



Happy Holidays!

Happy Hanukkah. Merry Christmas. Happy Kwanzaa.

Now - Do. Your. Job!

If not, you will be fired. Leaders, if you are unwilling or unable to do so, and are instead allowing a teammate to stay on your team who is not consistently *earning* their place on it, you are failing as a leader.

To quote legendary football coach, Bo Schembechler, it really *is* about The Team, The Team, THE TEAM! The leader gets held *accountable* for everything that happens or fails to happen on the team, but everyone is *responsible* for it. The leader is one part of the team. Teammates are the other.

Most leaders incorrectly believe that if someone is behaving in a manner inconsistent with their organization's culture and/or underperforming, then they as the leader are *responsible* and they



must figure out something that will change that person. Leaders are not responsible and a failure to understand *accountable* and *responsible* manifests itself as the greatest mistake we make as the leaders of our teams - retaining those individuals who shouldn't be a part of them.

A leader is *accountable* for everything that happens or fails to happen on their team. The leader (or someone designated to do so) is *responsible* for ensuring that every member of their team is taught:

- 1) The organization's Core Values (the non-negotiable behaviors that are expected from all members of the team) and how the organization defines those Core Values.
- 2) The daily standards that must be met that reinforce those Core Values.
- 3) "Why" meeting and exceeding those standards will help teammates as individuals and as a team achieve both their individual and the team's goals.

If a team member then chooses to behave in a manner inconsistent with the team's culture, it is not the leader's "responsibility." The leader is *accountable* for that teammate not doing so, but not *responsible*. They are! A leader *develops* the people on their team. Not *changes* them! Our Core Values are set by the age of 12. Admittedly, there are individuals who change their values after that, but on a macro scale, very few. And for those who do, it occurs because of a "life-changing" experience as well as a massive change (and improvement) in environment - to include their personal environment (those with whom they are spending their time) as well as their physical environment (where they are physically located). Often, these two changes in environment occur simultaneously.

We appreciate, at The Program, that many of the college coaches with whom we are privileged to work will say that that massive change in environment occurs when many of their athletes arrive on campus. We agree. Furthermore, attending college can be, and often is, a "life-changing" experience. Additionally, the individuals that they recruit to their team are typically seventeen and eighteen years of age. They are still young. Change is still a possibility. I just wouldn't plan on it. Further, for every individual you point to who did "change," we forget about numerous others who we also invested massive amounts of time in (time we didn't invest with other members of our team), who didn't change at all. Failing to remember that our first loyalty,



as a leader, is to the team, we end up hurting many more members of that organization as we attempt to change those individuals who do nothing to earn their right to be a part of it.

Furthermore, we must also remember that if we allow an upper-classmen who, as an example, has zero work ethic and is also mentally and physically soft to remain on our team, they are going to recruit and attract others who also have inconsistent work ethics and lack toughness. Zebras hang out with zebras and lions hang out with lions. Therefore, a new student-athlete may experience a massive change in their physical environment by attending our university and joining our team but experience a very small change in their personal environment if surrounded by other zebras.

All teammates, from every battlefield, have a responsibility to be great teammates. Typically, this means that they must show up early and work late, wear the right uniform, be prepared, have a positive attitude, consistently give 100%, do extra and if something is due on Wednesday, submit it on Wednesday! All of which are a choice.

Therefore, if you have been taught your team's Core Values and the standards that reinforce them, and you aren't meeting those standards, that is your choice. No one else. As an example, if Competitive is a Core Value of your team, and you are a competitive person, you will be competitive regardless of *who* your coach or business leader is and *what* either do. You will be competitive if you are 13- 0 or 0- 13. You will be competitive if you are "a Starter" or get very little playing time. You will be a competitive corporate team member regardless of if your team is having a great year generating revenue or a poor one. The flipside is also true. If you are uncompetitive, that is because you are uncompetitive, not because of who your coach or business leader is, what they do or the scenario or situation you and your team are in. If you are uncompetitive. *You* are uncompetitive. The same is true for any Core Value- as an example, you are Tough (a Core Value). That is your choice to be tough. No one and nothing else are to blame if you are soft. Same for Selfless, Disciplined, Honest, Passionate or any other Core Value.

If we are going to achieve everything we want to achieve in life, we must all get better. Why? Because there is no middle ground. There is no true thing in life as "just maintaining." This isn't Eric Kapitulik or The Program that *believes* this, this is what Biology teaches us: grow or die!



Personally, as a parent, I tell my children once to do something. If they don't, there is a consequence. I don't do, "by the time I count to 3," or "ok, this is the *last* time I am going to tell you." If I wanted them to do it in 3 seconds, I would wait three seconds and then tell them to do it. The "last time I am going to say it?" No, I say it once. Once is first and last. As an FYI, if they ask "why," and time permits, I will always answer that question. If time doesn't permit, I will answer it as soon as the situation allows. I also try to explain the "why" prior to asking them to do something as I know its importance. Knowing "why," helps all of us to do what we may not want to do or that we might think unnecessary. Further, if I can't articulate "why" doing what I am asking them to do will benefit them and/or the team, then, in fact, they probably shouldn't be doing it. Leaders would do well to remember this on whatever their chosen battlefield (See #3 above under responsibilities of a leader).

My children are eight and three years old. For some reason, I have used a different standard on adults. For adults, I have given one chance after another. I counsel an under- performer (always an individual who is also not meeting our Core Values and the standards that reinforce them) and I tell them that I am not going to have another conversation about it... and then I have another conversation about it. And another.

Throughout this period of one conversation after another, their continued poor, or worst, inconsistent behavior (and corresponding bad performance) hurts the team. As an FYI, inconsistent behavior is usually worse than bad behavior as we typically convince ourselves to give that inconsistent person even more chances. Don't! Remember, we must **consistently** grow... or die.

The greatest leaders and the greatest teammates together form the greatest teams. Team leaders-figure out what it means to be a great teammate on your team. Communicate it. Recruit it. Hire it. Retain it. And get rid of everyone who isn't it. Not on the *count of three*. Not after yet another conversation. **Right now**.

Is this harsh? Yes, to any member of your team who is *choosing* to act in a manner inconsistent with your team's culture. It is most definitely harsh to every member of your team who is hurting the team. THE TEAM. THE TEAM. THE TEAM. The team that we, as the leader, are accountable for everything that is happening or failing to happen on it.



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