



### Know Your Role

It may come as no surprise to many readers of our Letters on Leadership, but most Program Teammates are fans of professional wrestling. Although diehard fans of the Golden Era of WWE (ie. Hulk Hogan, Andre the Giant, Rowdy Roddy Piper, The Ultimate Warrior, The Macho Man (and of course, “the lovely Elizabeth), we still appreciate later legends of the sport like Stone Cold Steve Austin, Goldberg, and Dwayne “The Rock” Johnson who used to tell opponents (“Jabronies”) to “know your role!” We couldn’t agree more. It is a leader’s job to articulate each team member’s role on the team and it is the team member’s job to know it. They must also embrace it. It is mission critical for team success.

That isn’t to say that we need to be *satisfied* with our role. At times, many of us believe that we deserve that promotion or more playing time, but we don’t get what we deserve, we get what we earn. If we want the next promotion, we must work harder! If we want the ball more, we must get better! There is no “just maintaining” in life. We get stronger or weaker, faster or slower; we



get better or worse every day of our lives. The day that we become *satisfied* about what we have achieved and more importantly, who we have become in life, is the day that we start declining. We may not be satisfied with our role, but we must embrace it nonetheless.

Further, rarely do we choose the specific role we occupy on the teams which we are privileged to be a part. In our most recent episode of The Program Podcast ([Our Podcast | The Program Leadership](#)), we were fortunate enough to speak with Sami Jo Small. Sami won multiple gold medals and world championships as a goalie for the Canadian National Women's Ice Hockey Team and was an MVP and starting goalie for many of those teams. Sami highlighted both during our podcast, as well as in her great book "The Role I Played: Canada's Greatest Olympic Hockey Team," her losing her starting position right before the 2002 Olympics. Naturally she was heartbroken and dejected. However, as she states, she had a choice: she could be angry at her coaches and disengaged from her teammates, or she could embrace her role as the team's biggest cheerleader and in doing so, help the team achieve success.

The most important role that we all occupy is "teammate." Every member of a team from the CEO to the newest member of the mailroom must be a great teammate every single day. Teammates consistently meet and exceed two standards. First, we set the example. We meet and exceed the standards of our organization. Second, we hold our teammates accountable to achieving those same high standards. This is one way that we ensure consistent self and team improvement.

"The Rock" follows "know your role" with "and shut your mouth!" Although, we do indeed, "smell what the Rock is cooking," we disagree with him here. While there may be times when it is helpful for a teammate to shut their mouth; for example, when listening to another teammate or leader, we must open our mouths and communicate consistently. Once we have set the example, once we have met our organization's standards, we must ensure that our teammates are doing the same. We do so by consistently communicating with them. We hold teammates accountable when they fail to meet the standards of our team and more importantly, we hold them accountable when they DO meet our standards. Recognizing when our teammates are not meeting the standard helps us get to the mountaintop. Recognizing when they are, helps us get their faster! Never miss an opportunity to do so.

"Leading by example;" working hard and *hoping* our teammates both recognize our doing so and then magically doing it too just because we are doing so does NOT work. Setting the example and then holding our teammates accountable does. Regardless of our specific role or title on a team, we must be great teammates and hold each other accountable.



On any mission in the military there is a Main Effort and multiple Supporting Efforts. I have been both in combat. Everyone wants to be in the main effort. They are typically the ones standing victorious on the objective after accomplishing the mission. However, I can say with confidence, that I wouldn't have accomplished a single mission, let alone survived combat at all, if it were not for the actions of the supporting efforts; helicopter pilots that knowingly flew onto battlefields filled with gunfire and explosions to extract us, Navy Corpsmen and Medics who risked their lives to save wounded teammates, and the logistic crews that kept us fed, resupplied, and alive in the harsh, unforgiving terrain of the desert. On any team, on any battlefield, if everyone does not embrace their role and perform it to the best of their ability, we have no chance of success.

Great teams are comprised of great teammates and great team leaders. As a member of an organization, we are never a spectator or bystander. Every member of a team is crucial to mission accomplishment. Again, you may not agree or be satisfied with your current role, position, or title. Fine, work harder, but in the meantime, be the best teammate you can be. Don't sit on the bench and watch games. Get up and share positive energy with your teammates. Find a way to help the team accomplish the mission. Think you should be starting? Great, work harder, but in the meantime, be the best scout team player that you can possibly be. Think you are underutilized in the office? OK, look for additional responsibilities and get better! Find a way to help the team accomplish the mission. Let the people sitting in the stands or out on the street be spectators and bystanders. We may not be *satisfied* with our role, but as Olympian Sami Jo Small highlighted, we must choose to embrace it nonetheless. We must choose to be great teammates and do whatever the team needs us to do to accomplish the mission.

A long time ago, I watched The Rock drop The People's Elbow on his opponent and finish him off with The Rock Bottom. I was a spectator. On every team I have ever been privileged to be a part of though, I've tried to embrace my role and help my team accomplish the mission. I've tried to be the best teammate that I can be. *For* my teammates. I challenge you to do the same.

### **Jake "Mac" MacDonald**

Lead Instructor

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