

"A good leader is someone who takes a little more than his share of the blame and a little less than his share of the credit."

»John Maxwell

Moving Heaven and Earth



On a recent visit to an area we once lived, my wife and I were able to reconnect with a very good friend we had not seen in 17 years.

Not long after we moved, he received a promotion and was the second ranking person in a massive region.

We were not surprised to learn just before we went to dinner that he had recently received an even bigger promotion.

He is one of the most humble "rising stars" I've ever encountered and is moving states to be the senior person of a large territory.

We laughed about his rookie days almost twenty years ago and how fast time flies.

One of the observations he shared during our dinner resonated in particular with me.

The Elite Also Know Defeat



It's not often that I'll hit the rewind button on the DVR to rewatch a television commercial.

The fast forward button gets far more use in my house.

But a recent commercial from Gatorade had me sitting up and leaning forward. The message of the spot is something that has been a favorite soapbox topic of mine in recent years.

Failures and setbacks are not necessarily the enemies of success. They are often part of the process.

The commercial opens with Michael Jordan asking, "You want to know the secret to victory? Fail to make the varsity team. They then cut to JJ Watt who says, "Start your career as a walk-on."

Later, Peyton Manning says, "Go 3 and 13 your rookie season," and Eli Manning adds, "Lead the league in interceptions."

When I asked how his transition was going, he told me that he was inundated with people in his new market wanting to meet with him and “fill him in.”

He smiled and told us, “I try to do my best to show them that I am listening and obviously respect their opinions. But I also know that one of the most beneficial things I have now is a fresh set of eyes to evaluate everything. I haven’t yet formed biases.”

He continued, “If you are not careful, it is the most aggressive and political people who shape the way you will look at situations. They may be right. However, sometimes the people most aggressively telling you who or what to look out for are actually the people you need to look out for the most.”

Laughing at that comment, I asked him what he thought was going to be the hardest part of the job.

He said, “Time. One of the hardest things about having larger and larger groups to lead is giving people the time they need. Everyone wants a piece of your time. I understand. It’s hard, but it’s important that people see that you know who they are and appreciate all of the things they do, even if you cannot tell them that personally every day.”

Throughout dinner, I clearly saw that our friend’s focus was on being open and fair with his people and making them feel inspired to do what they do.

He has difficult business decisions to make, but he knows that having inspired

Karl-Anthony Towns says, “Take a perfect team and blow a perfect season.”

Serena Williams says, “Be on the wrong side of the biggest upset in your sport.”

The commercial then cuts to Matt Ryan of the Atlanta Falcons walking off the field saying, “Defeat.”

The empathy I felt for Ryan caught me off guard. In all of the celebrating of Tom Brady leading the greatest comeback in Super Bowl history, I mostly forgot that someone was on the other side of it.

I found myself smiling and kidding that I think I had written the script for that commercial in an American Banker column a few months ago entitled: [“Want to Succeed in Banking? Try Failing First.”](#)

No, repeated failure is not a guarantee of future success in all scenarios. I’m pretty sure I can head out to the backyard and fail in my first 100 attempts to dunk a basketball.

My odds of success will be no higher on attempt 101.

What I like most about that commercial is that it highlights that even incredibly gifted and successful people do not always have things work out for them.

It tells aspiring young athletes that being defeated does not disqualify you from ever becoming elite in your field. If anything, defeats and setbacks are the price most pay to become truly elite.

A sports drink company uses famous athletes to make that point. However, that

and engaged teams are key to making those business decisions work.

He succeeds because they do.

Whether you lead a team of one, one thousand, or more, always remember that people will move heaven and earth for honest leaders who earn their trust and respect.

Aim to be that kind of leader.

message is a rather universal one for our careers, as well.

Hard work and perseverance are not guarantors of rapid success. But they are usually elemental to our long-term success.

What past setbacks will you and your teams strive to overcome this week?

**"The problem is not that there are problems.
The problem is expecting otherwise and thinking that having
problems is a problem." »Theodore Rubin**



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