

March Madness, Nor' Easter's and Trump Assessments

March Madness

I just love this time of year. Although today we've got more to think about than all of our normal crazy lives. The purest of sports tournaments is underway, although those that didn't get in probably describe the selection process as much less than pure. But when you consider that more than 64 of the top college basketball teams get to try and prove themselves – one performance at a time.

March Madness is the epitome of talent selection, successful leadership, performance management and team and individual coaching. We're all sports fanatics in our house(s). Everyone in the family is up for this, brackets are scrutinized, favorites are penciled in and the superstitious shirts, socks, shorts, jewelry and of course religious artifacts have been pulled out of the drawers. More than football season, the Stanley Cup playoffs, March Madness pits the best against the rest. There's always a couple that pony up in their Cinderella slippers, and this year will be no different. Our Irish were just granted an early Saint Patrick's Day miracle! Phew!!!! But there's one reason I love this event – this is human capital at it's finest!

Like the world of business college basketball teams, in fact all sports teams, demonstrate the power of human capital. Players like employees are recruited from all over the place. They're evaluated based on how well they match the core competencies to fill the position. But all selection processes are not the same. Some schools require a strong academic record to meet minimum admission requirements (think Notre Dame, Stanford, and Princeton). It makes no difference how good your performance is, without some proof of intellect you not only won't get in, you can't. Others, well, not so much, as long as they can demonstrate performance those academic credentials aren't so important. The truth is each school has a different set of criteria, with a different set of desired outcomes. A. Win at all cost; b. win but the players must get an education; c. the players must get an education and we really want to win, or, d. I think we have a team but not many people on campus know where the gym is (think Carnegie Mellon or Harvard).

The team (important concept here – TEAM) consists of players, from first string to practice squad as well as coaches, instructors, equipment managers, graduate assistants, trainers, physical therapists, and yes, even team physicians and don't forget the strength coaches and dieticians. If you're really invested you've even got both a sports psychologist and of course the team chaplain.

Everyone is selected based on performance. Obviously the most visible are the players on the court, but there are several, in some cases, dozens of other individuals behind the scenes. Each one is compensated (e.g. scholarships et. al.) based on the teams performance and their ultimate performance. After all, their product is a performance, and only a positive performance gets people to pay to watch. Isn't that what happens on all of our teams in every company we all work for? Top Performance = recurring revenue. Poor performance = you won't be in business long as your competitors are waiting in the wings for you to foul up.

Leadership. Think about it. Someone on the team is going to step up into a leadership role and the coaches will select those who can lead the team both in performance and inspiration, because, as you know, performance is much more than just putting in the minimum hours. We all know those that are performing at their highest level at all times, many times without fanfare or recognition. Yet, without these folks, the operation just doesn't run the way it could.

Coaching – probably the most critical responsibility of any leader, supervisor, manager, director and executive within your firm. Certain coaches can get the best performance from the most unlikely staff. While the best can get not only top performance from an individual but from a team, department, division, and ultimately company. Think about yourself. We've all worked for individuals who we'd have tried to do anything to over deliver. While we've also had that one schmuck who you knew it was only going to be a matter of time until either they moved on, or you were.

March Nor' Easter

So the Meteorologists mostly missed their prediction this week. Three to six inches of snow this week here turned into a slight dusting, and in many cases nothing but cold air. Some places got about what was predicted, but those were the exception not the rule. But that's not the challenge most of us will have with the prediction. The Chief Meteorologists in all of the major markets that were to be affected by this storm had a conference call last weekend. What they realized was that the predictions were flawed, indeed completely wrong. Unfortunately they decided to continue with the dire forecast believing that they were going to error on the side of caution. Truth is that decision affected businesses, schools, parents, day care, and thousands, wait, millions of lives and schedules. What is the responsibility of the Meteorologist – to give as accurate a prediction as possible. Not make a judgement call about what is good or bad for us. We, the consumer of their expertise, can make an informed and educated decision about what how to proceed. Did someone cry WOLF??? Could this be Fake Weather??? Erode enough trust away from those entrusted in positions of authority, especially in those who have a pure responsibility to report the facts, eventually you continue to move the needle from respect and trust to one of wary and uncertainty. Can the message you send to your employees, and customers be trusted the same way? Come to think of it many of the business, specifically employee facing, laws today were created because employers were less than honest or forthright with their employees. Our workshop People Compliance in a World Full of Litigation covers all 46 laws that impact employees today. Like the simplification of the IRS Code, these laws need to be understood by everyone in business leadership roles, at least until these are all simplified as well.

Trump, Twitter, Media and Politics

What did you expect? Take someone who has never held that responsibility and put them dead center of chaos. Unfortunately it's going to take an entire series of outsiders to right a system that has been severely listing from one side to the other for the past four leadership teams led by a more and more insulated group of disconnected individuals. Listen for political rhetoric, those are the individuals holding on to the archaic broken rules and systems that need to change. Think Biggest Loser takes on Extreme Makeover. Everything is certain to be uncertain. Unconventional will become conventional. At it's core the theories are reasoned, it's their execution that will take the strongest leadership. What is going to happen over the next four years can be likened to an architect who needs to design buildings capable of withstanding regular earthquakes and tsunami's. Add one unique challenge – the architect is standing in a building already swaying from tremors on a foundation weakened by the first waves of a tsunami.

As for Media and Politics, there's only one thing that gets readers or viewers – the juicy story. Have you seen the commercial where the young girl gets a new car while another gentleman finds his car up on blocks. It's brilliant, and the best portrayal of media today. Both the girl and the guy say the exact same words – but with completely different contexts. Stories about puppies and babies are interesting, but

they will not sell enough papers to cover their operating costs. The next four years will see such a huge uptick in paper sales that they should all be thanking our president for saving their businesses!!!

Next up: Assessments and the Reassignment of Top Performers.