



Budoka in Business

Nathan McDonald is a 3rd degree Black-belt in hapkido; a product of years of hard training, no doubt. However, it's his other Black-belt that's more unique and intriguing. McDonald is a 'Black-belt in business', a system he founded in order to guide fellow businesspeople and martial artists alike towards proficiency in the commercial world. With years of success and experience in both fields, McDonald hopes to bring his new business education system to the masses and show that there's a lot more to learn from martial arts than punches and kicks.

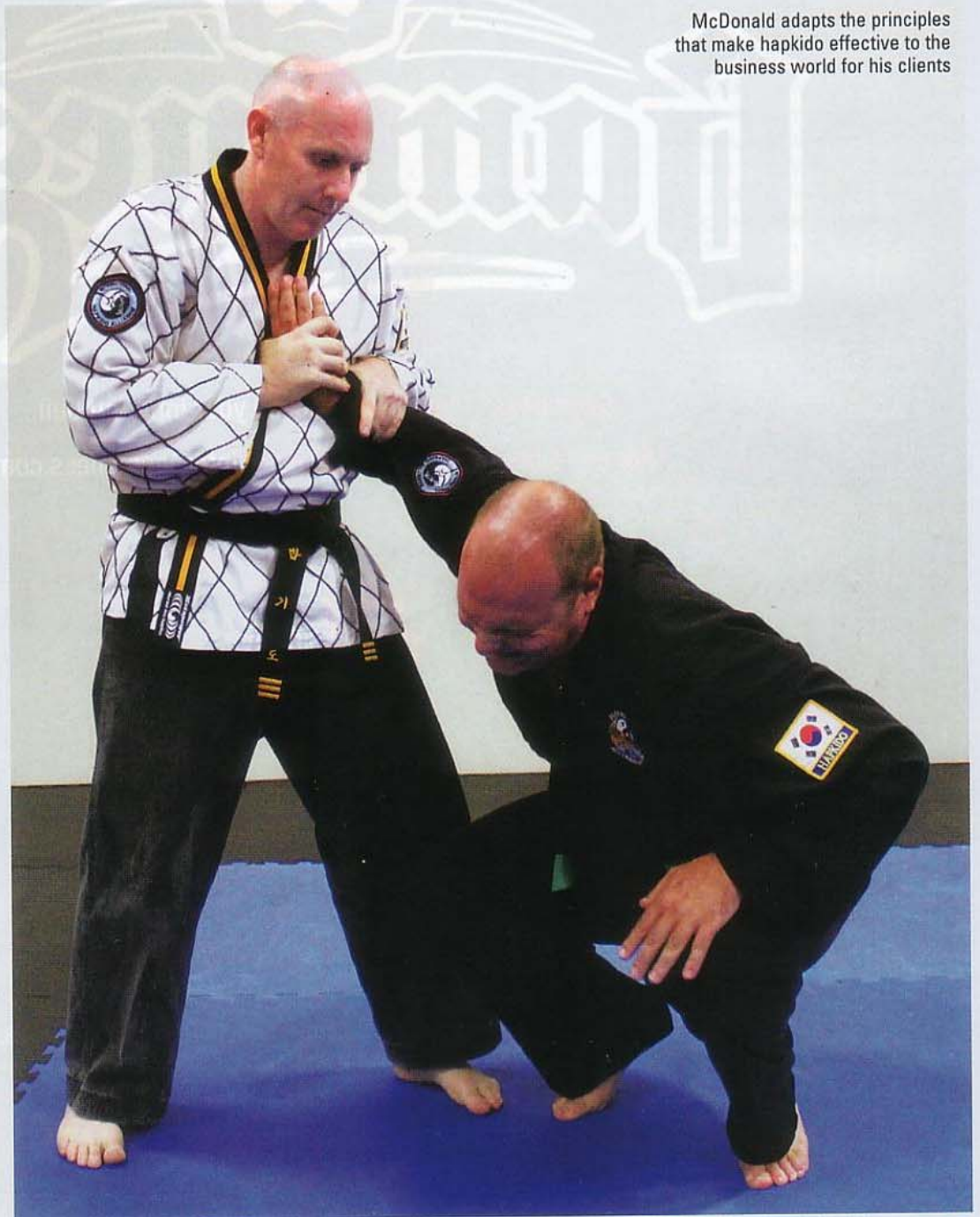
INTERVIEW BY BOON MARK SOUPHANH

Nathan, how did you first get involved with martial arts?

I used to watch all these martial arts films as a kid. I joined a gym when I was about 20 years old and they held a martial arts demo about two weeks in. They started doing classes, and I went to that first class and haven't looked back since. It just immediately gelled with me. The thing I liked about it was the consistency; I liked the stability; I liked the fact that I had to turn up to class all the time. I saw my own personal growth and after four or five weeks I had the aspiration to eventually teach it myself. The penny had dropped, and I had found my calling in life.

You now run a business education system called Black Belt Business (BBB). Can you explain what this is?

One of the biggest struggles for business owners at the start is that they don't have any structure. In martial arts, you are given structure and a syllabus from the start. You essentially know what you have to do at each belt level, you work your way up, and eventually you get your Black-belt. That's a goal for a lot of people. When business owners first start off they don't get anything. There's no structure, no direction, and there's no one there to tell them that they need to get their techniques right before moving forward. I remember driving one day and



McDonald adapts the principles that make hapkido effective to the business world for his clients

thinking to myself, 'Why can't I link my passion in martial arts with my business strategies?' I thought it was really simple. In business and martial arts you need the same discipline, focus, and drive but there's not real education system out there that teaches you and gives you the tools to be able to implement that.

