

4-1-2006

Leading With The Heart: Coach K'S Successful Strategies for Basketball, Business and Life

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Recommended Citation

Maresco, Peter A. (2006) "Leading With The Heart: Coach K'S Successful Strategies for Basketball, Business and Life," *Academic Leadership: The Online Journal*: Vol. 4 : Iss. 2 , Article 5.
Available at: <https://scholars.fhsu.edu/alj/vol4/iss2/5>

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Academic Leadership Journal

If you are a student of leadership, whether in business or in sports, you have no doubt noticed the proliferation of leadership books that continue to make their way onto the shelves of bookstores. After a while one starts to wonder if there can be possibly anything left to write on the subject that hasn't already been written. Well, perhaps there is; the relationship between leadership in sports and leadership in business, perhaps even leadership in our everyday lives.

For several months I have been thinking about what makes the subject of leadership so difficult and I have come to the conclusion that most of what is written about the subject is pretty much common sense applied to specific situations, usually business. This book reinforces that idea. In many ways *Leading With the Heart* parallels a concept that I came up with a year ago while teaching a class on leadership to MBA students at our campus in Luxembourg. Leadership, from my perspective, is a matter of four basic concepts: Does the culture of the organization in with the leader will be working need to change and if so can it be changed? If the culture is willing to change is the leader willing to invest the time and energy necessary to initiate cultural change throughout the organization? Does the leader have a clear vision of where he/she wants to take the organization? Finally, is the leader able to clearly communicate the vision to everyone throughout the organization and follow through with feedback regarding the movement of the vision.

In studying and teaching leadership it is difficult not to notice the many parallels that exist between sport and leadership. For instance, in basketball, as in other sports, no one is recruited to play on a team that does not already know and clearly understand the rules of the game. Everyone knows the rules, how to play the game, and how to play their particular position (do their jobs). There is constant communication between the coach and their players (boss and subordinates). There is constant feedback not only before the game, at halftime and after the game but throughout the game. Why is this so difficult to achieve in a business environment?

Leading with the Heart takes its reader through an entire season with the Duke University Blue Devil basketball team. It is divided into four sections, Preseason, Regular Season, Post Season and All-Season with each section having four chapters. In addition, each chapter starts with quotes from Coach Krzyzewski, many of which are on leadership, and ends with Coach K's Tips, also with references to leadership. If you are interested in leadership, and do not have an aversion to the sport analogy, this book is interesting reading; just keep your mind open to the business analogies.

There is so much in this book that, to me, is basic leadership common sense (leadership 101). For instance, "If our culture is properly developed, if it's nurtured and cared for and watered every day, then in the heat of competition, in those moments when you need to slam home a message, where you need to "spike it," an individual, or the team collectively, will respond well." (p. 53). This is a perfect example of how the sports analogy works with leadership. Communicate the vision, keep the lines of communication open, keep your team well trained and when the competition gets tough they will respond.

Throughout the book there are numerous examples of how preparing his basketball team to perform at their highest level relates directly to the business environment. To go into all these examples here would take pages. However, just keep in mind that in business, as in sports, it is the leader's responsibility to select the best people (players) possible, provide them with opportunities to continue to develop their skills, share the vision you, as the leader have, for the teams' success and the role they will play in achieving that success in an ongoing manner.

My suggestion is to read the book and as you do ask yourself how the principles outlined relate to leadership in its various forms. There are plenty of examples throughout the book especially at the end of each chapter.

Loyalty from Leadership: Holding the Team Together

Loyalty – devotion or allegiance to a group, person or cause. Loyalty is a highly valued character trait desired between employers and employees. All teams as well as organizations hang together or fall apart because loyalty. Loyalty, trust and commitment are truly the glue that holds relationships together. How do effective leaders inspire the loyalty of their followers? Below are three ways they make it happen.

