

Providing insight and encouragement to educational leaders

SPRING 2014

# THE ENCOURAGING LEADER



In the last issue of THE ENCOURAGING LEADER, we highlighted some of the best books to help you become a better leader. This issue's theme centers around quotes. We asked a number of leaders to write about their favorite quote and what it means to them.

My favorite quote is...

Just as I am obsessed with reading books, I love quotes. The first motivational quote that I ever learned was **"Obstacles are what you see when you take your eyes off the goal"**. When I was an aspiring junior high basketball player in Michigan, the state's Mr. Basketball was a player out of Saginaw by the name of Mark Macon. He went on to have a great career at Temple University. I saw him featured on a CBS special. In the segment, he mentioned that quote. I wrote it out on a piece of paper and taped it to the wall next to my bed. Every morning when I'd wake up, that was the first thing that I saw.

That quote still resonates with me. Through the years, I have worked with many athletes and that quote is still a go-to for me. The Kentucky Derby was held last week. Every time I think of horse racing, I am reminded of this quote. Horses have blinders on that keep them from seeing what is beside them. All they do is look straight ahead. They focus on where they need to go. We'd do well to remember this concept. Why get caught up in drama, distractions, detours or disillusionment? Set your eyes on the prize and focus on the goal.

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## Quotation Issue



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I first heard this phrase when Rick Pitino wrote a book that had this as the title. It is one of the best quotes I have heard. In fact, I have borrowed it as the primary motto for my basketball program over the years. It goes on all of our letterhead, locker room posters and motivational pieces. In general, every person has the choice of how they act and behave. Oftentimes, people say that they had no choice to explain why they do something. You always have a choice. The author and speaker, Charles Swindoll, is the person credited with saying that **"life is 10% what happens to you and 90% how you react to the things that happen to you"**. Success may not be as quick as you would like but doing things right and making the right choices and decisions will almost always lead to success. Of course, the definition of success is not always the same for each person so it is important to define what success is to you. Your actions and behaviors are your choices. If you choose to do things that have a positive effect on

your future then you'll be closer to being successful. Unfortunately, the converse to this statement is also true. Failure is a choice, as well. One of my coaching mentors, Denny Lehnus, used to say all the time **"what you do is what you believe; everything else is just talk"**. When I was leaving Kent State University after serving as Gary Waters' graduate assistant for two years, Coach Lehnus hired me as one of his assistants at Anderson University. I found out first-hand that he knew what he was talking about when it came to taking what you believe and what your goals are and turning them into good choices. A few years before I was hired by Coach Lehnus, he had lost a little more than 200 pounds in a year. At one time, he weighed more than 400 pounds. He continues to maintain his new health to this day. Remarkably, even though he lost the weight in a year, the success was and still remains a continual day by day process. As Robert Collier once said, **"Success is the sum of small efforts repeated day in and day out."**

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# "Every goal needs a plan or else it's just a wish"

While watching ESPN's 30 for 30 entitled "Broke", I heard Herm Edwards say "Every goal needs to have a plan or else it's just a wish." The context was regarding athletes and the way they handle money, but I thought it was a perfect quote for more than just money. As someone that works with college students on a regular basis, I see this problem all the time. People want things but they don't always know how to get those things. Even worse are the people that don't really want to work for those things that they say they want. I've often said that hope is not a strategy. Sure we want to have hope but that can't be all. It's very similar to wishing. Wishing is also not a very good strategy. The Bible even has a verse that says 'Faith without works is dead'. The late singer, Rich Mullins, wrote similar lyrics when he said "**Faith without works is like a screen door on a submarine**". You can't just want or wish for something to happen, you need to do something about this. You need to work up a plan to achieve your goal. Author John Ortberg has stated that "**If you want to walk on water than you've got to get out of the boat**". This is similar to what I heard Bobby Knight say once "**Every one has the will to win but not everyone has the will to work to win**". Yes, having faith or dreams is a start, but action has to go into these goals in order to have a better chance to be successful. What are your goals? It's important to define them. But go further, what is your plan to achieve them? Former NFL quarterback, Todd Blackledge, once said "**Work will win when wishing won't**". Just remember that it wasn't raining when Noah built the ark.



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John Maxwell, the leadership guru, authored the simple yet profound truth when he said 'everything rises and falls on leadership.' I was reminded of this leadership principle recently when I drove past a local college which has endured economic hardship and dwindling enrollment. Sadly the demolition crews were on hand that day to eliminate two vacant dorms deemed safety hazards.

