
**"We generate fears while we sit. We overcome them by action."
*Dr. Henry Link***

The Coaching Tree



My wife and I like certain genres of TV shows that drive each other crazy.

Whenever she turns on any kind of "reality TV", I risk pulling a hamstring bolting from the room.

On the other hand, she loathes any show in which people sit around talking about sports.

(I suppose that if "Teen Mom" or Dr. Phil talked sports, we might agree on a program.)

One TV talker I tend to agree with more often than not is Jason Whitlock.

"Speak For Yourself" is one of the few shows I bother to record to watch (well, after my wife falls asleep).

On a recent show, Whitlock and his cohosts were debating the merits of one of the recent NFL coaching hires.

He is absolutely convinced the hiring of that inexperienced coach was a mistake.

To Stand Out, You Do You



Chick-fil-A has a restaurant within Mercedes Benz Stadium in Atlanta where this year's Super Bowl will be played.

Like all of their locations, that one will be closed on Super Bowl Sunday.

An acquaintance remarked to me that it is a marketing debacle to have a "Sorry, We're Closed" sign up that day.

I suggested the opposite might be true... and I doubt that they are "sorry" about it.

From a pure business standpoint, you may or may not agree with the strategy of closing restaurants on one of the busiest retail days each week.

However, it makes a clear statement that they are not part of a homogenous pack.

The fact that Chick-fil-A is arguably the most successful restaurant chain of the past decade suggests their policy is not hampering them.

I felt that coach's record while coaching college was nothing to write home about and definitely not strong enough to warrant getting an NFL gig.

Whitlock mentioned that but then made a suggestion that had me nodding my head and thinking his point was relevant to the business world.

When one cohost suggested that head coach would be great working with a specific player, Whitlock forcefully argued that was not what a successful head coach does.

He argued that great NFL head coaches coach their assistant coaches.

He suggested the head coach establishes culture, sets strategies, and enforces standards.

The assistant coaches implement their leaders' strategies and manage the personnel day-to-day.

Listening to his argument, I couldn't help think of the innumerable times I've spoken to banker groups about the differences between being a productive employee and a successful manager.

The success (or failure) of a manager is simply the cumulative successes (or failures) of his or her team.

Even if well intentioned, managers who attempt to do everything themselves tend to end up with less-engaged, less-productive teams.

Their service satisfaction scores are usually the industry's best and their customers are incredibly loyal.

One of the greatest challenges of any business is differentiating itself in some way in customers' minds.

Banks have faced this challenge as much as any businesses through the years.

Going back a few decades, the greatest differentiator of any bank was the number of branches it operated in a market.

In many folks' minds, a bank was a bank was a bank. Differentiation was the most accessible branch.

That is not as true today. The ability of banks to expand into markets with ubiquitous mobile technology and fewer physical branches makes the differentiation challenge tougher than ever.

Lack of differentiation leads to lack of customer preference, lack of loyalty, and shrinking margins.

I often smile and nod when bankers tell me that their differentiation is their people.

Yes, I believe that is true.

I also know that is what everyone says. Far fewer can succinctly explain what that means.

If we cannot point to clear traits, practices, or policies that make our companies distinct, how could we expect customers to?

Being the hardest worker and most passionate person in the building are useful leadership traits.

They set a powerful example.

However, great leaders know that coaching their direct reports – and insisting they do the same for theirs - is how winning cultures are built.

Whom will you coach today?

Just as important - how receptive to coaching will you allow yourself to be?

What philosophies define your culture?
What makes you...you?

Most industries have a certain amount of copycat behavior in them. That's the nature of the beast in crowded, highly-competitive businesses.

Your distinguishing traits may be subtle...or bold. Whatever they are, never stop reinforcing them to your teams and customers.

Be the best and most unique "you" possible.

Then, you do you.

"I don't count my total sit-ups; I only start counting when it starts hurting because they're the only ones that count."

Muhammad Ali



Dave Martin, author of The In-Store Advantage, has become one of the most prolific writers in the banking industry. His keynote presentations, seminars, and podcasts have an authenticity and humor that brings teams of all sizes and seniority levels together.

For more info about having Dave or an FSI Consultant speak to your group, email Tina Coleman, tcoleman@SupermarketBank.com or call 800-992-4978.