

The Red Rubber Ball at Work

Elevate Your Game Through
the Hidden Power of Play

About Kevin Carroll



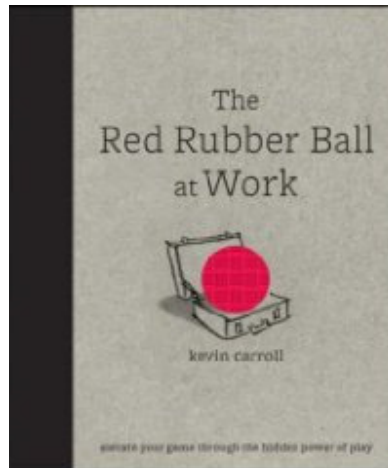
Kevin is an author, speaker and agent for social change. With his effervescent energy, wit, and humor, Kevin helps people harness the

power of sport and play as a vehicle for chasing and achieving their dreams. Kevin has dedicated his life to advancing sports and play as a vehicle for social change.

Kevin is the founder of The Katalyst Consultancy where he turns creative ideas into reality. He is also a Special Advisor to the humanitarian group Right to Play, which designs global sport and play programs for children and communities, and partners with a number of non-governmental organizations that share his vision and goals.

Kevin lives in Portland, Oregon with his wife and family.

<http://kevincarrollkatalyst.com/>



Author: Kevin Carroll

Publisher: McGraw-Hill
Books

Year of Publication:
2009

ISBN-13: 9780071599443

160 pages

■ The Big Idea

How do you ignite creativity, problem solving, and risk-taking to score big in business? According to bestselling author Kevin Carroll, it's child's play!

Former 76ers athletic trainer Kevin Carroll has turned his childhood passion for playing ball into a bestselling franchise. In this fun and thoughtful follow-up to his bestselling *Rules of the Red Rubber Ball* (2007), Carroll switches the playing field to the workplace, where innovation, motivation, engagement, and teamwork are the headline issues. Drawing on "play profiles" from thought leaders, change agents, and business leaders, he explains how to bring a sense of play into the workplace to stimulate creativity, encourage risk-taking, achieve goals – and have a great time doing it.

■ Why You Need This Book

This entertaining, pocket-sized book builds on Carroll's self-help series with profiles of 33 successful workers who illustrate the value of "productive play" (as opposed to "playful play," which is not serious enough for work). The book is inspiring and clever, with a lively layout and energetic writing.

Successful "players" featured include ESPN president George Bodenheimer, bestselling authors Seth Godin and Malcolm Gladwell, Food Network host Duff Goldman, South Bronx activist Majora Carter, renowned author Paulo Coelho, and many others.

■ Innovation

It became apparent that the people interviewed in this section had been very playful in childhood where they were encouraged in their youthful creative pursuits by family, friends, and teachers. Each profile reveals the significance of being allowed to "skin your knees" in an attempt to stretch beyond the imagined boundaries of an idea.

That encouragement had an impact on developing each person's ability as an adult to take an idea, create multiple iterations of solutions, and ultimately deliver an idea that solved a business problem.

SETH GODIN (Author/Speaker/Entrepreneur)

Play: is scenario planning.

As a boy, Seth's strategy was never to rely on one plan of attack. Instead, he anticipated multiple scenarios, used abstract thinking to envision an unknown future, and predicted how events might unfold. It was a possibility that an ally would deceive him or that an army would fail. This was his source of fun. If he was to win, so be it.

At work:

At 44, now a father to his own sons, Seth Godin helps others conquer the business world. A self-dubbed change agent, he tells marketers and CEOs how to prepare for the unexpected, react to crisis, and alter direction when their companies and careers take unforeseen turns.

Fostering others' ability to react to the unexpected is how Seth plays at work.

TOM KELLEY (General Manager, IDEO)

Play: is mobility and freedom.

In his boyhood, inventing, building, and taking things apart helped Tom and his brother understand their world. Riding bicycles allowed them to explore their world and broaden their horizons.

