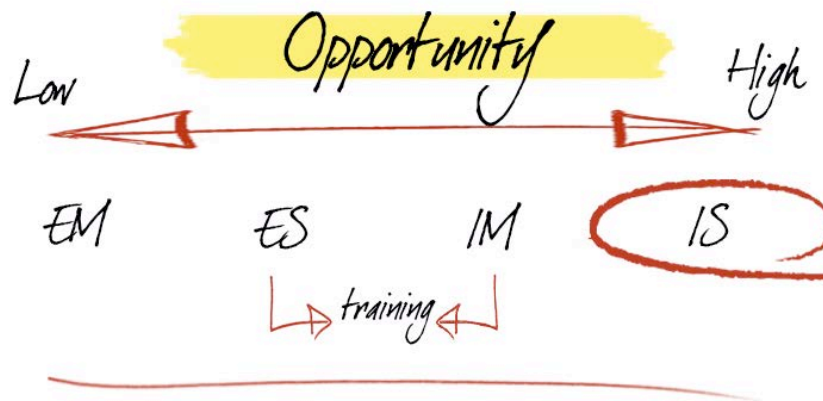
They believe that it is the environment that disadvantages someone and, because they have a high internal locus of control, they take responsibility for creating the opportunity in the first instance.

If we look more closely at the relationship between locus of control and the belief systems around the social and medical model then, ideally, we are looking for a person that has an internal locus of control and a belief system that is centered around the social model.

But a person that has an internal locus of control and a medical model belief system may also be able to create opportunities. This is similar to the person that has an external locus of control and a social model belief system. Both these people could benefit from training - a different kind of training.

I've sketched out this model below:

## Locus of Control and Belief Systems



EM = External locus and Medical model

ES = External locus and Social model

IM = Internal locus and Medical model

IS = Internal locus and Social model

The training that you might give a person with an internal locus of control and medical model belief system should focus around the disadvantages that are imposed on a person with a disability. These could be to do with teaching style, the rules being used or the equipment. Because their fundamental belief system is one that is geared toward impairment and what the person cannot do because of impairment, then training must focus on other things.

With the person that has an external locus of control and a social model belief system the training would be different. Remember that here, the issue is the person is not taking responsibility - they have an external locus of control. But, they do believe that the disadvantages imposed on a person with a disability are the result of factors other than impairment. So the training should focus on how the person is going to take responsibility for their actions.

For the person that has an external locus of control and a medical model belief system the challenge is much greater. I suspect these are the people that don't get 'it'! Certainly these are the people that feel it is not their job to provide opportunities for people with disability, particularly as you need to know all about impairment to do so! Classic excuse for the 'not my job' people!

Also, just to make it a bit more challenging, sometimes we make it easy for external locus of control people to abdicate responsibility through our policies and systems.

A few years ago I attended a sports disability education workshop. One man turned up with a 'Level 5 Coaching Athletes with Disabilities' embroidered t-shirt. He had attended 5, almost identical, courses. Everybody in his sport abdicated responsibility to him. He was the so-called expert.

People in that sport were not taking responsibility because the system had made it easy for them to do so.

I am not in favor of disability based accreditation programs at the grass roots level for this very reason.

## **Empathy**

It's a sad thing to say but a truism. Some people do not have much empathy. Empathy is the capacity to recognize and, to some extent, share feelings (such as sadness or happiness) that are being experienced by another person.

Some people are unable to put themselves in the shoes of people with disability. I am talking about disability simulation here. And I am not talking about having sympathy either.

It's an ability to relate other people's circumstances and what the experience of sport means to a person with a disability.

Let me tell you a story of two former bosses of mine. I'll change their names to protect the guilty! Three years ago I asked my boss, John, to go to the annual Table Cricket tournament in Canberra. Table Cricket is a table top game designed for young people with high support needs.