1. Competence – Who's In Charge? Employees look to their boss for solutions to problems. At a time when more and more expectations are being dumped in the lap of public education, frustration felt by school district faculty and staff members increase. When this happens employees look to their boss for answers. While this may seem like an unrealistic expectation for the superintendent to have all the solutions, it is human nature that the followers look to the leader for help. If help is not provided concerns of the leader's ineffectiveness add to the employee's frustration and loss of loyalty occurs. In order to calm the masses the leader must convey the message that even though this is a problem now, steps are being taken to find ways to solve the problem. Simply ignoring a problem leads to dissatisfaction. Incompetence ignores reality. The steady hand of experience is extremely valuable during these times in being realistic about problems and possible solutions. It is important for the leader to use all resources available to alleviate concerns. This will restore the confidence and trust in their leadership abilities and foster loyalty.
2. Concern – Who's listening? It is very important that a leader be in tuned to the needs of employees. I once sat through a district Superintendent's welcome back message to district faculty and staff at the beginning of a school year. This well intentioned man went on for an hour about how proud he was of the accomplishments the district has achieved during his tenure. As I looked around the auditorium I saw most employees struggling to stay awake. When he mentioned the district's intention of air conditioning elementary school classrooms, a loud applause broke out. After that, the audience basically was more receptive. While the welfare of the whole district is the concern of the Superintendent, the main concern of most teachers is their classrooms. If employees feel secure that the boss is aware and concerned of their daily needs they are more inclined to become devoted to the overall district needs as well. If not employees become territorial focusing only on their own needs. Time stress is a big issue with most people today. If you ask employees if they would rather have a pay raise or more time off you may be surprised at the result. Feeling overwhelmed because of lack of time to get things done causes

enormous stress and leads to burnout. Cutting back on the length of time spent in meetings goes a long way in showing respect for others and their needs. This respect is repaid with the loyalty of employees who realize a bosses concern for them.

3. Support – Who’s backing me? Absolutely rule #1 when it comes to loyalty – back your people. I learned a long time ago that public statements have personal consequences. There is a tendency to listen to negative comments about public education. As in any gossip there is probably a little bit of truth in everything you here. The point is not whether you as a leader agree with the negativism you hear – but how you handle it. I am reminded of a head coach who called a time-out at the end of a game to set up a game winning play. His assistant coach came up with a strategy the head coach felt would work. So the decision was made to go with the assistant’s suggestion. When the play was run – it completely backfired and the game was lost. At the press conference after the game a reporter asked, “Who was responsible for that last play?” With his assistant at his side, the head coach answered, “Me”. In that moment the head coach gained the loyalty and respect of not only his assistant but also the players. There comes a time when a leader must take the target off the back of his employees and place it on his own. Mistakes happen. Disagreements can be worked out over time but loyalty can be lost in seconds. Once a boss loses the respect of his employees trust and commitment suffers.

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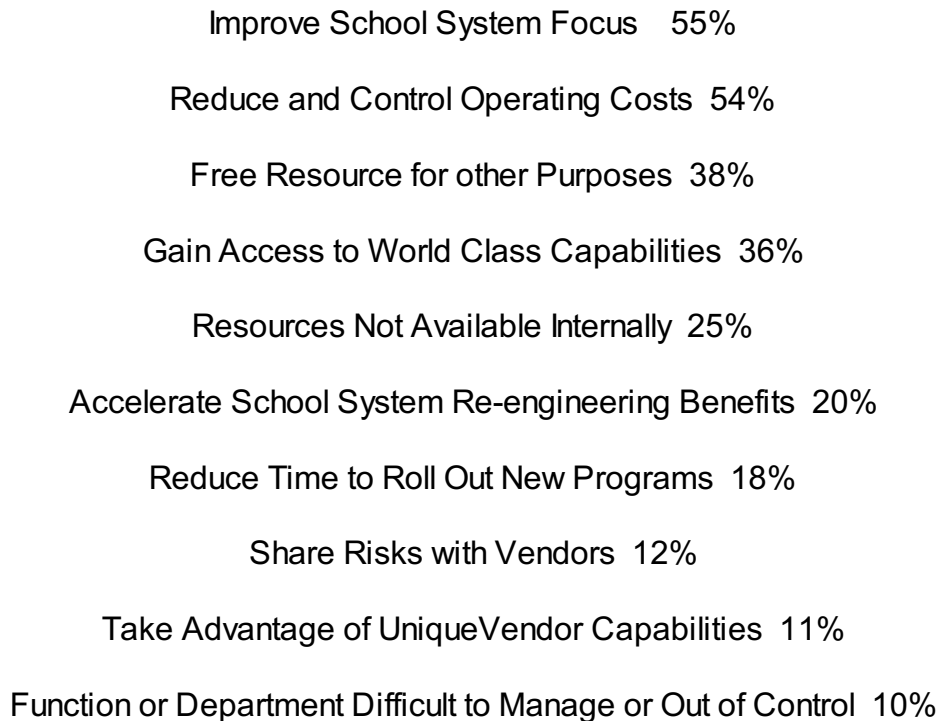
Outsourcing is swiftly achieving strategic value through contracting outside vendors for school administration non-core business processes. Outsourcing compels creative exploration and the re-engineering of those processes performed, which paves the way for focusing on your academic base functions.

