



THE SUCCESS HUNTER

Erik Bertrand Larssen (40) has made the entire country hunt for success. Now he dreams of a world where we are less focused on ourselves. ▶▶▶

BY: MARIA LEKVE

SHARPSHOOTER: Erik Bertrand Larssen has his background from the Special Forces. Now he aims for the top as Norway's leading mental trainer.

►►► **M**ental master. – The investigative, philosophical little Erik disappeared into something as hard and brutal as the military, economics and finance, Erik Bertrand Larssen says.

At a time of day that to us is early, we meet the legendary mental trainer. Sitting in a black leather chair, he is elegantly dressed. The office is minimalist and classy, with room for big thoughts. A cute secretary looks in on us and offers coffee.

- Don't you ever sleep late?
- I love sleeping in the morning.
- If my partner takes care of the children, I sometimes sleep until nine or ten in the weekends. But when I work, I get up early. I do. I try to live like I preach. It may sound tiresome, but it isn't. I love being aware of these things.

Military discipline. Erik Bertrand Larssen has taught an entire nation to get up in the morning, to set goals. The mental trainer is referred to as Norway's «hottest man» and is the most sought after source of inspiration for people who want to realize their potential. His books «Be your best - with mental training» and «Hell week» are both bestsellers and about 140 000 copies are sold.

– **The secret to success is hard work, Bertrand Larssen says.**

Many hardships. Life was not always easy for Erik Bertrand Larssen. In childhood, the family moved around a lot. The constant change of schools made it hard to find close friends. He says he has few

– **The secret to success is hard work**

good memories from school.

«Living in eastern Norway with a strange dialect and always being the smallest boy, with no social skills, was hard» he writes in «Be your best - with Mental Training».

He was bullied and shut out. He was picked after the best girls when football teams were selected in recess. He was insecure, outside, parked. This was when the «fighter» in him came into being. He read books about great personalities and dreamt of a different life.

– **Everything turned out the way I thought they would. No surprise, Erik says.**

- What did you think?
- At the age of ten I visualized myself

talking to people the way I do now.

– It is no coincidence. What you visualize is what you are drawn towards.

Wanted to show them. Initially he went in a different direction. To be admitted into the officer Candidate School was his goal. The tough guys at school thought he would never make it.

– **I wanted to prove that I was someone. That I really was a tough guy.**

In 1992 he made it. Later he cleared other hurdles. Hundreds of candidates were left behind when he made it into the paratroopers in 1995. Everything seemed to go his way when he was hit by a bus.

In «Be your best» he tells openly about the tough period following the accident. In February 1996 he was at home in Brumunddal. He borrowed his mother's

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car, a small Renault. The road was like soap. Suddenly a bus came sideways towards him at high speed. The bus covered the entire road. A collision was inevitable. The bus hit his car. Twice. He was not seriously injured, but struggled with headaches and pain in the neck for several years.

The following year was to be the toughest in his life. Even if he became a paratrooper and completed his education, the pain forced him to quit the military. He lost his girlfriend, was left unable to study and mentally hit the bottom.

– **I feel I have had to fight a lot in my life. There have been many good times, but also hard times.**

Good times. And today he is happy for it. He says that the act of allowing yourself to really feel negative feelings, really feel adversity, is what makes a human being able to also really feel the opposite: good feelings.

– One should not be afraid of the negative feelings. I can feel down, tired, exhausted, scared. But it is important to really feel that. This is where the potential to feel something good is.

To live as much as possible is all about feeling as many different emotions as possible. He rates happiness from 0 to 10.

– To me it's sad that so many people remain somewhere around 5 most of their lives. You miss out on life that way

– I don't want life to be a hike in Sahara. I want mountainous terrain! I want the contrasts and seek out challenges, thereby ending up in deep valleys every now and then.

He is content now. Happy. He is working on his next book. He has had some international attention due to his ideas and talks. He is ready to bring the message to the world.

– **I wouldn't change a thing. I don't want to be an astronaut, or president of the USA. I can see now that this is what I will be doing until I die. I have figured out exactly what I want and must do.**

Achievement. He has motivated the national Cross Country Team, high ranking officers and business executives. But normal people can also learn something from these principles, Bertrand Larssen thinks.

– *Is there anything about this focus on self-realization that could be a bit scary?*

– Yes, but then you get it wrong, in my opinion. A society that demands extreme achievements is not what I advocate. The title «Be your best» is a pointed statement to create a reaction, in the same way as «Hell week».

– *So it's a marketing trick?*

– It's no trick, but a sales poster. Everyone gets that. Seven days that change your life, of course this can be misunderstood. The book is no quick fix. But yes, in seven days you can actually make a small change. Small changes are changes, too.