About 8 Special Schools were competing that day. John had been working as a sports administrator for 20 years. He's a very stable guy, very experienced and not prone to emotional assessments of things. John came back from that Table Cricket tournament a changed man. He told me it was the best thing he's seen in his professional career. He said he now understood why we do what we do. He couldn't stop talking about it. John even

went on to apply for work in the disability sport sector even though he was officially retired!



Exactly one year later I asked my new boss to go to the same Table Cricket tournament. Jill went. It was a few days before I caught up with her. But when I did I asked her “how did you find it?”.

Do you know what she said? She said “it seemed like a lot of fun”.

John had empathy, Jill did not.

It is almost impossible to predict who has empathy and who does not. There are too many inter-changing factors taking place. John had no more understanding of the circumstances behind that day than Jill did. It’s just that he related to it differently.

Seeing and feeling the importance of participation for people with disabilities is an important characteristic of inclusive places.

## **Possibility**

And so to the next characteristic of places – the ability to see possibility.

Let me ask you – what happened on the 6th May 1954 – a famous sporting moment. Any ideas! Well, a man called Roger Bannister ran the first 4 minute mile. Before the 6th May nobody thought it was possible to run a 4 minute mile. But Roger Bannister saw the possibility. He trained differently to others. He studied physiology and biomechanics. He adapted his running shoes for the conditions. He was way ahead of its time.

But the extraordinary thing was not so much that Bannister ran the 4 minute mile that day. The remarkable thing was that by the end of 1954 30 more people had run the 4 minute mile.

It gets better – by the end of 1955 almost 300 people had ran a sub 4 minute mile.

Roger Bannister opened up the possibility and other people followed.

He did this by re-framing the possibilities. He chose to frame this possibility differently to everybody else. And that's the thing – we do have the choice to reframe our world view but it depends on the extent we take responsibility for our frames. If you are predominantly an internal locus of control then you are likely to see possibility because you chose to do so.

I am absolutely sure that Aaron Fotheringham has an internal locus of control – as you will see in this video.





<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z43PXkvVC5c>

Aaron saw the possibilities of being able to do a 360 degree flip in a wheelchair. Seeing possibility requires us to reject our lazy brains and think of new ways of doing things. This keeps ‘possibility’ in the front of our conscious part where things happen. If we are not careful our brains will get lazy – particularly if we are stressed or tired. That’s when our old frames – the old and familiar ways of doing things – come into play.

We will just ‘go through the motions’ and will not explore the possibilities.

Aaron first did the 360 degree flip in 2006. He has since done the *double* back-flip. How about that for seeing possibility!

## **Detail**

To have an *eye for detail* is different from the characteristic of *vision*. How? Because you only take in detail from a tiny subset of your visual world at any one moment. Vision is more about peripheral sight and being able to recognize and predict small changes that can make big differences.

Our eyes and brains are funny things! Because often what we think we are seeing is not actually reality. We move our eyes 3 or 4 times a second and we are taking in detail from everything that we see and have our focus on. If something in our peripheral vision gets our attention then we look and we see that detail and take that in.



This gives us the false impression that we are seeing everything in detail. But we are not. Take a look at these images.



These give a very false impression. We assume that everyone is seeing the world exactly as it is. These visual illusions mess with the reality of what we see. They distort our eye for detail.

They do not only trick our vision, they trick our understanding of the world and how we remember things. Importantly, these illusions demonstrate that we don't all see the same things. Our perception of the world, particularly when it comes to the detail, is different. The only thing we share is the illusion that our perceptions are the same all of the time.

This is a problem in places of sport and physical activity as there is a lot of detail to take in. And, we are generally not good at checking that we are seeing the same thing. The odds are that we are not seeing the same detail at all. Which makes adapting and modifying really



difficult and highly dependent on an individuals ability to see and understand the reality of the detail that matters.

The fact is that some people can see the detail that matters and some people cannot see the detail that matters. Even for people that are good at seeing the detailed reality of what is in front of them rely heavily on *chance* that what they see really matters and makes a difference to inclusion.