That re-engineering then becomes a continuum, focused on achieving persistent improvement and real dollar savings that school systems are seeking. Outsourcing is widely being implemented as a strategic management tool that school districts across the nation are leveraging to improve process level efficiency and effectiveness, as well as reduce costs. Outsourcing is rapidly losing the negative stigma in American schools as domestic employment is recovering in other industries. School administrators have been educated on the logical, capitalistic results of outsourcing and the responsibility for organizational costs.

Why are School Systems Outsourcing?

GRAPH

10 TOP REASONS SCHOOL SYSTEMS OUTSOURCE



NOTE: NUMBERS DO NOT ADD UP TO 100% SINCE RESPONDENTS SELECTED MORE THAN ONE ANSWER

Clearly, outsourcing is no longer just about saving districts money. It's now about doing things quicker, more efficiently, getting to programs faster than you can with internal resources, having maximum flexibility with your workforce and gaining access to high quality employees you otherwise could not afford.

Administrators state they are much more likely to cite improving their school system's focus than reducing and controlling expenses as the primary reason for outsourcing.

Who's Running Your Outsourcing Initiative?

Superintendents, Assistant Superintendents, Controllers, Human Resources Directors, and Purchasing Directors are finding much of the responsibility of outsourcing falls on their shoulders. Untrained in the responsibilities, yet still accountable for the school district outcomes, newly appointed outsourcing overseers are eager for schools-specific outsource initiative coaching.

Districts will likely spend more than 10 per cent of the value of outsourcing projects on building internal teams to manage them correctly, according to Scott Wilson, Founder of The CRO Institute (<http://www.croinstitute.com>), the Tampa FL training organization renowned for their trademarked Certification for Chief Resource Officers partnered with Syracuse University.

Douglas Brown, President of Brown-Wilson Group, Inc. a top national outsourcing firm specializing in

outsourcing consulting to school systems and governmental agencies, commented, “Preparing your school system for successful outsourcing outcomes requires a thorough capabilities assessment, careful evaluation of vendors’ capabilities to match your community’s needs, but most importantly, an educated outsourcing leader.”

The Demand for Chief Resource Officers in Education

“We are noting a dramatic rise in the number of newly named Chief Resource Officers, as initial outsourcing failures force school systems to better manage contracts and oversee all outsourcing operations with increased proficiency,” stated Wilson. “School districts are quickly expanding into outsourcing and are beginning to explode with growth opportunities.” Wilson also leads the Outsourcing Career Center (<http://outsourcingcareercenter.com>) an executive search firm exclusively placing outsourcing leadership.

CRO Training and certification is one practical safeguard in successfully managing the complete Outsourcing process as skillful governance becomes crucial.

Outsourcing administrators are increasingly being tasked with identifying current and future processes ripe for outsourcing, organizing the Request for Proposal (RFP), selecting the outsourcing partner, auditing, negotiating, and managing the on-going business relationship. Most school systems simply do not have the expertise to manage outsourcing internally, and its difficult to find it still in other industries.

Although most major US school systems will be outsourcing many functions in 2006, most have not developed a suitable structure to manage outsourcing relationships.

“Outsourcing is tough, expensive and most school administration don’t have the internal skill base yet to manage outsourcing deals properly,” Wilson explains. “School systems need to train outsourcing professionals, find the right people, and execute informed processes and controls in place to make it work. Fewer and fewer districts are expressing satisfaction from their outsourcing deals mainly because they are not skilled at orchestrating their outsourcing team...yet”.

Forming an In-House Outsourcing Governance Team

What’s the next challenge? Set your sights on one critical in-house resource to leverage outsourcing initiatives most effectively—Strategic Sourcing Centers led by Chief Resource Officers (CRO).

This fresh breed of senior executive is now a growing trend, with more and more companies and school systems evolving central business units empowered as the focal point of all outsourcing strategy, implementation and relationship management. Outsourcing pros now own a seat at the school administrative and board tables.

