



## INTERVIEW WITH OLGA KOROLEVA OF CAPITAL BRAIN: Optimal Performance Before High Pressure Moments & How to Relieve Stress, Clear Your Head, and Prepare Yourself for High Stakes Business Encounters

By Parveen Panwar  
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*As a part of our series about “Optimal Performance Before High Pressure Moments”, I had the pleasure of interviewing Olga Koroleva.*

*Olga Koroleva is a real estate entrepreneur, proponent of AI, adventurer, eternal optimist, and the founder of Capital Brain, the first real estate AI company in the industry that creates machine learning products for real estate companies.*

*Previously, she helped build a business intelligence platform for a \$5 billion multifamily REIT BRE Properties, set up a reporting infrastructure for SBE Entertainment, and managed a workout of a \$300 million multifamily portfolio for Redwood Mortgage.*

*Olga was named Top 10 Women in CRE Tech, nominated for The Innovator of the Year Award by CREW. She holds a Master’s in Linguistics degree and received an MBA from UCLA Anderson. Olga is a high-altitude mountaineer with multiple summits around the world.*

**Thank you so much for joining us in this interview series! Before we dive into the main focus of our interview, our readers would love to “get to know you” a bit better. Can you tell us a bit about your childhood backstory?**

I grew up on a Naval base on the Baltic Sea in Soviet Russia. I was fortunate enough to start traveling at a very young age, lived in four countries across three continents, visited over fifty countries and counting. After receiving my first master’s degree from one of the oldest universities in Europe, I moved to the U.S. to pursue a career in real estate and attend a business school at UCLA.

Today, after spending several years in institutional real estate finance, I am a founder of the first artificial intelligence platform for commercial real estate. I am insanely in love with all things real estate and was named Top 10 Women in Commercial Real Estate Tech two years in a row.

I am hungry for life, with great passion for food, high heels, and an adrenaline rush. When I am not running my AI startup or investing in real estate, I am climbing mountains around the world. I climbed my first mountain when I was 7 years old. I climb because it allows me to take calculated risks and to push myself outside of my comfort zone. I ran marathons in California, kayaked glacial rivers of Alaska, dove shipwrecks in Australia, walked a catwalk in a Los Angeles fashion show, swam from Alcatraz, and summited Everest unguided. You get the idea; I am very adventurous and would never miss a chance to try new things.

**What or who inspired you to pursue your career as an entrepreneur or business leader? We’d love to hear the story. None of us can achieve success without some help along the way. Was there a particular person who**



**you feel gave you the most help or encouragement to be who you are today? Can you share a story about that?**

Dr. Larry Souza, who is a real estate economist and an executive, has been my mentor for many years now. In the early days he taught me about the inner workings of the real estate industry and made multiple introductions that allowed me to grow professionally. Now we are collaborating on projects for my real estate AI technology business. (Full disclosure, I met him at a bar!)

**The road to success is hard and requires tremendous dedication. This question is obviously a big one, but what advice would you give to a young person who aspires to follow in your footsteps and emulate your success?**

You don't climb a mountain by hanging out in the base camp. Know the approximate direction of your summit, and keep going, keep trying, keep climbing.

**Is there a particular book that made a significant impact on you? Can you share a story or explain why it resonated with you so much?**

I read about 50 books each year, so it is a hard question to answer. If I had to think about an inspiring business book, I would say "Start with Why" by Simon Sinek. It described a great idea that a human will be happy only working on something that gives her a purpose. The same mason can either be laying bricks or building a cathedral. I found Ray Dalio's Principles book quite great. He's got a very interesting approach to life — you make the best decisions by having lots of data. I happen to agree with it.

**What are some of the most interesting or exciting projects you are working on now? How do you think that might help people?**

My real estate AI company Capital Brain is in the process of launching an institutional real estate investment fund that invests in public real estate securities. We have already created several successful real estate investment models run by tech instead of human analysts. It is our belief that it's possible to construct an investment strategy that takes a lot more into account in a way that can only be done by the tech. By systematically analyzing a myriad of factors we can much better understand the big picture market dynamics and find the most optimal investment scenario. If we reduce the friction caused by the unexpected and turn this uncertainty into calculated risk, we will be much better in managing investors' money by achieving higher returns.

**OK, thank you for all of that. Let's now shift to the core focus of our interview. As a business leader, you likely often face high stakes situations that involve a lot of pressure. Most of us tend to wither in the face of such pressure and stress. Can you share with our readers 3 or 4 strategies that you use to cope with the burden of stress?**

I strongly believe that the world is just a mental narrative so most of my preparation for high-pressure moments happen in my head. I am what I believe in. Here is a short description of how I usually frame my thinking before a summit bid or an important business conversation:

First—Ask yourself: Do I have control over the situation?