The local newspaper claimed the city gave the college more than 10 extensions to fix the problems of the two dorms. Additionally, city officials received complaints from neighbors about the structures drawing in rodents and vermin. The buildings have been vacant since about 2004 which was the same year the college lost its accreditation.

I share this story because in the various leadership positions I've held, I have had the opportunity to be a part of ground breaking and ribbon cutting ceremonies. However, I have never been on-hand to see a dream demolished. While I'm unaware of all the challenges which led this particular institution to eliminate two multi-million dollar buildings and losing their accreditation, I do believe the

**"EVERYTHING  
RISES & FALLS  
ON LEADERSHIP."**

leadership principle held true, 'everything rises and falls on leadership.'

As a former Athletic Director I attempted to live by Maxwell's quote, 'everything rises and falls on leadership', however it's a double edge sword. While I enjoyed receiving accolades when our teams captured national championships, I also had to accept the mantle of leadership when student athletes in our athletic department were being verbally abused by coaches I hired. This happened on my watch and I let those kids down. Yes we dismissed the coach but I can't take away the student-athletes' experience which failed to meet our mission.

As stewards of the positions we have been entrusted, we must lead with the end in mind, to successfully hand off programs or organizations to future successors. However, how we lead today will determine if our successors will soar or if demolition crews will be called because no matter what 'everything rises and falls on leadership'.

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When I was quite young, I had a conversation with my grandmother, as I often did. I had grown to have great love and respect for this woman who was the matriarch of our extended family. She had lost her husband a month after I was born, and she was left to raise 7 children of her own, my father being the oldest of the children. She had taught me the power of prayer and value of hard work. On this particular occasion, I was complaining about things in my day: things like school work, the modest means of my family while my friends seemed to have more, that I wasn't as good in sports as someone else, and that we lived in the country while all my friends lived in the city.

In my view, my Grandmother carried the wisdom of the ages and a faith that comes from knowing. She always spoke plainly to me, and that seemed fine, but it also provided a clarity that I might not have received had the message been cloaked in empathy, sympathy, and emotion. After I had concluded my rant of complaining, she simply said to me "Danny, you should figure out how to bloom where you are planted." I wasn't expecting such a comment, it seemed odd at first, and then it caused my young mind to think upon it for a fashion.

Over the years, as I have grown, had my own children, worked with others, and now lead organizations, I remember her words whenever I head down the path of wishing that things were different or somehow better. The memory of her, and her words, pull me from a downward spiral of pity or complaint. Instead, I try to figure out how to make the most of my current situation, and embrace the things about which I can do something now. When things change in the future, as they often do, I will embrace those opportunities then; but for now, I do what I can now, and do so faithfully and with joy. The act of 'blooming' where you are is, in itself, a type of leadership, showing others that there is no perfection here on earth, only moments of responding in honorable ways, ways that demonstrate gratitude for what you have been given, and opportunities to prove you have what it takes to move forward, regardless of the environment within which you find yourself.

My grandmother was not a leader of a major corporation, nor famous, but for her grandson, she taught me much about life, living, self-governance, and leading in action.

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This quote is often attributed to Teddy Roosevelt. However, authority of this quote is disputed as similar quotes found in many publications attributing different authors.

This quote is also found in biography of "James Watt" by Andrew Carnegie, according to this book this quote was written by Watt in a letter to his friend in March 1769.

(From James Watt Biography): *The man who never makes mistakes never makes anything. The only point the wise man guards is not to make the same mistake twice; the first time never counts with the successful man. He both forgives and forgets that. One difference between the wise man and the foolish one.*

I have been prodded by this quote many times during leadership endeavors. It demands action, as do most of the situations I have found myself evaluating. While some are paralyzed by analysis, leaders must lead and the result of leadership must be action without fear of making a mistake.

I was raised in such a way by my dad that when he was working, I was to be working....action! He also made mention of a quote I heard often as a kid, "do something...even if it is wrong!" I think it was Isaac Newton who made the statement, "*An object at rest stays at rest and an object in motion stays in motion with the same*

*speed and in the same direction unless acted upon by an unbalanced force.*" Those who do not move do not achieve.

