

Everest expedition makes history!

BY
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MOUNT EVEREST, LOCATED IN THE HIMALAYAS OF SOUTHERN ASIA, IS THE HIGHEST MOUNTAIN IN THE WORLD, REACHING 29,035 FEET (8,850 METERS). ITS CLIMATE IS EXTREME WITH TEMPERATURES AT THE PEAK NEVER RISING ABOVE FREEZING.

Imagine spending more than two months of your life trekking across stretches of ice that shift and crumble beneath you, balancing above 1,000-foot-deep crevasses, and climbing vertical stretches while microwave-size chunks of rock and ice fall around you, all in an attempt to reach the highest ground on earth.

Now, imagine attempting such a feat without being able to see where your feet will step next or the obstacles that lay in your path. That's exactly what 33-year-old Erik Weihenmayer, who has been blind since he was 13, started out to do in March of 2001.

An accomplished mountain climber, Erik had been conquering arduous summits such as Denali, Kilimanjaro in Africa, and Aconcagua in Argentina since his early 20's. But, tackling Mount Everest was only a dream until Erik met 47-year-old Pasquale Scaturro, a veteran of seven Himalayan expeditions, at a sportswear tradeshow in Salt Lake City, Utah.

Pasquale convinced Erik that he could make history by becoming the first blind climber to reach the peak of Mount Everest, turning his dream into a reality. Together, Pasquale and Erik assembled a world-class team of 19

climbers who would each attempt to scale the peak.

Enter Best Year Yet™

In order to tackle Mount Everest, Erik knew he not only needed to assemble a skilled team of climbers to guide him up the mountain, but a solid plan of action as well. That's where Michael O'Donnell, technical climbing expert, entered the picture.

Michael, who had been climbing/adventuring around the world for more than 30 years, brought a clear, simple and powerful tool called Best Year Yet™ to the expedition that would ultimately lead to the success of the mission.

A proven method that uses a simple, straightforward approach, Best Year Yet helps individuals and businesses achieve their goals through a series of ten simple questions. Michael attended his first Best Year Yet workshop in Aspen, Colorado, in 1999. He is now a Best Year Yet partner and has been leading workshops ever since.

"Best Year Yet is about planning your journey, not your day," Michael explains.

"We were setting out on such an audacious expedition that I knew it would take a tightly run ship to make it work," he says. "We needed a focus and plan or we'd never make it. Most teams think they'll get stronger in the face of adversity, but I didn't want to draw us together

through desperation."

At first, Michael questioned whether he could get the strong-willed group, each with such "big egos," to go along



Michael and Erik on Everest

with the process. Yet, once the group reached Base Camp, which served as a resting area and base of operations for the climbers, the reality of what they were about to embark upon was before them. It was at that point that Michael knew the Best Year Yet process would work.

“It was empowering to see such a strong group of individuals go through the process,” Michael says. “It helped us attain a strategy, a focus, a clearly stated list of goals and a clearly defined way of how we were going to go about achieving those goals.”

The Plan

While sitting at Base Camp, which is situated 17,600 feet (5,400 meters) above sea level, the Everest team constructed three basic guidelines for the journey ahead:

Next, they developed a new par-

Trust one another’s skills and knowledge.

Ask for our needs — eliminate fear!

Develop our plan and stick to it!

adigm to generate a shift in their thinking about the challenges ahead. According to Best Year Yet, a new paradigm must be positive, personal, present tense, powerfully and simply stated, and point to an exciting future. The team unanimously chose a powerful new paradigm, “Together we are powerful — together we rule!”

Once the guidelines and paradigm for the expedition were in place, Michael requested that the team members consider the dangers they faced and carefully select a major focus for the trip. Wisely, the climbers decided to keep it simple, and chose “Team mate” as their focus.

Finally, the Best Year Yet process asked the group to identify the expedition’s top 10 goals:

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Erik Weihenmayer

1. Come back alive.
2. Climb the mountain.
3. Stay focused.
4. Hold at least 3 team meetings a week.

5. Use team member abilities effectively.
6. Have Mike O. make frequent personal check-ins.
7. Have Pasquale monitor all communications on the mountain and with the media.
8. Remember who we are and how we got here.
9. Support each other both physically and emotionally.
10. Have fun!

“True courage and achievement takes organization, knowing what you want and going for it,” explains Michael. “Making a Best Year Yet plan together helped us do exactly that.”

The Ascent

The next weeks were exhausting for the 19-member crew. They were forced to make life-or-death decisions every step of the way. Conditions were both difficult and dangerous.

“Incredibly, this group of 19 guys, all with very strong ideas of their own, did not have one argument the whole trip!” says Michael. “I believe this accomplishment can be directly attributed to the Best Year Yet process.”

Throughout the climb, Erik and the others withstood freezing temperatures, extreme physical pain, nausea, dysentery, insomnia and, waiting in tents for days at a time while wind and snow storms passed, complete boredom.

The extraordinary team also enjoyed a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to view spectacular scenery and explore the fascinating high mountain villages of the Sherpa people who live in the shadow of the mountain.

“It is difficult to put a value on the Best Year Yet process and how it really affected the success of the expedition,” says Michael. “It is now being called the most successful Everest expedition ever, which I’m positive was possible because of the process we put ourselves through before we ever went up on that mountain!”

The Results

On May 25, 2001, after nearly 3 months

**Help Your Organization Make
This Year Its Best Year Yet**

For more than twenty years, the Best Year Yet system has helped individuals, teams and entire organizations from around the world produce RESULTS year after year. Best Year Yet is an annual planning process designed for leadership teams that want focus, alignment, accountability and breakthrough.

The program consists of three basic components:

Best Year Yet for Management Teams or Departments — A one-day program that works with a group to create a strategic plan.

Best Year Yet for Individuals — A half-day workshop where participants create their personal one-page plan.

The Follow-up Process — Follow-up coaching and monthly check-in to support the team in meeting the goals set out in their Best Year Yet plans.

To learn more about how the Best Year Yet system can move your team or organization to the next level or to find a workshop in your area, visit bestyearyet.com.

of painstaking and grueling climbing, each of the exhausted 19 team members had achieved their ultimate goal — to climb the highest mountain on earth! And together, they made history.

Not only was their team the first to include a blind climber, but it also included 64-year-old Sherman Bull, the oldest man to ever reach the summit of Mount Everest. Bull made the climb with his son Brad, making the pair the second father-son team to ever make the ascent. Ordinarily an Everest expedition considers itself fortunate to have two or three team members make it to the top — the group had 19!

The Everest team met each of the goals it set during the workshop. And, while most outsiders doubted that the ascent of the first blind man and his team would end successfully, the results were astounding. By the end of the expedition, Erik and his team could proudly boast that:

- They climbed the mountain!
- Erik achieved his dream.
- Sherman and his son Brad made it to the top.
- Everyone returned alive without any serious health problems.
- They achieved incredible communication — not one argument on the trip, an unheard of accomplishment.
- They maintained a sense of flow throughout the mission — supplies were where they needed them every time.
- The team built an inspiring level of trust and confidence in one another despite not knowing each other well before they started.

“The Best Year Yet plan made a huge difference in the outcome of our expedition,” says Erik Weihenmayer. “It is a truly wonderful, powerful and

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Erik Weihenmayer



Best Year Yet workshop at Base Camp

effective tool that can increase anyone's level of satisfaction and awareness of what they truly want and what they get out of their life. Dreams really can come true and Best Year Yet can help them become a reality.”