This is what Cognitive psychologists call 'cognitive blindness'. This is why it is quite easy for 2 people to be looking at the same simple task yet come to different conclusions about how successful that task was. I'm sure you can relate to this if you've been a teacher or a coach.

The conclusion here is that we need recognize the people that see the detail that matters and trust them to take action.

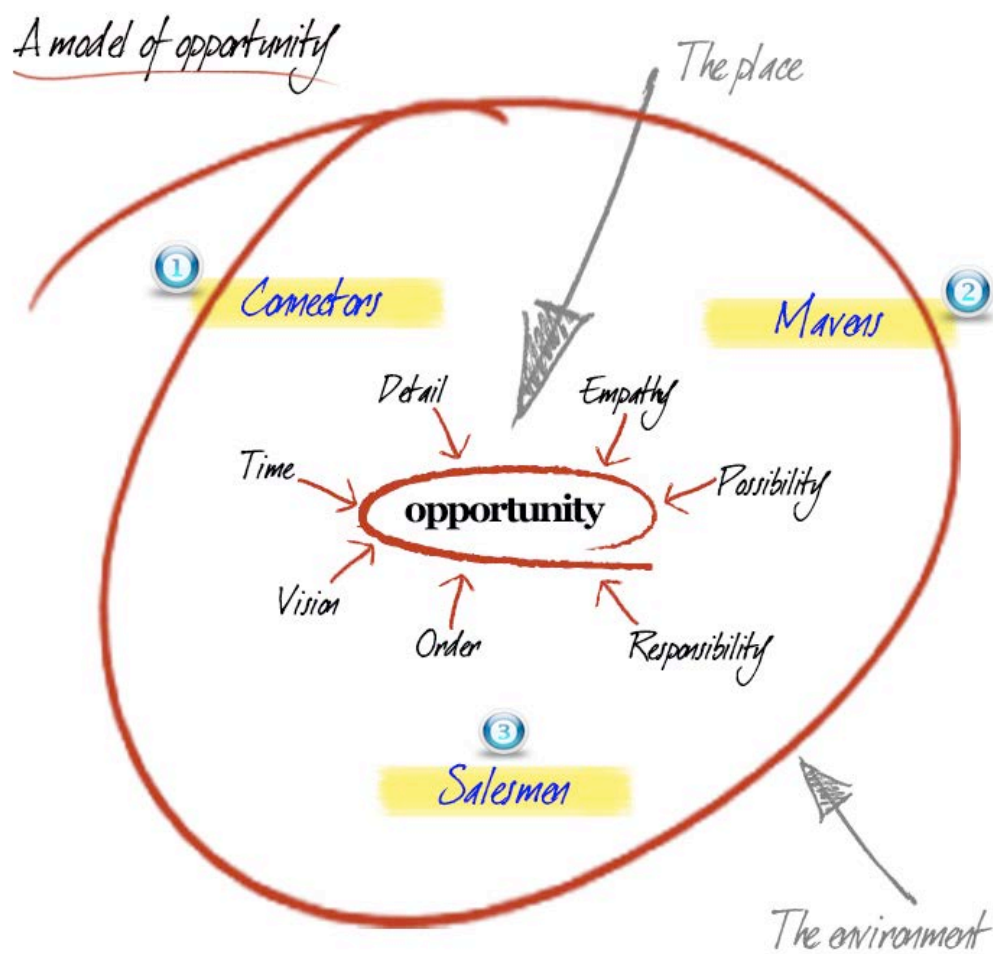
## Part 3: The model

So, now we come to the part where we try to pull this all together. We have looked at the three types of people that we need to make environments that have the best possible chance of creating opportunity. Connectors, Mavens and Salesmen.

The **Connectors** are the glue that bind people together, the **Mavens** are the knowledge facilitators and the **Salesmen** are the motivators to make things happen.

