

Valuable ATvantages

The business of athletic training, professional development, and what the future holds

By Scott Mullett, M.A., AT, CEFE

Experience, training, collaboration and mentoring; these are all examples of professional development. Many misunderstandings exist about professional development, its purpose, and how it functions.¹ Getting to the roots of these misunderstandings, one must first address “what constitutes professional development”?¹ Formal processes include: conferences, seminars, or workshops. However, professional development can also occur in informal contexts such as discussions among colleagues, independent readings and research, or other learning form a peer.¹



These are valuable advantages which help progress careers forward. However, many are apprehensive to network and seek mentors. Others go through the motions obtaining the necessary continuing education requirements and miss the big picture: the experience growing and the importance of the knowledge offered. How do we find the motivation and ambition to get excited about professional development? What can be done to gain the full benefits?

To seek out these questions and for additional insight, AT Efficiency thought no person was better to discuss business and professional development other than founder and owner of ATvantage Athletic Training, Alisha M. Pennington. ATvantage is an exclusive agency specializing in athletic training work – getting the right athletic trainers to the right job. A self-motivated and enthusiastic professional, Alisha developed her business more for selfish intent:

“I wanted to meet the demand of clients wanting AT’s to cover their events. Contract work was a way for me to achieve this. However, I started getting too many jobs and needed help. I would ask around and see if friends needed work. It helped that I started in California where the profession isn’t regulated. With the lack of regulation and people wanting certified AT’s to cover their events, a business was born.”

After 6 years of grit, commitment, and determination, ATvantage is a reputable and innovative business. With 12 full-time positions already created and 30+ contracts signed to high schools, colleges, and organization across California and Arizona, Alisha is tapping into this entrepreneurial spirit many AT’s possess.

My business sense is self-taught. I'm a proponent of free resources to learn and grow from.

An advocate for professional growth, Alisha has her own Podcasts, The Business ATvantage, which focus on the business of athletic training and professional development.

"It's important for us to be one's own advocate. Better yourself, serve the profession and the greater good, but support each other – that's what I strive for in my Podcasts." We should not shame one another. All too often, particularly on social media, we engage in debates which call out other settings as not traditional athletic training. That does not help the professional, we need to realize that we are all athletic trainers working towards a common goal: caring for our patients."

Alisha strongly believes in personal branding and marketing, and feels that's an important professional development component. *"You are your own advocate"*, Alisha reiterated.

We need to present ourselves in a way that's professional, competent, empathetic, assertive, and trustworthy. We need to convey ourselves in this fashion because someone is always watching – on the sidelines, in the stands, and within a hospital system.



Alisha holds bettering yourself as a fundamental element, and that's a consistent message in her Podcasts. A phenomenal speaker and all around magnetic person, Alisha presents The Business ATvantage in a way that's charming but compelling.

From branding to networking to contract work, Alisha delivers a message to think, to be curious, and ask why? Why are you an athletic trainer? What brings you to this point in your life? How do you effectively

learn and grow as a professional?

Optimistic and excited for the future of the profession, Alisha thinks that we'll be more specialized in treating a wider variety of patients. This however starts with how we develop as professionals. Understanding growth is an important aspect of our profession – how we get there is an exploration one needs to experience.

- ✓ **Create a learning mindset** – Unscheduled time should be time utilized for learning and reflecting.² Athletic training is changing frequently, and keeping up with the latest research and news are key for the continued growth. Alisha's Podcasts are a great place to start:
 - o [The Business ATvantage Podcast](#)

- ✓ **Find mentors** – Mentorship is strong in the athletic training profession. Established professionals speak fondly of their mentors and how they developed their relationships. Mentors are often able to give you objective advice that you may not achieve through experience. If you're looking to seek mentors outside of athletic training, SCORE is the place for you:
 - o [Find a Mentor](#)

- ✓ **Network** – State, regional, and national meetings are perfect for networking and developing professional relationships. Keeping up with developments and gaining new perspectives are key for a great networking experience. An important resource on networking is a TED Talk by Christopher Barrat:
 - o [Successful Networking the Ultimate Guide](#)

The value seen in one's ability to develop as a professional is a subjected undertaking and takes commitment. Alisha is a prime example of taking that commitment to the next step. She's been able to transform an idea by learning, consulting with mentors, and networking with others; one idea six years ago is riding strong today. For those not interested in pursuing a business venture, keep in mind that professional development takes your career to new heights. Never stop learning and develop professional relationships with others in the industry. Ascend and conquer the world – great things are on the horizon; keep going, keep growing.

Article Contributor



Alisha M. Pennington – Alisha became a certified athletic trainer after graduating from Florida State University in 2009. She continued her education as a graduate assistant at California State University, Fullerton, earning her master’s degree in 2011. She has worked USA Water Polo, USA Beach Volleyball, The Biggest Loser, and in various collegiate and high school settings. In 2012 she started ATvantage Athletic Training, a company that allows her to practice her passion for advancing the athletic training profession. It is at this intersection of business and athletic training that Alisha has found a niche to spread knowledge to other ATs.

About the Author



Scott Mullett is the founder and owner of AT Efficiency. Scott received both his bachelor’s and master’s degree from Kent State University. Scott has worked in the secondary school setting, and currently holds a position within the industrial/occupational sector. Scott’s goal is to advocate the value of the athletic trainer in all settings.

¹ Mizell, Hayes. “Why Professional Development Matters?” *Learning Forward*. 2010.
https://learningforward.org/docs/default-source/pdf/why_pd_matters_web.pdf

² Trammell, Joe. “10 Ways to Maximize Your Professional Development.” *Inc.* 2016.
<https://www.inc.com/joel-trammell/10-ways-to-maximize-your-professional-development.html>.