



Portrait

This man is a mover. Whether it comes to management, motors, money, or—especially—men. Roger S. Penske, Porsche's partner in the American Le Mans Series, excels in applying the principles of his sport to the world of business.

Roger More

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Voicemail time stamps are the modern time clock. Thursday, 6:14 a.m.: “Hi, this is Roger...” No answer. Friday, 5:58 a.m.: “It’s Roger again, I’m on my way to a board meeting. Unfortunately we won’t be able to talk today...” Sunday, 10:30 a.m.: “Are you there? That would be great. I’m at the racetrack, and I’ve still got another hour before the race starts...” This call went through. Time and place are immaterial. “There is one thing you learn in motorsports you’ll never forget: Nobody waits for you.”

Racing is Penske’s passion, as is conducting his business, whether that be selling cars or transporting them. The man who makes sure the RS Spyder gets off to a good start for Porsche in the American Le Mans Series is one of the most successful people in America. His manner and his charisma are a mix of Steve McQueen and Julius Caesar, evidenced by his blend of Prussian order and American freedom. When he stands behind the pit wall, one foot on the concrete ledge, he communicates through his body language: always ready to take action, a mobile field marshal. Even at 70 he retains this resilient tension.

The urge to triumph. The skill to win. That place in Victory Lane achievable only through relentless self-acceleration. “I focus my life on what’s ahead,” says Penske, “not on what’s already done.” Always moving in the passing lane. “The reason why I’ve been successful so long are the people I’ve gathered around me. I care about the training and advancement of my employees, and I am richly rewarded for that, both in our sport and in our business life.” Roger Penske is self-made, a mark of distinction. At the age

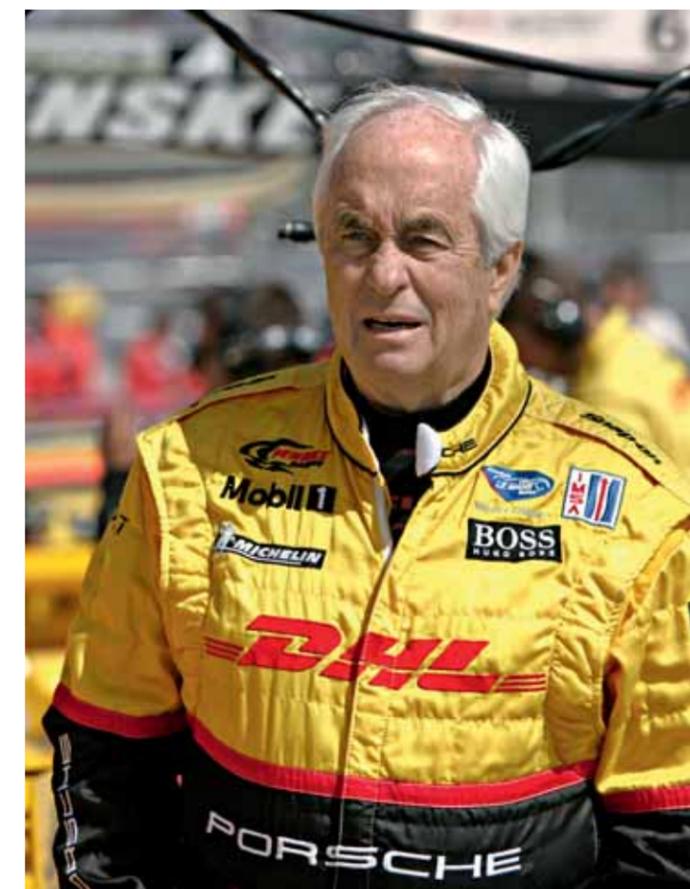
Changing roles: On weekends Roger Penske slips into his race coveralls, but he remains the same person and true to his principles

of 15, he bought his first car, and that marked the start of an immensely successful career. *Forbes* ranks him among the most dynamic business magnates. What began as a small business selling used race cars has become an automotive empire.

One would expect an autocrat to be aloof and insensitive. But not Roger Penske. He not only knows what he wants and expects of others, he insists on it: “What I like best about my job is that I can make people successful.” Because without effective teamwork, this former race-car driver is convinced, no boss stands much of a chance: “In my position you can still care about details, but you can’t get everything done yourself. So you’ve got to delegate responsibility to your people because ultimately your success depends on every single individual.” A principle that he brings from his role as racing team centurion to his role as CEO of the whole Penske empire: “30,000 people work in my organization. I delegate responsibilities and empower them to be accountable on all levels.” Here’s a man who knows how to combine the principles of motorsport and management, and how to make his company work like a team. All for one, and one for all.

Penske starts in his own race every day. And he expects his team members to embrace the same sportsmanship and commitment: “Racing, which embodies quality, competitiveness, teamwork, reliability, and decisiveness, is the DNA of my business—character traits one can use in all sorts of situations in daily business life. These capabilities are essential in creating the right environment for good business.” He transfers this sense of commitment from pit lane to executive suite with ease. “These virtues endow me and my companies with strength and resilience, and I pass them on to my employees.” Those who work with Penske closely hold him in high regard as a mentor. And they appreciate that despite his perfectionism he gives them the freedom to act and to develop personally. Penske is known for experimenting with new approaches—providing they look like winning propositions.

