



May 22, 2009

Watco Team,

This week in continuing to focus on Coach Wooden's "Pyramid of Success" I'll introduce Building Block #7- Alertness. For review, the previous Building Blocks were:

- #1 - Industriousness and Planning
- #2 - Enthusiasm
- #3 - Friendship
- #4 - Cooperation
- #5 - Loyalty
- #6 - Self-control

We have talked many times in these messages about continuous improvement. Personal improvement first begins with a personal commitment to accept the fact we all have faults. Second, we must commit to improving on our faults and third, we must have an attitude to seek truth regardless of the stark reality of our weakness. Fourth, we must have fortitude to persist in our effort knowing that we are human and will falter at times in our pursuit of self-improvement. Finally, we must be active in observing and learning how to improve.

As we've talked in the past, learning is a process that begins with awareness. It involves gaining knowledge, grasping an understanding of the nature of what we are learning and then to advance this understanding into action that produces a result. Applying this knowledge in a practical manner to produce an evident result is the second highest level of intellectual development. The highest form of mental development occurs when we can transfer this knowledge to other seemingly unrelated applications.

Coach Wooden describes alertness as constant observation, open mindedness, learning and improvement. Alertness is awareness of what actions and decisions we make and what is going on around us. The contrast to alertness is passiveness. When we are passive it is difficult to learn and improve as alertness and awareness is the very first and maybe most difficult step in the process of improvement and learning. Alertness can be the most difficult because it begins with making a commitment to change how we interact within our own environment.

Coach Wooden reflects on the eagerness and awareness of one of his players who eventually became an outstanding coach. Denny Crum, according to Coach Wooden, was a good player at UCLA but wasn't great. But what Coach remembered most about Crum was his desire to understand the reasons behind every direction. He was alert to and curious about everything going on around him. As a result of his constant learning, Coach Crum went on to great success at Louisville and was inducted into the Basketball Hall of Fame.

When we narrow our focus we create tunnel vision. Tunnel vision inhibits learning as we remain settled in our present knowledge and understand which limits our ability to improve. As leaders, or for that matter, anyone who wants to improve, we must be alert and actively participate in what happens around us. We must open our intellect to greater challenges which will expand our mental capacities and that of those around us. Making ourselves and others better is a true characteristic of outstanding leadership.

Thanks you to all of you who remain curious about your surroundings and who constantly strive to challenge yourself and those around you. Your dedication to this purpose is what has made Watco great and will make us even better in the future.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "D Crum". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a horizontal line above the first few letters.