Education Needs Certified Chief Resource Officers

So, how does one assure a successful outsourcing experience?

Seasoned school system CRO Judy Ranus of Cleveland, Ohio, insists “Outsourcing is an art, not a science. The CRO certification process I undertook as an assistant superintendent was invaluable. I

became accomplished in making smart choices and being resourceful at finding instant answers in outsourcing under high pressure.”

In fact, (Certified) Chief Resource Officers are one of the swiftest growing overall managerial occupations in all industries, according to Marsha Wise with the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

How to Assure CRO Successes

While few in the financial community will argue against the potential benefits of a properly structured outsourcing partnership, according to a recent outsourcing performance study by PriceWaterhouseCoopers, 25% of all outsourcing relationships fail.

The chances for success can be dramatically increased if the CRO focuses on three key elements:

Education and Outsourcing Specific Non-Curriculum Functions. It is essential that the non-core competency you are outsourcing is the core competency of your outsourcing partner. Choose a partner with an established track record in the process you plan to outsource. Watch out, in particular, for potential partners that try to be all things to all clients: few understand the intricacies of the education industry and multi-school systems particularly. For whom in education have they performed the same services in the past? Are these school systems still clients? If not, why not? What performance management system does the outsourcing firm use to ensure success?

Service Level Agreements. Many outsourcing partnerships fail due to unclear performance expectations. Others don't succeed because the client has insisted upon unrealistic or unattainable performance metrics, particularly as they apply to schools. Outsourcing at its best is a true partnership — two organizations leveraging their synergies to reach higher levels of performance. Service Level Agreements (SLAs) should be collaboratively defined and cover all items key to evaluating future performance.

Relationship Management and Open Communication. Lack of communication breeds mistrust, and communication breakdown is another reason outsourcing relationships fail. Outsourcing partners need to meet regularly to review performance against established service levels and to discuss future changes to processes. Additionally, executives and board members from both organizations need to be visibly supporting the project, if possible. Collaboratively reviewing performance and setting future goals leads to a feeling of ownership for everyone involved. Executive visibility sends the message that the outsourcing initiative is supported from the top down.

Summary

“As education executives such as Superintendents, Assistants and Service department directors transition into the role of Chief Resource Officers, they undoubtedly will be seriously investigating outsourcing as a strategic management tool,” states Wilson.

Careful attention to selecting a partner with the appropriate Business or Business Function Specialty collaboratively defining Service Level Agreements, and maintaining high touch business relationships, along with professional certification will increase their chances of establishing a successful outsourcing partnership.

What are School Systems Outsourcing?

GRAPH

10 TOP FUNCTIONS CONTRACTED BY LEADING OUTSOURCING-EMPOWERED SCHOOL SYSTEMS

Food Service	55%
Payroll	54%
Facility Maintenance	38%
Human Resources – Benefits/Recruitment	36%
Finance/Accounting	25%
Housekeeping	20%
Human Resources – Training/Staff Education	18%
Information Systems	12%
Grounds	11%
Transportation	10%

NOTE: NUMBERS DO NOT ADD UP TO 100% SINCE RESPONDENTS SELECTED MORE THAN ONE ANSWER, 129 SCHOOL SYSTEM ADMINISTRATORS RESPONDED

Established in 2002, The Chief Resource Officer Institute and The Outsourcing Management Institute are the elected outsourcing management (OM) credentialing organizations co-founded by the Society for Business Outsourcing Management and the International Association of Chief Resource Officers to promote the establishment of professional standards for the Outsourcing Management Vendor and Buyer industries. CROI and OMI's missions are to develop and administer high quality certification programs that are the recognized standard for the Outsourcing Management professions. CROI and OMI recognize Outsourcing professionals who, through professional experience and the successful completion of the respective exam, have met the requirements for mastering the OM body of knowledge.

The executive education programs are administered by Syracuse University
(<http://outsourcingmanagementinstitute.com>)

Scott Wilson and Doug Brown, co-authors of THE BLACK BOOK OF OUTSOURCING: HOW TO MANAGE THE CHANGES, CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES, (Wiley Publishers, 2005) welcome your comments and questions, and can be reached at 727.784.6689, email: swilson@chiefresourceofficer.com or dbrown@chiefresourceofficer.com