Consciousness. Erik Bertrand Larssen claims he has discovered these principles by studying how people who are comfortable in their own skin and perform well, live.

The book «Hell week» is a civilian version of the military «hell week». Ha has gone through several hell weeks himself and says they have given him insights that he applies today.

– It is about compassion and presence, as well as being a good human being. It's about the importance of figuring out what's important to you, what your values are, how you want to live your life.

– **I understand the criticism, because it can be associated with elitism and performance. It's really all about figuring out what's important to you. You need to set a goal, a dream and go for it.**

– Yes, I refer to top athletes and successful leaders, and that is associated with achievements. But to me, being altruistic or less selfish is an equally great achievement as winning a race or show-



A PHILOSOPHER IN A SUIT: – Erik Bertrand Larssen thinks everyone has a responsibility to make the most of themselves. He hopes more people will open their eyes to the joy of giving.

ing up at work at four in the morning.

He explains that consciousness is at the core of what he does. You need to be aware of your inner dialogue, to be able to talk positively about yourself and life.

– To be a good human being, you need to take care of yourself. That's not selfishness! If you are happy, you are in a better position to give something to others. In the book I say: You put your own oxygen mask on first, then your child's.

– *Which is more important; performing well or being a good human being?*

– To me it's actually provoking that you pose that question. There is nothing negative about performing well. If performing well makes you feel mastery and acclaim, then perform well. But values are so much more important than performing well.

A beautiful flower. Even if his books sell well, he does not view this as a success.

– I think I would be equally happy

selling 3000 as 130 000. It's nice, but it is just a detail in my total sense of happiness.

– There is simply so much else that means infinitely more.

– *But you like nice things?*

– Hahaha. Funny. You know the answer

– **But values are so much more important than performing well.**

to parts of that.

– *I do?*

– I'm asking.

– *Your suit looks very nice.*

– I wear this suit because I want to communicate my respect for you. If I care about nice things? My immediate response is no. But I watched a documentary about Valentino, the designer, a

couple of days ago. He says he is preoccupied with the beauty of the world, be it a beautiful flower, a nice painting or a beautiful woman. He is interested in the beauty you can see with your eyes. I think I am, too.

– *But it must matter to you that people want to listen to you, and that you make money doing what you love?*

– It means a lot to me to be able to work with what I feel passionate about. How many listen to me is not that important.

– *Can you elaborate on that?*

– Little is a lot, I have always thought. Imagine the importance of one close friend as opposed to ten peripheral ones. I just came out of a meeting that made me feel really well, the meeting did something to me. And then there is an internal battle. I cannot truthfully say that recognition does not matter at all, but I am working on it.

– *How is the battle going?*

►►► – I think it's far from over.
 – But watching people apparently making it is inspiring to me. The way Dalai Lama thinks about people is a huge inspiration. I think it would be a fantastic thing if we all could be a little less self-centered. To give and not even think about getting something in return. That is a nice quality.

War and peace. He has fought in wars in the Balkans and Afghanistan. He has been referred to as a warrior, as a «badass». Now he is talking about the importance of being a good human being.

– *Have you become a softer man?*
 – I think it's more that I am back to the original. I was probably very soft as a young boy. When we are children, we are not yet destroyed by our surroundings and the society that chips away at our purity.
 – *Are you saying that society has taken away the pure and genuine from you?*
 – Well ...

– **Yes, I have become softer in the sense that I am more seeking and concerned with what I really am, what my emotions are, and how emotions control action, Erik says.**

– My son of five is soft. He is open, honest, direct, inquiring and has little to prove to his surroundings. If he is sad, he cries. It's as soft as it gets. His emotions are on the outside. They are real and genuine.

Love. Erik Bertrand Larssen lives together with Louise Mohn, the daughter of industrial tycoon and billionaire Trond Mohn. They met in his office and soon understood that their relationship could not be professional. They had to be lovers. He has two children, Max and Arn, from a previous marriage, and now a daughter, Eva, with Louise.

– *Is she the one who has changed you?*
 He looks at the tape recorder and moves it under the table. A prank? It's still on. He raises his voice:

– There is no question that Louise is an amazing woman, and that she has influenced me. In exactly what way, I don't wish to elaborate on.

– *Is it true love?*

– **Yes, it is.**

– *How can one tell?*

– Oh my. My words would not be adequate if I were to try to answer that. You need to look to art for that. So many millions of books have been written, so many songs, paintings and sculptures made in search of that answer. That is why it's art, right?

A force. He is working on a new book.

About being in the moment. Bertrand Larssen thinks we all can gain something by getting to know ourselves better.

– I simply think it is important to stay open and searching. I am fascinated by how we as humans can improve our relationships. What is regarded as important

– I am probably more spiritual than is perceived.

here in the West, is not necessarily what makes us feel better about ourselves.

