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"Fairy tales are more than true: not because they tell us that dragons exist, but because they tell us dragons can be beaten."

» Neil Gaiman



On-Point Leadership

A scene that was captured on video by a basketball fan a few weeks ago quickly became my favorite sports story of the year.

A University of Alabama fan shot a brief video of University of Houston starting point guard, Jamal Shead. In it, Shead showed the kind of leadership that millions would soon praise.

This particular footage, however, was not from the actual game. It was taken a few minutes after the final buzzer.

The Houston Cougars and Alabama Crimson Tide were both highly ranked teams. This was an intense game played on Alabama's homecourt.

In the final moments of a one-point game, an Alabama player goaltended a ball shot by Houston. But...the referees missed the call.

The basket should have counted, and Houston should have won by a point.

Full disclosure: I live in Houston. My son attended UH.

I'm not unbiased. (But I'm right.)



Drumming Up Loyalty

Whenever I can weave a Van Halen reference into management advice, it's a good day. I had such a day recently.

Over the past few weeks, several bank leaders shared their frustration as they've had to temporarily close some branches due to a lack of personnel.

Many of the branches they could open ran with the skinniest of skeleton crews.

Folks can debate whether generational attitudes, societal influences, economic conditions, or a rolling pandemic are the greatest drivers of the heightened workforce challenges many feel.

But leaders are being reminded in real time of the value of folks who literally keep their doors open each day.

Sure, competent leaders know those folks' value. In challenging times, however, you see and feel that value even more acutely.

One president shared his concerns that his most reliable people would burn out.

In the aftermath, the Houston coaches argued furiously, but the refs ducked their heads and escaped the gym.

There was no review.

On the way to the locker room, a UH assistant coach (the head coach's son, no less) dumped a garbage can, and a senior player on the team threw chairs.

Sadly, that kind of behavior doesn't really raise eyebrows anymore.

What Jamal Shead then did, however, did raise eyebrows.

Without calling attention to himself, he stopped to pick up the garbage can and collect the trash his own coach had strewn.

He could have easily walked by. He didn't make that mess.

Someone else would get it.

And, besides, they had just been robbed of a win.

Yet the young man cleaned up the mess his coach and teammate left in their wake.

The fact that the footage of him doing so was soon seen and shared by millions says plenty.

Thousands of folks on social media claimed that they had a new favorite player in Shead.

I was reminded that in a world that seems less respectful and courteous by the day, manners and common decency stand out more than ever.

Sometimes a leader's most impactful messages are not spoken from a podium or recorded in email or official documents.

Their personal actions - even small ones - show who they are and what they stand for.

What will your actions show today?

He said, "We have so many folks doing their jobs and someone else's. We have a core group of folks moving heaven and earth not to let our customers down."

During our chat about keeping these folks from burning out, an old Van Halen story came to mind.

A good friend of mine worked for a concert touring company. Before a show in Dallas years back, he interacted with the roadie crew who set up the drum riser for Alex Van Halen.

Alex had popped in that afternoon without warning to thank them for what they did.

No cameras. No hype.

Rock stars didn't just show up to thank roadies for doing their jobs.

But Alex did.

They joked that they had to ask him what he was thanking them for. No one had ever done that.

They were "just doing their jobs." But one of the guys on the album cover was standing there, asking for and then thanking them by name.

My friend said that crews do get bonuses on occasion and few folks remember them past the next payday or ever talk about them.

The Alex Van Halen story, however, was told in the trenches for years.

And each of those guys – and the people they shared that story with – wanted to work with Van Halen whenever they could.

No, most leaders are not rock stars.

But taking the time and effort to personally thank team members tends to ring in their ears long afterward.

Who do you rely on day in and day out to keep the show going?

Try to personally thank them today.

"Smart people learn from everything and everyone, average people from their experiences, stupid people already have all the answers." » Socrates



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.

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