

"Challenges are what make life interesting; overcoming them is what makes life meaningful."

»Joshua J. Marine

Most of Us Are Walk-Ons

I have a great fondness for “rags to riches” stories. In certain speeches, I enjoy pointing out to folks that one of the greatest things about this country is that we are not a caste system.

Where you start does not determine where you finish.

Like many, I became aware of Clemson Football Coach Dabo Swinney’s personal history before last year’s national championship game.

Suffice it to say, his bio is inspirational on several levels and a testament to how hard work and faith can overcome most obstacles placed in your way.

I didn’t have a strong rooting interest one way or another in this year’s championship game.

Afterwards, however, I found myself smiling that Swinney’s already inspirational story had such a climactic chapter added to it.

Hidden in Plain Sight?

While on our way home from our son’s basketball game recently, we decided to pull into a national chain restaurant for dinner.

A young lady at the entrance told us it may be a long wait, but if there was an open table in the bar area, we could grab it.

That section of the restaurant actually seats more than the official “dining area”, so we headed over. Plus, you can never spend too much time in a “bar” with your kids.

(I read that in a parenting book.)

As luck would have it, there was an open table near the entrance to that section. We sat down, and with no menus on the table, began chatting and checking out the games on TV.

Five minutes went by, then 10, then 15. (No, really.)

I watched as no less than five wait staff walked by us multiple times without making eye contact.

(I assume Matthew McConaughey is prepping to play the role now.)

One of Swinney's postgame comments in particular struck a nerve with me. It got me thinking of comments I've made about my experiences meeting and getting to know thousands of bankers over the past couple of decades.

Swinney said that their final scoring play with one second left on the clock was a representation of their program.

He stated, "You've got the five-star quarterback throwing the game-winning touchdown to the walk-on wideout."

The message was that the Clemson team was a mix of young men who arrived with disparate opportunities and options.

They had players who the experts (scouts) expected to succeed and others who few predicted would ever become champions.

I've frequently shared with groups that one of the more motivating things about working in the banking industry has been the personal success stories I've witnessed.

I long ago lost count of how many impressively successful bankers I have met who have come from modest backgrounds- either never attended college or graduated from schools with names few would recognize.

They were walk-ons into the industry and through hard work and perseverance became champions.

I know other industries have similar

An older guy wearing a logoed shirt was clearly a supervisor. He ignored us as he walked by several times, as well.

When we had reached our "Grab your coats" moment, I decided to call over to a waiter standing close by.

I called, "James, can I ask you something?"

I could see he was trying to remember me. After all, I had used his name. My wife chimed in, "How do you know him?"

I whispered, "Nametag."

I explained that I imagined we were not his table as he had walked by us several times, but I wondered if he could maybe point out to me who our server was or whether they quit within the last hour.

He walked over to a group of servers near the register and lots of shrugs and confusion ensued.

A young lady who had walked by our table several times came over and apologized, saying our table hadn't been assigned on their system. So... every single server walked by us...literally...as if we were not there.

And hey, I thought the cloak of invisibility was only found in a Harry Potter book!

To her credit, she was very nice and did a great job from that point on. But no one in the place was customer-focused enough to comprehend that customers right in front of them were being ignored.

Some would blame the system. I would blame the supervisor.

stories.

However, few industries are as inaccurately stereotyped to the degree banking is.

Strive to serve your customers beyond their expectations, and continue to grow your business this week.

Your own championship run continues.

Our teams listen to our words, but they follow our examples. If he was oblivious, it was hard to blame a team for being equally so.

If your team mirrors your own personal practices and gestures today, will that be a good or bad thing for the customers in your presence?

"When something bad happens you have three choices. You can either let it define you, let it destroy you, or you can let it strengthen you."

»Dr. Seuss



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