Can you go into more depth regarding the belt system you use?

It's just like martial arts when you look at it. The junior belt levels are all about the foundations and getting those right. The precise foundations include marketing, finance and administration, sales techniques, and customer service. We also cover goal setting and timing management during this stage. In martial arts, you'd do the same by building foundations, getting your footwork right, developing power, and

technique and asking 'have you thought about x, y, z?' When I sit with a client, I'll be looking at a marketing technique that they're employing and I'm able to break those down and ask them if they're doing x, y and z. Being able to link the two and visually see when something isn't right, then being able to help them correct it, whether they're a businessperson or a martial artist, is something that flows for me.

You speak about setting and achieving goals. Can you elaborate on this concept? How has this helped you in your own personal experience?

Everyone has a different learning ability and capability, some people are audio and some are visual learners. When I'm talking to a client, they're teaching me as much I'm teaching them. Because of this, I'm able to benefit every day. Setting goals has helped

"Seeing the progression of my students and clients is amazing. Watching students give their all in gradings, at training, seeing their growth."

understanding the concepts.

Then we move onto intermediate belts, or what we like to call 'growth belts'. This is when you start looking and decent systems and team members. You then move onto the 'expansion belts', at this stage you already know how to kick and punch so you'll have to work out what you need to work on in order to get that Black-belt. In business, these are translated into franchises, licensees, and creating distributorships.

How has your own martial arts training helped you in the field of business?

Being able to use my martial arts instructing skills with clients has been brilliant. One thing I've found that I've been good at doing is looking at a

The Master's Tip

Nathan McDonald on how to overcome the trap of stagnation and stay motivated through 'downtimes' caused by injury or a busy schedule:

I have to deal with these downtimes every day with clients and students. Sometimes I struggle with this myself. The first thing I do is go back to a massive lesson I learned way back when I was 30: motivation starts with action. Just start.

If I am having a non-motivating day, I go back to remember what the feeling was to accomplish the task, and then I just start. Do you ever have those times when you say, I don't want to go, but you go anyway? Then after going, you are glad you went. This is what I am talking

about when action comes before motivation. This is the hardest part and I teach clients that discipline is not throughout the task, discipline is about turning up. This is the only discipline required in martial arts and business. Just show up and start, and normally the rest just works itself out. When injured you can be a sulk and say you can't do anything, can't go to training, etc. You can actually do heaps: you can study videos, read about better mind-set stuff, strengthen other parts of the injured body... When it all boils down to it, it is about happiness and you're in control of being happy or not. You are going to have negative stuff to deal with; it is how you deal with it that is most important.

me realise that I don't know everything and that I have to research and 'find' the answers if I don't know them. I go to my own instructor for answers when one of my students asks me a question that I don't know the answer to.

Who or what have you found most inspiring to you on your martial arts

and business journeys (and why)?

I have had great mentors both in my martial arts and business journey. There are three that stand out. In martial arts, it has to be Grandmaster Geoff Booth, head of the International Hapkido Alliance. Apart from being an exceptional mentor,



'Come fly with me'... McDonald demonstrates the acrobatic abilities gained through hapkido breakfall training

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5 MINUTES WITH NATHAN McDONALD

seeing Grandmaster Booth follow his passion of hapkido and following it is inspiring. Not many people would quit a great job to follow their passion. This takes courage and guts and you have to ride a huge emotional wave. My first business coach, Jeremy Carter is another. He came in and helped me not only get my business at the time working better, but helped get my mind set right. He helped me set goals, allocate tasks and to start my journey to becoming a business instructor. Last but not least, seeing the progression of my students and clients is amazing. Watching students give all in gradings, at training, seeing their growth. Parents thank you for the positive changes in their kids, and clients getting massive results in their business. Seeing more profit, a better lifestyle and seeing them hit their targets is a massive inspiration for me.

What do you hope to achieve with both hapkido and BBB initiative in years to come?

In martial arts, I have a goal to keep working through the ranks. I'm a 3rd Degree in hapkido now, and I want to keep pushing on with that and hopefully I'll have my 4th Degree by 2015. I hope to get my 5th by 2020. These are the goals I've set myself for martial arts. In business, I hope to have a global business education system by the end of next year, starting in the USA and the UK. I want to expand it from there and have business instructors around the globe implementing a very easy-to-use business system, where there's structure and goals to it. Discipline, focus, and all those other things that breed in a martial artist. I want those to be instilled in business owners as well.

How can martial artists get the most out of their

McDonald's business clients work toward 'belt' ranks like martial artists



training when they have limited opportunities because of personal endeavours such as business?

It's really simple. I think you have to really value your own time. Obviously, you have to invest the time into it if you want to get results. Whether it's martial arts or not, you have to make the effort to turn up to class if you want to get your Black-belt. You can't be half-hearted, and it's the same in the realm of business. The next part is having the follow-through, basically making sure you're doing the right stuff. So many people in martial arts and business get caught in that vicious cycle of going around in circles and not progressing. You have to follow through with the stuff that's going to make a difference. I would say the third part would be uniting your goals and understanding why you want to achieve them. You have to understand why you're moving forward in that direction, why you're doing this, why you're doing that. If you can link these parts together, whether you're a martial artist or a businessperson, you're going to be really successful at it. ■