Professionally, as leaders, we are called to action. Culturally, I prefer to establish the philosophy of making bold decisions quickly, and if wrong, making another bold decision to make it right. This sets the tone for those you lead that we will be an organization defined by action, bolstered by analysis and evaluation, but not paralyzed by them. As a former baseball coach, I often use baseball

examples to highlight a leadership point. In this case, think of the pitcher who throws lots of strikes and forces the batter into action; the defense behind the pitcher is more attentive and the action brings out their best as they function

for their team as they were intended. Sure, the risk is that the pitcher will get rocked (risk is part of any decision), but we will not be paralyzed watching the pitcher walk every batter. If the pitcher does not throw strikes and create action, the leadership of the team will make a quick decision to change.

Leaders must be all about action!

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The only man who never makes a mistake is the man who never does anything.

(Theodore Roosevelt)

## “The A team hires the A team; The B team hires the C team”

Recruiting members of your team is a vital dimension of the job of every leader. My basic rule of thumb is to hire people who are better than me. (It has been suggested to me that I need to have a higher hurdle, but it's a start.) Everything that happens during my time in a position is attributed to me, so I prefer having the best people to work with as it maximizes the possibility for success. To put it differently, their individual success, far from being a threat, is a benefit in two ways. First, we can accomplish our goals. Second, I get the credit for attracting good people.

One feature of academia that is confusing to the rest of the world is the existence of tenure for faculty. A justification for tenure is that it provides good incentives to faculty members to recruit the best possible colleagues, as they don't have to worry about a strong new hire displacing them. For baseball fans, this is perhaps best illustrated by what hap-

pened to Wally Pipp once Lou Gehrig got the chance at first base. Tenured faculty, secure in their position, can hire the best.

But most people (including me in my present position) are not tenured. So how does that argument apply to staff or other leaders? I like to think of job security in terms of being able to find a new position. The best way to do so is to have a strong record of accomplishment and to have a broad network. Hiring good people, achieving goals, and building a reputation as someone who hires good people and achieves goals is true job security.

An argument that gets back with surprising frequency is that good people might not stay. “They're only here for a few years and then they're going to look for something better.” Suppose that's true. Then the only way for such a strategy to work is for the person to be successful here. So what's wrong with having a few years of success? It gives us a chance to continue to recruit the person for the longer term. And even if they leave, it's easier to recruit a replacement for someone whose success at your institution has opened possibilities elsewhere. I'll never forget the first time I ever had to work

on retaining a top person. My dean at the time said, “It's a much better problem to work on keeping good people than to work on getting rid of bad people.” It was true then and it's still true today.

The final point I want to make has to do with the following potential objection. What about that internal person? It would save us the time and effort of doing a search to just promote them, plus it might be uncomfortable for them if they apply and don't get the position. Yes, that's true, but there are two problems. First, you are giving up the opportunity to bring in someone better. Second, you are sending a message that convenience and comfort are more important than trying to be the best. Succession planning is important and underrated in academia, but that's another essay. In my experience, the more dangerous idea is to settle for the convenient hire rather than making the effort to find the best hire.

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Kevin Kruse (@Kruse) wrote an article for Forbes on October 16, 2012 entitled “100 Best Quotes on Leadership”. You can see the entire article at [www.Forbes.com](http://www.Forbes.com). Below are the top 10 quotes that he felt were the best quotes ever for leaders.

1. A leader is best when people barely know he exists, when his work is done, his aim fulfilled, they will say: we did it ourselves. (Lao Tzu)
2. Where there is no vision, the people perish. (Proverbs 29:18)
3. I must follow the people. Am I not their leader? (Benjamin Disraeli)
4. You manage things; you lead people. (Rear Admiral Grace Murray Hopper)
5. The first responsibility of a leader is to define reality. The last is to say thank you. In between, the leader is a servant. (Max DePree)
6. Leadership is the capacity to translate vision into reality. (Warren Bennis)
7. Lead me, follow me, or get out of my way. (General George Patton)
8. Before you are a leader, success is all about growing yourself. When you become a leader, success is all about growing others. (Jack Welch)
9. A leader is a dealer in hope. (Napoleon Bonaparte)
10. You don't need a title to be a leader. (Multiple Attributions)

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Greatest  
Quotes  
Ever  
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## “If you are not getting better, you are getting worse. There is no staying the same.”

