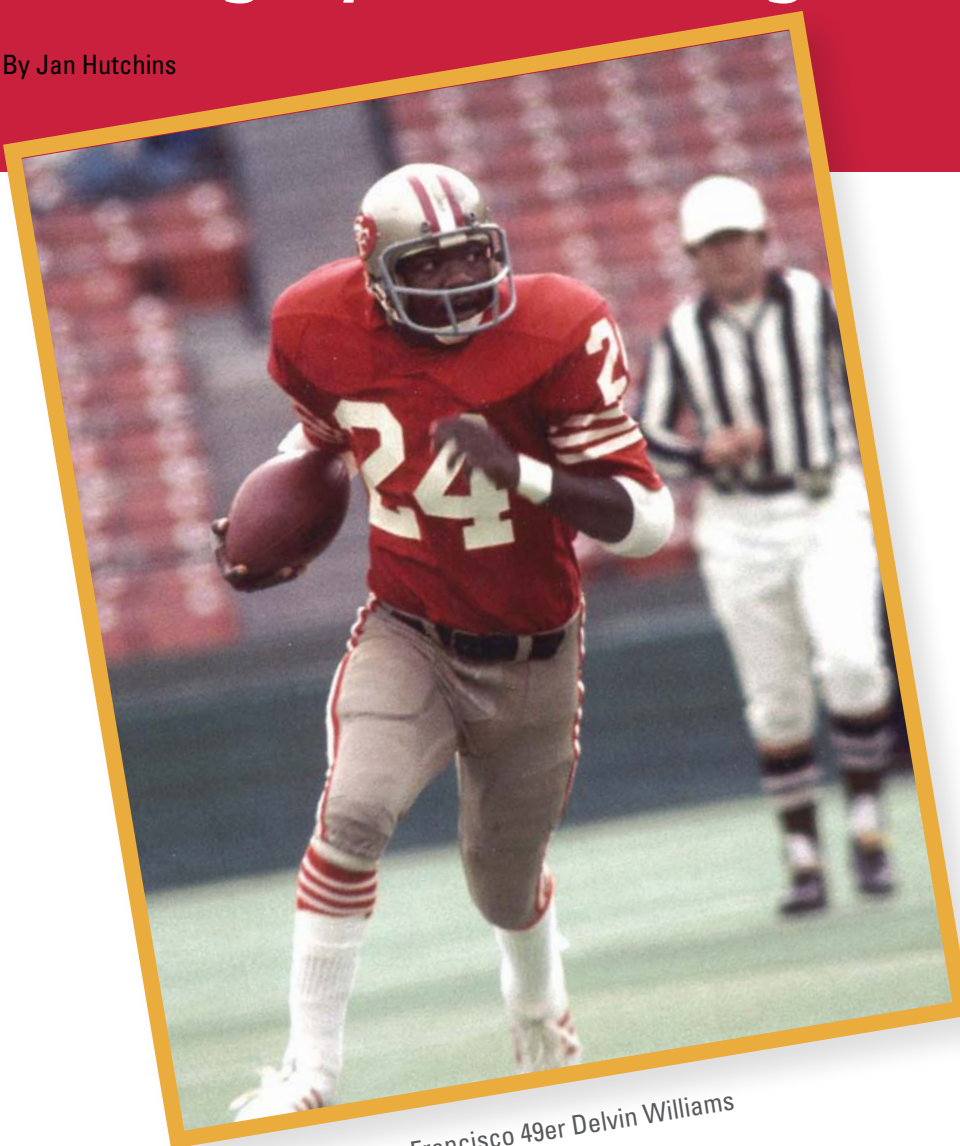


Former 49er Delvin Williams

# Getting Up After Being Knocked

# Down

By Jan Hutchins



All-pro, former San Francisco 49er Delvin Williams

*Since he was eight years old, he's dreamt of becoming a star, leaving behind the poverty of his youth, creating abundance for himself and his family. By working harder than anyone else and doing whatever was asked of him, he did it, starring as a football player, dodging defenders to become All-American in high school, a leader at Kansas University, an all-pro with the San Francisco 49ers and Miami Dolphins in the NFL.*

