

A LOCAL JOURNEY - Baltimore, Washington, Hockessin

Roger Ralph, Principal, Hockessin Athletic Club, Hockessin, Delaware
May 12, 2010

Travelling backwards, let me begin with yesterday at the Hockessin Athletic Club (HAC). The owners of one of Maryland's most successful and progressive health clubs, Tim and Liz Rhode, and their senior management team were our guests yesterday. They spent a good part of their day touring our 105,000 sq. ft. family and community oriented club; partnering up with their counterparts from our management team; and sharing- along with HAC staff and owners- their career stories and major lessons. What struck me about the major themes emanating from the 20, 30, 40, 50, and sixty something year olds in attendance was the wisdom contained in their articulation of "lessons from their experience". Distilling:



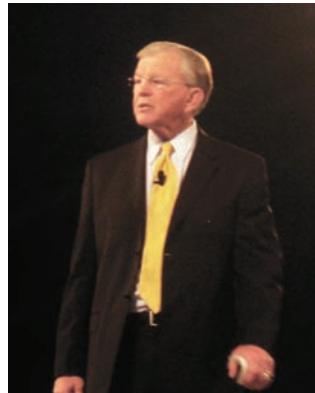
- Get out to learn – find best outsiders
- Provide clear expectations but encourage staff to figure out how to get there
- Acquire Mentors
- Ask before you tell
- Get real feedback (eg 360 degree eval) about how you come across and use it
- In hiring, focus on traits not skills
- Place folk in the right place where they can use their talents and give them the tools to maximize use of those talents
- Build teams taking into account each individual's natural talents/strengths
- Be sure you know in fact- not simply assumed- the employee's "starting point"
- Passion to grow people is a very powerful leadership component
- Make it fun
- Ask the right questions; Get beneath the surface; Apply and adapt knowledge gained to your unique circumstance

AND ON TO BALTIMORE exactly seven days earlier in the Baltimore Arena downtown (Now 1st Mariner Bank Arena) to the crab city stop of the Get Motivated 2010 national tour seated in the second row listening to veteran motivational speaking pros Joe Gibbs, General Powell, Rudy Giuliani; Zig Ziegler and newcomers Michael Phelps and Michael Oher.

In reviewing my Baltimore notes I was struck - but not surprised - by the similarities between the earned inspiring wisdom dispensed by Colin Powell et al and those pictured above. While no one in our group was getting their \$75,000 gig fee, hopefully we consciously help those who work with us and for us become better leaders/managers over time. Here are some related important highlights from my perspective:

JOE GIBBS

- *Set clear short term goals and hand out rewards when achieved. Coach Gibbs said he learned quickly with the Redskins that 300 pound \$600,000 a year line men would go through walls just to win a Bose Headset for achieving x and being recognized for such in front of their teammates*
- *Test people for what you really want them to do*
 - *Pick people who care*
 - *Study your people under adversity*
- *My priorities in order, God, family, occupation, influencing others*



MICHAEL PHELPS

- *I was in the pool 365 days a year for the five years leading up to Athens (There Michael won four gold medals)*
- *If I did not have Bob Bowman as a coach and mentor I would not be where I am today*

GENERAL COLIN POWELL

- *What is important is not where you came from but where you end up*
- *I want to go through life looking through the front windshield*
- *Leaders must have a sense of purpose*
- *Leaders set the stage. Your role as a leader is to put followers in a position to succeed*
- *The essence of all leadership is trust- it is the lubricant that keeps us going forward*
- *Real leaders must solve problems*



I have tremendous respect for Secretary Powell and this story for me says it all about his understanding of leadership, respect of others, and sincere customer service: He tells the story of how- much to the horror of the secret service- he consciously left his ornate Secretary of State's office in Washington to visit with the parking attendants in the Department's over crowded underground garage. There the cars are stacked three deep. After finding out where everyone was from and how they were doing, Secretary Powell said to the group, "I have a question. How do you decide who is in the 3 slot (the worst); who is in the second; and whose car gets a number one spot?" After some hemming and hawing, one of parking attendants said: "Mr. Secretary, here's how it really goes. The guy who drives in here staring straight ahead without a word gets a 3 spot. The person who rolls down their window and waves gets the 2. The person who rolls down the window, waves, says hello, and engages.....#1." If you already are a respected leader/manager, the odds are you know this instinctively and act accordingly.

