



Letters on Leadership #25 – The Hot Seat

Winter is coming... The leaves have changed color and are falling off the trees. Days are getting shorter and the nights longer. Pools have closed. End of year reviews are about to take place and bonuses determined. Air conditioning units have shut off. Heaters are turned on: in our homes, and, in corporate America and throughout college sports. Managers, Directors and Coaches everywhere are on “the hot seat.”

There are numerous reasons why our teams may not have reached our goals this year and thus, why we find ourselves on “the hot seat.” Program Lead Instructor and part owner, Jake MacDonald, and I are currently writing a book about all of them. For now, I would like to tackle one in this “Letter on Leadership”.



Most leaders have earned their position through outstanding performance earlier in their careers. Typically, in corporate America, a region's best salesperson is named Regional Sales Director when that position opens. In college football, the best offensive, defensive and special teams coordinators are promoted to head coach.

However, the things that make a subordinate leader great can hurt that individual when they are promoted to the top position, IF they are unable to adapt to the new role. How, specifically? Typically, great subordinate leaders want their leader to give them as much ownership over various parts of the organization as possible. Their subsequent great performance in those areas is what allows them to be promoted in the first place. (For this "Letter on Leadership", we are defining an "owner" as an individual who has both the authority and the obligation to make "it" happen.)

A great salesperson typically makes the most sales calls to clients and prospects and in doing so, helps the team to be successful. However, as Regional Sales Director, if they are still spending their time that way, it has exactly the opposite effect on the team's success. For the sales team to be most effective, the Regional Sales Director must stay focused on the things that only they can do: training the sales people, attending meetings with the biggest clients and prospects, determining compensation, etc.

Similarly, there are certain things that only a head coach can do. As an example, it is great to have an assistant coach sit down and talk to a recruit and their parents inside of their home. However, it just isn't the same as when the head coach walks in and does this. Both coaches are *saying* that the school wants that recruit to play for them, but the latter scenario *shows* it.

For a head coach to have the time that it takes to be in that living room, they must delegate ownership of other tasks to their subordinates. If they do not, the organization will not function as efficiently as it could, and performance will suffer. That coach will then find themselves on "the hot seat".

When I first started The Program, we were a one-man show. I gave all the speeches, ran all the events, developed all the curriculum, made all the sales calls, cleaned the office, etc. This allowed me to develop a *good* company. However, what has made us into a *great* company is having a TEAM of experts, each with ownership of the various areas of our business in which they excel. I rarely work events or make sales calls now. Instead, by delegating maximum



ownership to my teammates and giving them clearly defined roles and responsibilities, I am able to stay laser-focused on those tasks that only I, as the Founder and President, can do. It allows me, as the leader, to stay laser-focused on our accomplishing our company's mission.

A leader can never delegate responsibility, but they can and should delegate *ownership*. The best leaders are those that stay solely focused on only those things that the leader can and must do for the organization to be successful. Everything else is delegated to subordinate leaders. While the leader ultimately remains responsible for everything that happens or fails to happen in the organization, in the most successful organizations the leaders have delegated everything possible to their subordinates.

Clearly defined subordinate roles and areas of ownership help to ensure this. If these are not in place, the first step is the hot seat. The next is no seat.

Attack!

Eric Kapitulik
Founder and CEO

"Letters on Leadership" are published periodically by The Program, a leadership development and team building company that works with the nation's leading corporations as well as professional and collegiate athletic teams.

For information on developing better leaders and more cohesive teams at your organization, visit <http://www.theprogram.org/corporate>.