The Red Rubber Ball at Work

By Kevin Carroll

At work:

His brother David Kelley cofounded IDEO in 1991. Tom describes himself and David as “cross-pollinators”: people with great intellectual curiosity, people who are always taking in new information and are eager to share it with others. “A cross-pollinator is almost an unstable element until you tell two or three people the thing you just learned,” he says.

EMILY CRUMPACKER (Chef/Consultant)

Play: is improvisation and imagination.

From a young age, Emily loved to cook, and her grandmother especially encouraged her. One day Emily made an angel food cake that was as hard as a doorstop and was frosted an odd shape of blue to boot! But GaGi, as the girl’s grandmother was known, didn’t scold her. She simply found a way to turn the supposedly ruined cake into a delicious batch of bread pudding. Emily was mesmerized – and she never forgot her grandmother’s simple act of culinary magic.

At work:

Emily reflects that cooking requires flexibility and the ability to solve problems on the fly – chocolate sprinkles and chopped parsley can be lifesavers, she says. She is a master at creating meals from whatever is on hand in her refrigerator. Emily says, “What is cooler than to look in your refrigerator and wonder, hmm, what will I make for lunch today?!” This is where her imagination comes into play too.

MAJORA CARTER (Executive Director, Sustainable South Bronx)

Play: is being part of a community.

Majora was neither the most coordinated nor the most graceful rope jumper, but she was strong and earned respect for how far she could jump. She also readily took her turn at turning the rope for other girls and made certain to turn the rope in a good rhythm for them. As young as six years old, she learned how to be a “team player,” sharing the rope her mom cut from an old clothesline.

At work:

For Majora, community is her play. She helped her community find its voice and develop a rallying cry for environmental justice. Now, when she goes out jogging with her dog, the streets are prettier, the air fresher than ever before. And sure enough, she sees more and more young girls out on the sidewalk jumping rope. Just like the old days – only better.

JAMES McLURKIN (Robotics Engineer)

Play: is a passion for building things.

By the time James was six, his mom had perfected the art of buying only those toys that are worth their cost. LEGO met her standards. He delighted in his first set, a lunar landing kit. LEGO dominated as a pivotal toy. In fourth grade James received an Expert Builder set from his aunt. Before long he tried to build a steering mechanism in a LEGO car on his own.

At work:

MIT graduate James McLurkin is still playing. He is one of the world's leading designers of robot "swarms" – groups of robots that work together for a greater purpose. James says that robots are just part of his grand, lifelong procession of toys. A fun fact: James + androids = a very special opportunity to contribute to the hit movie *I, Robot* released in 2004.

ANDREW ZOLLI (Futurist/Founder, Z + Partners)

Play: is inventing without constraints.

In his youth, Andrew quickly realized that he wasn't just a kid who would enjoy computer games; he was a kid who would actually make them. For him, computer programming was a form of play that allows him to control a universe of his own creation. Without even knowing it, he was learning certain principles of abstract math and multidimensional thinking that most students don't learn in college.

At work:

Now, Andrew Zolli makes his living deciphering systems on a global level. Through his company, Z + Partners, he studies the complex trends at the intersection of technology, sustainability and global society that are shaping our future.

CARLOS "MARE139" RODRIGUEZ (Sculptor/Graffiti Artist)

Play: is resourcefulness.

Many times, armed with stolen spray-paint cans, the young Carlos and his friends set out to paint the subway trains in 1970s New York City. He used the tag "Mare139," a reference to his self-coined nickname, "Nightmare," and the street he lived on. What he didn't realize back then was that he was part of a generation that would transform culture, art, and music.

At work:

As a sculptor and Web designer, Carlos' work is now seen by audiences worldwide. Perhaps his best-known contribution is the BET Lifetime Achievement Award, a dynamic sculpture of a shooting star, first bestowed upon Whitney Houston in 2001.