Always assume both good and bad things happen, and events might not go the way you wish. As I am writing this, my house is being buried under the retardant by the largest firefighting plane in the world; the house will possibly die in the California wildfires by tomorrow morning. I can't do anything about it. I just have to accept the unknown...

Second—Accept the unknown.

The weather always changes, and you just never know how it turns out. In mountaineering, under extreme conditions, you have to have this mentality that you can just keep walking up into the unknown and that at some point you'll safely reach the summit. When I was climbing Everest, I was starting in the end of the weather window and I knew there was just a 2-hour summit window which was three days into the future... my only chance, a culmination of my two months expedition. By that time, all other climbers descended, and I had the highest mountain on the planet to myself. As I was struggling my way up for the next 3 days, all I had left was to believe that the forecast wouldn't change, and the window would stay open. In the end, it worked out and I found myself standing alone on top of the world.

Third—Why not?

Go after the biggest prize and see what you can get away with. Take a risk. If you don't get the desired outcome, see it as a future non-event—will it be important in 5 years? Most likely, not.

Finally—Remember you are loved.

Everyone around you wants you to do well. The conference audience is there because they want to hear what you have to say. Investors gave you money because they believe in your vision. Customers work with you because they love your product. Tip: Call someone close to you before an important event to receive some love.

**Aside from being able to deal with the burden of stress, can you share with our readers 3 or 4 strategies that you use to optimize your mind for peak performance before high pressure, high stress situations?**

Choose Growth Mindset: I tell myself there are different routes to the summit. If I know I have options, it is easier to stay in a positive mindset when the probability of success is much higher.

Focus: Forget about the outside factors, focus on the inside and do your best. Believe that what's inside always knows better. Everything else is irrelevant, only your goal matters. I summited Everest with a broken rib. The summit was the goal, the broken rib was just a nuisance that had to be disregarded.

Act: You don't summit a mountain by sitting in the base camp, remember?

**Do you use any special or particular breathing techniques, meditations, or visualizations to help optimize yourself? If you do, we'd love to hear about it.**

Yes, I meditate every day to stay centered. It reminds me that I have the internal power to handle anything in life. I am a big fan of Insight Timer app.

**Do you have a special technique to develop a strong focus and clear away distractions?**



I always have a training plan and to-do lists to keep myself accountable. Admittedly, it does require a certain level of effort. There are days when I am feeling down, but I always tell myself that if I do just one thing a day that moves me towards my final goal, I am good. Especially now, it is so hard to keep the spirits up during scary times and mass hysteria all around. But you know, you climb the mountain step by step. Focus on the next step only. The mountain always looks large from afar and you can never see the end of the trail. As you start climbing, the trail slowly appears, and things get easier.

**We all know the importance of good habits. How have habits played a role in your success? Can you share some success habits that have helped you in your journey?**

Set a big, fat, juicy goal — and then never question yourself. If you bother to put an effort into training, you might as well aim for Everest. Then imagine yourself standing on the summit, and work backward to understand the necessary steps for achieving your goal.

Pick a team — I always pick only the best people for each particular task. My CTO Andrei Safonau is only one of the few engineers in the industry who can write machine learning code specific to real estate. Our advisory team consists of PhDs who are authorities in their respective fields. My climbing team is led by Valentyn Sypavin, a former World Ice Climbing Champion and a Guinness Record holder who is simply the best climber out there right now. They are the best at what they do with the positive can-do attitude.

Carry out the plan — and think through the resource allocation. I allocate my time wisely because I know I have limited time on this planet. So, I am mindful of my schedule. Setting up some kind of routine always helps.

**What is the best way to develop great habits for optimal performance? How can one stop bad habits?**

I believe you don't need to stop bad habits because this work will take a lot of your willpower and energy. All you have to do is focus on creating good habits instead. For example, when several years ago I decided to stop drinking alcohol, I just created an environment and a lifestyle that was not compatible with alcohol consumption.

**Ok, we are nearly done. You are a person of great influence. If you could inspire a movement that would bring the most amount of good for the greatest number of people, what would that be? You never know what your idea can trigger.**

I would work on prototyping an Earth+ future where every human activity has a positive impact on our beautiful planet. When you look at the impact that humans have had on the planet, there is barely a single place that hasn't been negatively impacted by our presence. Long lived plastics are strewn about the path up to the summit of Everest and have sunk to the depths of the Mariana Trench. The solutions are already existing to solve our most pressing issue, the climate crisis but we need to bring ideas, innovation, stories, funding and community together, a prototype model that can be replicated and grounded in local communities across the Globe.

We are already working on creating an ecosystem that includes various networks and higher education bodies (Oxford, Harvard, MIT, UZH), social clubs where members unite around Earth+ future discussions, and a VC fund that invests in Earth+ tech in agriculture, sustainable food, real estate. I welcome your ideas if you want to join our Earth+ efforts.



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Sam Zell is one of the greatest real estate investors of our time. I want to be like him when I grow up.

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