



March 1, 2009

This week in continuing to focus on Coach Wooden's "Pyramid of Success" I'll introduce Building Block #2 – Enthusiasm. For review, Building Block #1 was Industriousness and Planning.

Enthusiasm is the fuel of success. When we enjoy what we do, we'll do it better and for as long as it takes to achieve our best. Enthusiasm is really less about doing what you like and more about the mentality and attitude you cultivate around any circumstance. When Coach Wooden arrived at UCLA, he realized that the players he had were of a lower caliber than those he had in Indiana and the facilities were dismal. It's hard to believe, but for a period of time Coach Wooden sunk into self pity because he allowed circumstances over which he had no control to influence his attitude. As we would expect, his career was far from successful during this time of emotional doldrums. One day Coach Wooden decided to change his mentality. Rather than use his circumstances as an excuse, Coach Wooden decided to accept what he could not control as a challenge and to make the most of what he had. He also noticed that once his attitude changed, those around him became more enthusiastic. Not long after this change and by no surprise, UCLA won its first national championship in that old gymnasium.

Regardless of our situation, leaders owe it to their People to be enthusiastic. An enthusiastic leader will keep those around them energized and focused on becoming their best.

Kareem Abdul-Jabbar is a prime example of the influence of enthusiasm. Late in his career as a professional basketball player Kareem was considering retirement. Then a young energetic player named Magic Johnson joined the team. Magic played with such enthusiasm that others around him gained a new sense of purpose and energy. As we know, Kareem went on to become a Hall of Fame player setting many records and winning several championships with the Los Angeles Lakers along with Magic Johnson, James Worthy and Michael Cooper. Kareem readily credits Magic Johnson for reigniting his career and without this renewed energy, doubts that he would have ever achieved his eventual level of success in his career.

As leaders we must always be mindful that our enthusiasm sets the tone for others. If we expect those in our responsibility to become their best, we must always be a source of energy for them in spite of the circumstances we encounter. Remember that the only person who can change your attitude is you. Successful leaders must accept responsibility for tasks that are least enjoyable with as much enthusiasm as for tasks that are more enjoyable. When we instill confidence and energy in our People, we become the fuel for team success. In the end, what we get from our People is no more than what we give as a leader.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "J. D. ...".