■ Results

The stories in this section show how each person featured has an innate leadership quality and an even greater desire to get others to rally around an idea, get the best and the most out of others, and find ways to impact the well-being of others with their actions and ideas.

TINKER HATFIELD (Vice President of Design and Special Projects, NIKE)

Play: is problem solving.

In a rural Oregon town on a sunny afternoon, the young Tinker was often home alone with his imagination. One day he was a cowboy; the day before, an Indian; the next, a quarterback in the Super Bowl. The pressure is on. The choice had to be made. Hide. Run. Shoot. Acting and reacting are all in a day's play.

At work:

In his design studio on Nike's sprawling corporate campus in Portland, Oregon, Tinker is surrounded by sneakers he helped design: Air Jordans. Cross trainers. The shoes worn by Michael Keaton in *Batman, The Movie*.

Tinker's favorite days? The hectic ones.

His deadline of choice? ASAP.

MARC HACKER (Designer and Architect, Rockwell Group)

Play: is tinkering.

Marc's father had a workshop in the back of the family's garden in London. It was a magical place where the boy and his dad tinkered with wood and tools, making furniture, repairing household things. One of the first things the boy made on his own was a piano for his mother.

At work:

Marc Hacker is one of the leading thinker/designers at the Rockwell Group, an internationally acclaimed architecture and design firm. With a background in product design and design education, Marc relishes his role as an advocate for Rockwell's diverse designers.

RYAN CHRISTENSEN (Entrepreneur)

Play: is bringing people together.

Ryan's mother gave him that name because she liked that Ryan means "Little King" in Hebrew. She told him, "You've got to be careful what you do because people are going to follow you. You've got to be sure you use that in a positive manner."

He was the kid all the other kids turned to as a leader. And he made sure he always led them in an afternoon of play and food and family.

At work:

Through his entrepreneurial endeavors, Ryan is creating community on a grand scale. The Sameunderneath offices are like his childhood backyard pool: a place to stay hard, have fun, and bond like family. Not surprisingly, Ryan is still a play instigator. From ultimate Frisbee to regular game nights, he creates teams that are tight-knit and supportive of one another.

IVY ROSS (Executive Vice President of Marketing, GAP Inc., North America)

Play: is visualization.

As a child, Ivy entertained herself for hours by visualizing the extraordinary in the ordinary, from imaginary rock concerts to made-up musicals.

At work:

By fueling her active imagination with the season's garments plus the retail space ideas her designers create, Ivy finds the common thread that ties seemingly disparate styles together in a unified, emotional message.

HENDRIK MAMORARE (Cardiac Surgeon, Walter Sisulu Paediatric Cardiac Centre for Africa)

Play: is inclusion.

Growing up in apartheid South Africa, Hendrik was born into a black community where expectations are low. Then one night, when he was 12 years old, his favorite music program was interrupted by a news story that the first-ever successful human heart transplant had just taken place. In South Africa, no less!

At work:

From that moment in 1968, Hendrik Mamorare set himself on a course to become a cardiac surgeon. Today he is one of the chief surgeons at the Walter Sisulu Paediatric Cardiac Centre for Africa, the only low-cost children's heart surgery centre on the continent.

■ Teamwork

In these profiles, you will come to understand how hangin' out with a select group of peers, mimicking adult social behavior at an early age, being a member of a sports team, and creating imaginary communities were all fantastic learning environments for the future endeavors and success of the men and women profiled.

IRENE AU (Director of User Experience, Google)

Play: is people-centered pretending.

Irene's childhood life was filled with books, both at home and at her father's office. She started her own "library" collection at home, and her brother visited the library so she could play librarian. "I'd like to learn about..." he would say. She helped him find books that matched his interest.

At work:

As the director for User Experience at perhaps the most popular search engine *ever*, Irene gets to play at work every day. Her job is just like her childhood play. She studies what Google users need and want, and then uses those insights to help inspire product development.

DWAYNE "The Rock" JOHNSON (Actor/Former Professional Wrestler)

Play: is igniting the imagination of others.