But at age 29, the dream ended and the nightmare began. His body stitched together with 19 surgeries couldn't do it any more. The money stopped, as did his identity as a star. Not part of the team anymore, officially not needed or wanted by the coaches and owners who'd told him he was "part of their family." It felt like something had been stolen from him, like a part of his body was missing. This young man was Delvin Williams, who's now 61 with many years of therapy behind him. How is his experience now providing an opportunity for start-ups and small

to medium businesses (SMB) in Silicon Valley and the current crop of athletes being forced to retire?

**"If we can get past our envy,** retired star athletes can help us learn important life lessons about how to take advantage of and handle change," says Williams.

There are compelling statistics: Two years after they leave the NFL, 78% of players are jobless, divorced or bankrupt, 65% have injuries they'll carry the rest of their lives and 20% are clinically depressed. Frequently they're under 35 and have to wait until they're 45 to collect their pension and almost 60 to cash in their 401k.

Williams who has recently founded the non-profit Athletes Reengagement Alliance, puts it this way. "The experience of having my life's work taken from me was devastating. I needed to create an organization that can help athletes make some money after they retire because contrary to people's assumption, the teams don't take care of them."

**He turned to his friend and former** sportscaster Jan Hutchins, now co-founder of a successful marketing agency, SocialAgenda Media. "We create opportunities for the players to use their strong brands to endorse start-ups and SMBs, and share their insights about leadership, teamwork and handling competition," said Hutchins, the former mayor of Los Gatos, "It costs businesses less than they expect to have their retired heroes and heroines endorse their products and show up at events to provide empowering and inspirational speeches for their employees and customers."



Jan Hutchins and Delvin Williams having fun

The dream-turned-nightmare for one athlete is now building hope for others and even providing new opportunities for small to medium sized businesses in Silicon Valley. "I carried the ball more than 1,300 times in the NFL," says Williams, "I can share a lot about being knocked down and getting back up."

*For information about Athletes Reengagement Alliance and SocialAgendaMedia, contact Jan Hutchins at [jan@SocialAgendaMedia.com](mailto:jan@SocialAgendaMedia.com) and [AthletesReengagement.org](http://AthletesReengagement.org).*

Hutchins and Williams, with support from business leaders, are building the organization not just for someone getting cut from playing pro sports. The vision is to use the power of celebrity voice to empower everyone, whether they're getting divorced, being fired, have a life-threatening illness, have lost loved ones, suffered violent attack, abuse, rape, severe injury, post traumatic stress, addiction, incarceration, the list goes on and on and eventually touches us all.

**What the players go through can** teach the rest of us valuable lessons about dealing with dramatic change:

- Don't try to handle it alone. More than the money or adulation, the athletes miss the camaraderie after they leave the game. We also need to feel the support of a group or close friends when we're grieving a loss.
- Realize that feeling emotions are natural and don't be embarrassed. After a difficult challenge, it's natural to feel anger and sadness but, like athletes, some of us are trained to believe we shouldn't admit we're feeling confusion or pain. When denied though, feelings often come out "sideways" as violence or illness.
- Stay active and keep moving. Like water, we're powerful and stay clear when we move relentlessly toward a goal. Take care of your body with healthy eating, exercise and rest.
- Be patient with yourself. Building a new life after sports takes athletes an average of three to five years. Learning how to live after abuse, loss, divorce or being fired can take just as long to fully transition to the next phase of your life.

 An advertisement for Amtrak featuring a woman with long blonde hair looking out a train window. A white thought bubble originates from her head, containing a list of activities. The background shows a scenic view of mountains and a lake. The Amtrak logo and slogan "Enjoy the journey." are visible in the bottom left.
 

**POINT A**

- Put away to-do list
- Novel from book club
- Chatting with woman across the aisle

Mountains carved by glaciers

A glass of cabernet, please

I think I've found a new hobby

**POINT BE**

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