He talks of curbing the ego. It's not about maximizing your own happiness, but the total harmony and well-being of the society in general.

– **If we could be better at thinking about «us» in stead of «me», I think we would feel more, feel better and have a greater sense of harmony.**

Success is often associated with being first up the hill, travel the farthest on vacation, but maybe it's time we travelled inwards. He says he is inspired by spiritual thinkers. That he spends a lot of time on philosophy and focuses on essential questions. In his office he has a picture of Steve Jobs, the genius behind Apple. In the book he has also quoted the Apple entrepreneur.

«*Don't let the noise of others' opinions drown out your inner voice. And most important, have the courage to follow your heart and intuition. They somehow already know what you truly want to become. Everything else is secondary.*»

– *Do you think what we are to do in this world is predetermined?*

Erik Bertrand Larssen leans back in the chair. Is he provoked again?

– You know, I did not think I would be asked that question until two, three, four years from now.

– *I am probably more spiritual than is perceived. Friends and family know. The market doesn't yet. I don't think a lot of people know me, but those who have read the book, may have a different impression.*

Erik Bertrand Larssen doesn't use the word «soul», but he believes in a force.

– I think much is predetermined. I believe in a force that to a great degree creates and controls something. Some call it God. The rational, science, they can't explain everything. That is why we have religion, philosophy, different views on what's existential.

– It's very nice to believe in a source, even in everyday life. It brings a perspective to it all and makes me want to be a

better person.

– You and I, in fifty years, we are most likely dust, he says and points to the photographer.

– How old are you really? Well, in a hundred years. It neutralizes both of us. We are the same! A hundred years ago we didn't exist.

The more progress we make on the «inner travel», the better we will be able to spread inner calm and harmony, he thinks.

Now he hopes to open more eyes to the joy of giving.

– The joy of giving may be underrated in Norway today. Social democracy has left us with a willingness to help each other and other nice things. Maybe it's more of a western challenge. I feel that Asia has been ahead of us in this field the last 3000 years.

Eternal search. – I find it extremely fascinating how we can apply these principles in every day life, in extreme achievements, as a mother, father or at the counter in the grocery shop.

– *Then we need to know ourselves?*

– Know thyself, that was Socrates, right. If you ask a 22 year old if he knows himself, he will reply: Of course. But the older you get, the more you realize that you need to spend your life on something. If you stay searching, the chance of having a sense of fulfillment, greatly increases.

– *Do you know yourself?*

– Yes, no, uhm. He he. It is a constant search. That search is an adventure. This is what makes me conscious of who I am and how I influence my surroundings. There is something nice about searching and good emotions is what we fight for.

Maybe it was no coincidence that Erik Bertrand Larssen ended up as a mental trainer. Maybe it was not just a result of hard work. Maybe it was already written somewhere? So does that mean we have to get up early in the morning?

– **We have a responsibility to take care of ourselves and to do our best beyond ourselves. I intend to take that responsibility more seriously, as I have been given a voice. Some are resourceful, others have less, but everyone can still affect their private little sphere.**

I better set the alarm clock.



«*My friendship with Erik has been educational and evolving for me, but also for him, I think. His media image is probably a lot more tough and result oriented, but I think it will be come more apparent that he has so much more to offer. My feeling is that he has a large world inside and a love for all humans. I learn something from Erik every time we meet.*»

SILJE NEERGAARD



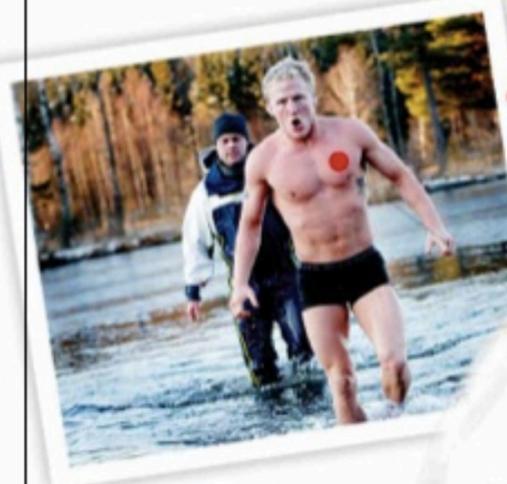
«*Erik has helped me set good goals.*»

MARTIN JOHN SRUD SUNDBY



«*I have gotten to know myself better. Through a lot of training and intense cooperation, I feel he has helped me become tougher in the head and make the right choices every day! To dare to be good, dare to go for it, intensify training and let go in competition.*»

SUZANN PETERSEN



«*He has made me think in a completely new way.*»

STIG ANDRÉ BERGE



«*He makes me dare.*»

JON ØIGARDEN

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