Baseball, football, wrestling, army games, cops and robbers... The young Dwayne was always running, leaping, playing with other kids. No matter how many times his family moved house, this only child jumped right into his new community and made new friends immediately by playing sports and games with the other kids.

At work:

Dwayne believes that for any performance to be a success, all team members must perform their craft from a place of honesty. Be it the sports stage or the movie set, he has learned that a great performance depends upon the team's willingness to strategize, practice, have a great sense of timing, and ability to always deliver moments of surprise together.

MEL YOUNG (Founder, Homeless World Cup)

Play: is bringing out the best in others.

Growing up in Scotland, Mel took up soccer as a national rite of passage. It didn't matter that he wasn't the best player on the team – although he sure would love to be the best. For him, the team was all about being a band of brothers, a tribe.

At work:

As an adult, Mel's belief in the importance of teams and community extends to the world around him. He dedicates himself to helping solve the problem of homelessness, first as an editor of a Scottish homeless newspaper, and then as a cofounder of an international soccer tournament for homeless people – the Homeless World Cup.

PREMAL SHAH (President, Kiva)

Play: is intellectual creativity.

During freezing cold winters in a suburb of Minneapolis, there was nothing the young Premal loved more than an unstructured weekend with his LEGO set. He could cozy up in the basement for hours, perfecting his LEGO spacecraft, while the buzz of family life went on around him.

At work:

These days, Premal Shah does far fewer “oughts” and far more “want to’s” than he ever dreamed possible. As president of Kiva, a unique Web site that helps people make microloans to small business entrepreneurs in developing countries, Premal’s work is his play.

LARRY ROSENSTOCK (Founder and Chief Executive Officer, High Tech High)

Play: is creating imaginary worlds.

In college, Larry was drawn to film studies. He learned the art of filmmaking, a form of building imaginary worlds. He developed a lifelong fascination with creating environments for people and seeing what is possible when all the right elements are in place.

At work:

Larry Rosenstock never stopped building worlds. He has taught carpentry in urban high schools, served as staff attorney at the Harvard Center for Law and Education, and headed up the Rindge School for Technical Arts, among other noteworthy achievements.

REBECCA VAN DYCK (Former Global Account Director, Wieden + Kennedy)

Play: is pushing boundaries.

As a girl, Rebecca particularly liked soccer. Even though she wasn’t the most skilled on the team, she still became the captain. She discovered she had a natural talent for motivating people to work well together. Because she could speak both the language of boys and of girls, everybody trusted her to lead.

At work:

Rebecca says that she never intended to get into advertising; she just fell into it. Now that it’s her vocation, she loves it because once again she’s a team leader and has the opportunity to motivate people to work as a team.

TITO LLANTADA (Global Fellowship Team, Ashoka)

Play: is being resilient.

Throughout Tito's childhood, baseball was an essential way for him to connect with community and family. Playing catch in the backyard with his dad became a cherished activity for both son and father.

At work:

As a member of the Global Fellowship team of the social entrepreneur organization Ashoka, Tito utilizes his excellent team skills every day. His primary roles with the Global Fellowship team includes helping build and maintain the infrastructure behind a global network of more than 1,600 fellows.

■ **Leadership**

Leadership is part tactical, part analytical, part situational, and a BIG part understanding humanity. Great leaders understand the human dynamic/factors that can affect an organization. Good leaders are students of humanistic teachings and are constantly developing their capacity to understand the intricate makeup of human beings and how it factors into an organization's successes and failures.

DELANO LEWIS (Business Leader/Former U.S. Ambassador to South Africa)

Play: is being nimble on your feet.

The son of a railroad porter and a domestic worker, Delano was an only child. His parents wanted to ensure that he had every opportunity to succeed in life. His mother especially encouraged him in the arts, and he excelled as a drum major, an actor, and a trumpet player. But his biggest love in his formative years was tap dance.

