



August 21, 2009

This week in continuing to focus on Coach Wooden's "Pyramid of Success" I'll introduce Building Block #11 – Speed. For review, the previous Building Blocks were:

- #1 - Industriousness and Planning
- #2 - Enthusiasm
- #3 – Friendship
- #4 – Cooperation
- #5 - Loyalty
- #6 – Self-control
- #7 – Alertness
- #8 – Initiative
- #9 – Intentness
- #10 – Condition

According to Coach Wooden, a skillful person possesses the knowledge and ability to *quickly* execute the fundamentals of a particular task. Skill is the ability to perform at a high level of competency under a time constraint and intense pressure. It is much like a NASCAR driver who must make instant decisions while traveling at two hundred miles per hour or a heart surgeon racing to save a heart attack victim. In each case the driver or surgeon must not only have expert knowledge, but must have the physical and mental capacity to apply the knowledge, almost as if it is a natural response to the situation as it rapidly unfolds.

Developing the proficiency to execute the fundamentals of a craft and learning to do it quickly are key traits to high performers. Having the knowledge alone absent the ability to apply it under pressure will only get you so far.

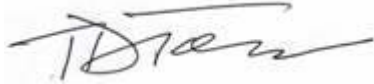
Reaching this level of competence is only achieved by those who dedicate themselves to constant learning and the practice of applying their knowledge. It is hard work for which there is no substitute. Recently I watched a show talking about the traits of high performing athletes. One interesting conclusion was that expertise in sports, such as Tiger Woods in golf, is developed when the athlete has performed the important tasks in the sport at least 10,000 times. It is at that time that the athlete is able to perform at a very high level as a nature reaction and without much thought.

The corollary to this story is that for us to achieve any measure of success requires that we dedicate ourselves to gaining knowledge and refining the application of these skills through continuous practice.

This is also true when it comes to our business. We must be constantly vigilant as to the level and quality of the service we provide to our internal or external customers and the safety and efficiency with which we execute. Being of this mind on one day, and forgetful of it the next, does little to develop the concentrated focus and attention to detail to constantly push us to new and higher levels of performance.

Each moment of each day we must strive to understand where we can improve and develop the intensity to implement that improvement the next and every time thereafter. If we work with this mentality we can't help but to improve our skills to become experts in applying the Watco Foundation Principles.

Thank you for all you do to serve our Customers, People, Communities and Company in a safe and efficient manner.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "T. D. ...", located in the lower-left quadrant of the page.