RUDY GIULIANI

- Make decisions knowing the facts. The major reason we were able to cut crime in New York City dramatically in the mid-nineties was because we used technology to get accurate information.
(for more details re this go to www.RogerRalph.com/ downloads and “Leadership Myths & Characteristics of Effective Leaders/Managers
- One of the reasons New York City was able to respond as well and as effectively as we did to the September 11th, 2001 attack is that we had in place emergency systems, plans, and procedures for a range of crisis’s. While none directly related to the attack on the World Trade Center by plane, elements of many helped us deal far more effectively with an unimaginable event”.
 - Read regularly
 - Learn to write
 - Even in a crisis humor is important
- Leaders listen to other’s points of view carefully even if they disagree



TAMARA LOWE

Tamara is the wife of Peter Lowe whose company created and sponsors these all day Motivational/financial investing seminars that routinely attract 10,000 to 20,000 folk in major city arenas. A former down and out drug user, she has written a popular successful book “Get Motivated” that details her conclusions of how to understand which “motivators” to use with different personality types, eg “Connectors”; “Drivers”; “Stabilizers”.

- Her major message is that if you do not understand why the same approach will move some people and not others and if you do not appreciate what language/what tools/what approach works best for distinct personality types you are limiting your effectiveness as a manager.

***WASHINGTON, D.C. IHRSA LEGISLATIVE SUMMIT,
May 5 and May 6, 2010***

The International Health, Racquet and Sportsclub Association (IHRSA) is **the** Association for the \$19 billion dollar health club industry world wide. Its mission is to grow, protect and promote the health and fitness club industry and to provide its members with benefits that will help them be more successful. Today IHRSA has more than 9000 Member Health Clubs in 74 countries around the world including, 5700 in all 50 U.S. states. Both HAC and MAC are IHRSA members and members of our club are welcome at virtually all IHRSA member clubs around the world via a guest fee.

The purpose of this year's Washington Summit was to meet directly with Congressman and Senators and or their staff seeking support for two bills which IHRSA has sponsored:

- The Workforce Health Improvement Act (WHIP- S. 913/H.R. 2106, and
- The Personal Health Investment Today Act (PHIT - H.R. 2105).

A modest bill, PHIT would allow Americans to use up to \$1,000 annually from tax favored accounts (eg FSA's/MSA's) to make expenditures related to organized individual and team sports, fitness and exercise and other physical activities. The PHIT Act did not make it into the Health Care Reform Legislation.

Neither did the more substantive and far reaching WHIP Act. In brief, WHIP legislation would eliminate the current tax inequity whereby employees who receive the benefit of on-site exercise facilities do not pay taxes on this benefit. However, if they subsidize an employee's membership at an offsite health club the amount of this subsidy is viewed by the IRS as taxable income. This from a rationale of way of thinking makes no sense if a public policy objective is to get more Americans more active because this has a positive impact on one's health. IHRSA staff believe that the lack of success to date in getting these bills approved will be changed via inclusion in a new Obesity bill encouraged by the First Lady and designed to deal with these kind of statistical nightmares (and opportunities) directly related to the nation's ever increasing health care costs:

1. 64% of American adults and 34% of American children suffer from overweight or Obesity
2. The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) year 2000 estimate was that \$77 billion in healthcare costs were directly related to inactivity
3. Companies who invest in health promotion programs reap significant financial benefits- \$5.64 return for every dollar spent
4. CDC study reports that those involved and averaged at least two health club visits a week over two years incurred at least \$1,252 less in health care costs in year two than did those who visited on average once a week
5. Exercise is the cheapest form of medicine. “Maintaining an active lifestyle even without accompanying weight loss, produces health benefits. One study suggests that expending 100 extra calories per day-roughly the equivalent of walking an extra mile or taking 2,000 steps, could prevent weight gain in most of the population

The information in the above five items was taken from IHRSA materials. It is provided here in support of our first hand knowledge as health club workers that what we do is extremely good for folk of any age in terms of health and mood. I'd encourage you to discover and use information which supports what you yourself see and have an interest in.

I am not especially optimistic about the ability of our politicians at the national level to translate the simplistic but evidenced based generality that “EXERCISE IS THE LEAST EXPENSIVE FORM OF MEDICINE” into sensible public policy. However, in addition to continuing to help make this happen, we in all of the various aspects of the health club business have the responsibility, challenge and wonderful opportunity to use our talents, at the very least, to find ways in our communities to *help children who need help the most be more active and knowledgeable in regard to their own health.*

What can YOU do?