Then we looked at the seven characteristics of inclusive places - people that have vision, can create order from chaos, can find the time to be inclusive, take responsibility, have empathy, see possibility and have an eye for detail.

Again, I've sketched out a Model of Opportunity that encapsulates this:



It's important to note that you don't need all of these at any one moment to create opportunity. Opportunity can be created simply by the person that sees the possibility. Or the person that takes responsibility. Opportunities are created like this every day of the week.

But, this model helps us identify the important human characteristics that give the best possible chance of creating new opportunities in sport and physical activity for people with disability.

There is interaction between the elements here. Connectors can be Mavens. People that take responsibility can also be people that have an eye for detail. A person with an external locus of control can still play a role in creating opportunities. There are synergies and important relationships between many of the concepts here.

The point is though, by reading through this report and thinking about this model, it helps you identify your Connectors, Mavens and Salesmen, then this has been a worthwhile labour of love! If it helps you look that much closer at the places where opportunity happens then again, it has been worthwhile.

I believe that we need to continue to look very closely at the environments and places that can make a difference in the lives of people with disability. We should not leave things to chance or think that formal training is always what is needed.

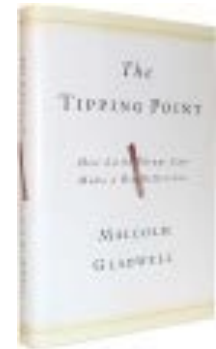
If you are interested in providing opportunities in sport and physical activity for people with disability and this Model of Opportunity helps to framework how these opportunities come about then I think the world could really be a better place.

Thanks

## Recommended Resources

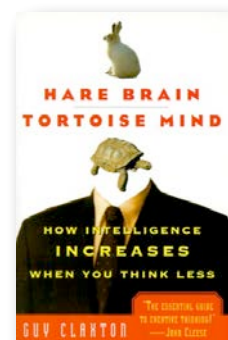
1. **The Tipping Point** by Malcolm Gladwell is a great read if you want to learn more about Connectors, Mavens and Salesmen. Best place to get a copy is through Amazon, simply click on the link below:

Get: [The Tipping Point](#)



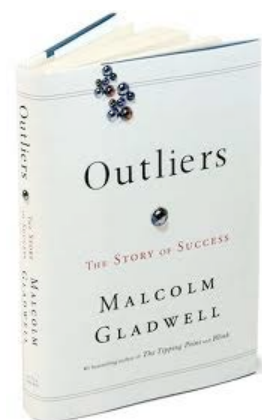
3. **Hare Brain - Tortoise Mind** by Guy Claxton is a fascinating book that is described as “*an essential guide to creative thinking*”. It looks in detail at *d-mode* thinking referred to in this Report.

Get: [Hare Brain - Tortoise Mind](#)



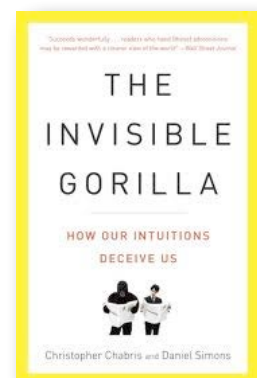
4. **Outliers** by Malcolm Gladwell. Another great book by Gladwell. There are some fascinating case studies around the concept of 10,000 hours theory as well as a lot more relevant content.

Get: [Outliers](#)



5. **The Invisible Gorilla** by Christopher Chabris and Daniel Simons. Reading this book will make you less sure of yourself - and that's a good thing. If you want to learn more about how intuitions can deceive us this is a great book. Check out the videos on their website too: <http://www.theinvisiblegorilla.com/>

Get: [The Invisible Gorilla](#)



6. **The Making of an Expert** by Anders Ericsson, Michael Prietula and Edward Cokely.  
An interesting read related to 10,000 theory. This is an online version of the Harvard Business Review. You can download it direct by clicking the link below:



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