

The Simplicity of Success

Pre-game

It's simple. **Success is a process, not an event.**

That's not always the most exciting thing to hear. We want to believe in quick fixes, silver bullets, catching magic in a bottle.

But if you take the time to analyze the large majority of successful people, organizations, companies or teams, you will find that their overall success is a byproduct of simply doing the right things on a daily basis.

That is the reality we face as leaders — the simplicity of success. So how do we address something that is so elementary? How do we

affirm this message with our teams day in and day out?

Welcome to the challenge of being a leader.

Game Time

The average college basketball fan would probably be surprised to learn how much our coaching staff focuses on working with players to develop them off the court, in addition to helping them improve on the court.

When these young men join our program, they are usually 18-, 19- or 20-years-old. Many of them are away from home for the first time.

Some arrive on the scene with a strong work ethic while some lack the concept of working hard. It is all relative to their background and surroundings. While you can learn a little something about the players during the recruiting process, there are just some things you can't find out about people until you are around them everyday.

Our objective as a staff is to develop our program for long-term success.

This means having kids on our team who are emotionally, mentally and physically able to perform at their highest level possible in basketball as well as in the classroom and socially. We want to maximize the potential of each player in our program.

In order to do this, we must start with the basics. We talk to our kids about the simplicity of success. “Take care of what you have to take care of today,” we tell them. “If you do this day in and day out for your entire tenure with us, you will have success and we will have success as a team.”

It is teaching elementary principles, but it is what works. Sound too simple? We know it does. But the reality of our world is that our jobs in this competitive occupational field rely directly upon the daily decisions and habits of fifteen 18- to 23-year-old young men.

Because of this, our primary objective is to help our players develop habits that will make them successful. One of the first teachings we offer to our players is about excuses. They need to eliminate putting themselves in a position to have an excuse.

For example, if they are off-campus and are leaving for class or practice, they shouldn't plan on arriving five minutes early — they should plan on arriving thirty minutes early. If there are traffic problems, they will still arrive on time if they leave earlier. There is no excuse for not leaving earlier. “Traffic” is simply an excuse for the real problem — a lack of time management or laziness.

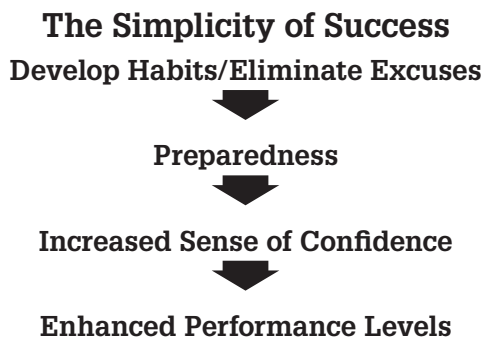
This basic way of thinking translates into everything our players do whether it is time management, taking care of assignments in class or their physical conditioning.

An amazing transformation occurs once a player develops the habit of taking care of the basics on a daily basis to avoid excuses. As he witnesses the positive outcomes caused by this habit, he then begins to value the habit. More importantly, he begins to value preparation, which is what his new habit ultimately creates. This leads to the crucial development of confidence.

Confidence is the key ingredient to success. Not necessarily confidence to know you will succeed in every situation that arises, but confidence to know you have done all that you can do to prepare yourself to succeed in every situation that arises. There is a difference between the two. The first is a false sense of confidence. The second is real and life changing.

By developing good habits, players become more prepared. With that increased preparedness comes a higher level of confidence.

If we put those three things together we will win ballgames, and our players will leave our program better prepared for life. And that is how we measure success.



Post-game

If the proven plan for success is so simple and readily available to all of us, then why do only a select number of people and teams actually choose to follow that plan and, ultimately, decide to be successful?

Developing a plan is the easiest part — executing the plan is the challenge. A good plan doesn't offer the easiest, most convenient route. To be great at any task requires sacrifice, effort and commitment. A lack of genuine commitment to the plan is why most achieve less than their potential. If it was easy to be a champion, then all would achieve at a championship level.

If this philosophy is so basic, where and why does the breakdown occur?

What tends to happen is we don't focus enough on the tactics it takes to effectively implement a plan. It's easy to talk about the initial development of a plan as well as the desired outcomes of a plan, but the actual steps required to implement a plan correctly oftentimes go overlooked and, thus, undervalued.

Those who don't undervalue these steps are able to separate themselves from the rest of the world — whether it is in their professions or any other parts of their lives. People who choose to follow the success plan make a habit out of mastering those tactics on a daily

basis. They avoid falling behind and don't need to take shortcuts or break rules to catch up.

Leaders who head successful teams make a habit out of developing productive habits for their team members. This is primarily accomplished through individual communication — on an ongoing basis — between the supervisor and team members to encourage the execution of the plan. In turn, this creates a more prepared team as well as earns the leader trust from his team as a teacher. This sense of preparedness and trust increases the team members' sense of confidence in themselves and the team, which leads to enhanced performance levels.

It's not the silver bullet theory to powerful leadership; it's just the most proven. **Ultimately, your performance as a leader is determined by how well the members of your team take care of their basic responsibilities on a daily basis.**

Sound simple? That's because it is.

The best leaders are those visionary enough to see the dream, but grounded enough to be a brilliant teacher of the basics. It's simple — don't ever stop teaching the basics.