My former head coach, Moe Ankney, spoke this to me as a young freshman wide receiver at Bowling Green State University. This quote has stayed with me all of these years and I have tried to follow this motto in everything I have done. At first, I really didn't understand what he was trying to convey to us, but as he said it almost everyday and I became more mature, it really started to resonate with me what he was trying to get us to buy into.

The quote meant that each day was another opportunity to get better. No matter what you accomplished the day before, no matter how great you think you did yesterday, if you didn't improve on those accomplishments the next day, technically, your performance got worse. He also wanted us to understand that you could not rest on your laurels because there was always room for improvement. Another lesson to this quote that I came to understand is that if you didn't accomplish what you wanted to today, another opportunity would present itself tomorrow to improve yourself or your chances of reaching that goal.

Coach Ankney would issue a challenge at the end of each by asking, “If you honestly got better today?” This would force you to look at your performance that day, on the field and in the classroom, to self-evaluate yourself. There were some days that I would answer to myself that I felt I got better that day and there were some days that I knew I didn't live up to what I felt I could do, but on those days, I always knew that I could try tomorrow to come up with a different answer.

Today, as an Athletic Director, I find myself still asking Coach Ankney's question to myself on a regular basis. I can almost hear his voice in my head saying, “Goff, did you get better or worse today, because you know there is no staying the same?” I still try to answer the question in an honest manner.

I think it is important as a leader to continue to honestly self-assess yourself on a regular basis and to try to improve your leadership skills and performance for the good of the group you are leading. On times that I can say I got better or accomplished my goals, I try to reflect back on why and how this came about, so that I can try to repeat some of the behavior that allowed me to be successful. When I answer the question with, “No”, I try to assess what factors led me to be unsuccessful in my quest and seek out strategies to eliminate or mitigate those factors/barriers. Not only do I use this quote in my professional life, but I also try to use it in my personal life. Those are the times I have to let my wife also weigh in on whether I am getting better. LOL. That's a whole other article.

The fact that I am still using this quote to shape my leadership behavior and approach after all of these years just shows you one of the many ways individuals are influenced and affected by leaders. I am not sure where Coach Ankney is right now, but I hope he knows he had a positive effect on me and that I am not the only one of my teammates that feels this way.

**ANTON GOFF** will start his new position as the Director of Athletics at the University of Harford in July. Until then, you can reach him at [AGoff@BowieState.edu](mailto:AGoff@BowieState.edu) as he finishes up his tenure as the A.D. at Bowie State University.

“If your actions inspire others to dream more, learn more, do more and become more, you are a leader.”

**John Quincy Adams**

“A leader is one who knows the way, goes the way, and shows the way.”

**John Maxwell**

“Become the kind of leader that people would follow voluntarily; even if you had no title or position.”

**Brian Tracy**

## "Don't tell me how rough the water is; just bring the ship in"

This quote showed up on Kobe Bryant's twitter feed as a "Mambo-ism". However, I don't know who originally said this. I have said similar things for years. Among them is the one quote that my players always roll their eye at when I say "**Don't tell me about the labor pains, just show me the baby**". One of my former bosses was Andy Carter. He was the Vice President of Athletics when I was at Newberry College. I remember him always saying that "**if it was easy, I wouldn't need you**". That has stuck with me to this day. Each of us have certain strengths that we bring to the table. We have a responsibility to utilize these strengths to attain success. Another thing that I constantly say that gets an eye roll from my players is when I ask them what is in the middle of all excuses. I then proceed to tell them that the answer is 'U'. The same can be said for what is in the middle of all results. Obviously, there is team work involved in a lot of what we do and most of the time, we are not on an island. However, we must take the approach that we must do everything that we can do to be successful. John Wooden, the legendary basketball coach, once said "**Do not let what you can't do interfere with what you can do**". You have heard it said that you are normally part of the problem or part of the solution. You may not be able to do everything, but you can always do something. If we wanted to, we could sit around forever coming up with reasons why we can't do something. That is not productive. What can we do? How can we make things better? Sure, there are many challenges that come our way that might appear to be insurmountable, but what kind of attitude do we take? I know it's cliché but we need to have a can-do approach.

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"Leadership is unlocking people's potential to become better."

**BILL BRADLEY**

"Great leaders are almost always great simplifiers, who can cut through argument, debate, and doubt to offer a solution everybody can understand."

**GEN. COLIN POWELL**

"Management is about arranging and telling. Leadership is about nurturing and enhancing."

**TOM PETERS**

# ULeadership

*"Leadership begins with U"*

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