Weekends off? Unwinding? Not for this multilevel manager: “Racing is for me what playing golf is for another.” Needless to say, a single racetrack won’t do: the American Le Mans Series, NASCAR, the Indy Racing League—Penske has a multifaceted personality and organization. Unwinding by being fully engaged. When it comes to cars, his pale blue eyes shine as brightly as his gold Rolex. On such occasions his usual level-headedness has to compete with a rush of adrenaline. Speed is still the phenomenon that enralls him: the synergy of all forces. He loves the short-term results: “You see the immediate effects of the efforts you’ve invested.” And there are longer-term benefits:



“The motivation and inspiration I gain from the weekend races stay with me long into my workweek.” While results are essential—preferably good ones—Penske considers it wrong to make them the only measure of satisfaction: “It’s too bad that so many people care only about what’s on the scoreboard. Of course that’s what matters in the end. But what I care about most is that we’re competitive and that we can prove it to everyone.”

Loyalty and continuity mean a lot to Penske. When Porsche Research and Development Director Wolfgang Dürheimer contacted him more than two and a half years ago about a new sports-car project, Penske was interested immediately. It had been 32 years since he’d been involved with the sports-car category—with a Porsche 917. Within nine months the new partnership was off the launching pad, and by the end of 2005, the RS Spyder had already celebrated its debut with a class victory. Says Penske, “Our will to compete in races and our will to win brought us back together. What I like about Porsche is that the entire workforce stands behind the brand.” He even amplified his appraisal with a “terrific.” For a man not given to hyperbole, that’s a terrific compliment.

On race days he doesn’t delegate authority completely. There’s always a car or a driver team that Penske takes care of personally. It’s surprising that the team doesn’t get nervous when the boss is right there. Quite the contrary, his presence seems to reassure people. He is a true helmsman, and his close associates reverently call him “the Captain.” When he changes from his business ▶



Winners' circle: Dr. Wendelin Wiedeking and Roger Penske; strategy chat with Porsche Board Members Michael Macht and Wolfgang Dürheimer and Motorsport Chief Hartmut Kristen (left to right)

suit into his racing fire suit, he steps into a different life, but he remains the same Roger. "Don't look for me in the VIP section. If you want to find me, look around the car hauler or near the cars. Just being an observer wouldn't be any fun for me." He concedes that his whole life could be described as a contest. And the impression is correct that this whole interview is guided along a strategic path, with deliberately selected points of emphasis. Of course that has a lot to do with his immense experience in anticipating such questions: "If you're in charge of a team or a company, you've got to anticipate. To think ahead. A day or a weekend. Sometimes a whole year. When we leave the track after the race, that's what we think about." But what excites him most is the need to be agile, to respond swiftly: "You've

Champions League Roger Penske

Roger S. Penske, born in 1937, has been President and CEO of Penske Corporation since 1969, as well as Chairman of the Managing Board and CEO of United Auto Group (UAG), in which his activities in automotive sales and the transport business are consolidated. His companies have more than 35,000 employees in 3,000 locations around the globe. Among his properties are nine Porsche Centers in the USA and in the UK.

The multitude of business units includes Penske Racing and Penske Motorsports. Penske's racing teams have won well over 225 races in all classes to date, including the greatest number of victories (14) in the Indianapolis 500. In 1961 and 1962 he was chosen "Driver of the Year" in the USA, and in 1995 he was inducted into the American Motorsports Hall of Fame near Detroit.

Penske is also actively involved with the Deer Valley ski resort in Utah, the revitalization of Detroit's inner city, and the engine builder Ilmor. He is a Board Member of General Electric. He and his wife Kathryn have five children.

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got to make decisions minute by minute. That's what motivates me. And especially in racing, you rarely get the opportunity to revise your decisions." To always keep up the pace, he uses a motivational tool that he says always works: "Prepare for each race as if it were your first."

Penske's relationship with Porsche goes back to the first encounter on the racetrack at Lime Rock in 1959, when Penske took the wheel of a modified Porsche RS and defeated all competitors, though they raced in much newer vehicles. Then he bought a Porsche RSK and won a class victory. Penske was a talented driver, but he had to finance his racing himself while also earning his college degree. Nevertheless, he appeared on the cover of *Sports Illustrated*. At the age of 28, in 1965, he reached the turning point of his career: "I had to make up my mind whether to be a racer or a businessman." He became a racing entrepreneur. "That was probably the best decision I ever made. Because I was able to pursue my passion for racing while conducting my business at the same time."

Penske's power stems from his genius in orchestrating the synergy of horsepower and manpower, and in maximizing the results to keep winning. Winners are both drivers and driven at the same time. A final maxim: "The only losers are those who are afraid to risk victory." We hear you, Roger. And we can't wait for more. ◀