At work:

Delano has always stayed close to the arts in order to feed that playful, dynamic part of himself his mother nurtured in his childhood. He served on the board of the Arena Stage in D.C., and he helped form the Cultural Alliance of Greater Washington. His wife and four sons are quick to note that Delano never stopped performing.

GEORGE BODENHEIMER (President, ESPN)

Play: is a team of friends.

For young George, it all came down to his circle of friends. Each year he and his friends played on sports teams together: baseball, football, ice hockey. From Little League all the way through his high school playing days, this boy nurtured friendships through sports.

At work:

George Bodenheimer has been at ESPN for 27 of the sports media giant's 28 years. His humble beginnings in the mail room led to an impressive ascension in the company. A much beloved leader, George has been president since 1998.

AWISTA AYUB (Founder and Director, Afghan Youth Sports Exchange)

Play: is sports.

Awista's passion for sports began one day when she was eight years old. It was the middle of winter, 1988, and she was glued to the TV set watching the Olympics. She was crying. The courage and resilience of the ice hockey players on the screen spoke to her soul. She wanted to do *that*.

At work:

That small beginning grew into the Afghan Youth Sports Exchange, an internationally recognized and award winning nonprofit organization dedicated to preparing Afghanistan's young girls with the leadership skills they need to promote athletics in their schools and communities. Her program has helped to empower the girls to break down gender barriers in their country.

DUFF GOLDMAN (Owner, Charm City Cakes)

Play: is challenging what's possible.

Duff's always been a builder. From two common forms of concocting everyday creations – cooking and LEGO – he learned the fine arts of improvisation, problem solving and experimentation. A dash of salt, a sprinkle of dill, a couple of 4x4 wheels, or a power-lift component, and he can make something nobody has seen – or tasted – before.

At work:

If you've ever tuned into the Food Channel and caught Duff Goldman and his Charm City Cakes team in action on *Ace of Cakes*, you know Duff is somebody who has made his work his play.

■ Curiosity

May the short stories under this section serve as LOUD reminders that being forever curious, quizzical, and a seeker of moments of wonder can be of value for a lifetime.

MALCOLM GLADWELL (Author)

Play: is building and creating.

Thanks to the young Malcolm's LEGO set, maps, and his subscription to *Road & Track* magazine, he saw himself as an active participant in the world of cars. Without knowing it, he was in training for being a major influencer in the world at large.

At work:

Now a staff writer at the *New Yorker* and author of *The Tipping Point* and *Blink*, Malcolm refers to writing as "building." He loves the process of writing, which he likens to his childhood play with LEGO sets. The joy for him is in the construction of articles and books, assembling pieces so they fit into a whole.

SUE SCHAFFNER (Photographer, Girl Ray Photography)

Play: is embracing the unexpected.

When Sue was 10 years old, her grandmother gave her a Pocket Instamatic 110 camera. The cigarette-case-sized camera was all the rage in the early 1970s, but it was a totally random gift. Little did Grandma know that the camera would become Sue's calling card in life.

At work:

Twenty-odd years later, as the founder and proprietor of Girl Ray Photography, Sue's photographs have been featured in top national magazines such as *Glamour*, *Wired*, *Fortune*, *Entertainment Weekly*, and many others, as well as in ads for Lexus, American Express, ConEdison, and others.

PAULO COELHO (Author/Alchemist)

Play: is skill and instinct.

The young Paolo found the repetition of shooting marbles into holes absorbing. At some point in a long-ago afternoon of playing, he became the marble, the target, the motion and sound of THWACK, flicking the marble with his thumb. He embodied the essence of instinct.

At work:

Sixty years later and Paulo Coelho is an internationally renowned author. With sales of over 100 million copies worldwide, his books have been translated into 63 languages and have been distributed in 150 countries.

The Red Rubber Ball at Work

By Kevin Carroll

To write, he uses that same mix of instinct and discipline he learned from playing marbles. Now, he looks at his new book just as if it were a perfect white marble gleaming in his palm.

~///~