

Skills, Drills & Forward & Progress

By Valerie Atkin

Anyone who has ever played a sport knows that it isn't practice that makes perfect. It's perfect practice that makes perfect.

This applies just as much to the business of leading an organization, a sales team or even being in charge of your own development.

Great coaches don't stop growing when they get the coaching job. They continue to review films, question their decisions and work to improve.

In an effort to continue the learning which began for many at the recent WPF conference, we are launching the Coach's Corner as a regular feature of our quarterly newsletter.

Each issue will offer suggestions to improve your game that are practical, easy to try and that will eliminate the "I'd love to focus on my own development, but I don't have time" syndrome.

At this time, all that's needed to help raise your own game is a commitment to read this column and practice.

Let's start with the easiest, hard thing you'll every try: Increasing self awareness.

As psychologist Carl Jung said, "Until you make the unconscious conscious, it will direct your life and you will call it fate."

We are so caught up in the maelstrom of what we are doing, we rarely take time out to think about how we are doing it, thus creating misunderstanding and sometimes even costly mistakes.

The quickest way to improve this area of our game is to consider intent versus impact.

How often do you find yourself telling someone, "No, no, that's not what I meant"?

If you're like most of us, mis-speaking or being misunderstood is a fairly common occurrence.

Clarifying the difference between intent—what we meant to say or the meaning we hoped would be gleaned—and impact—what the listener actually took from our comments—is at the core of this challenge.

This is because we judge ourselves by our intent while we judge others by their impact.

The only exception is if we know and respect the person and as a result, might be inclined to give them the benefit of the doubt.

So here's your first skill practice: Be aware of how people are responding to you. Watch their facial expressions, listen to the questions they ask, be mindful of how often you are asking for their thoughts vs. sharing your own.

Wake up! Before you can begin to think about improving anything you must first be aware of where you are. Make becoming aware your goal.

As author Robert Heinlein said, "In the absence of clearly defined goals, we become strangely loyal to performing daily trivia until ultimately we become enslaved by it."

Our next topic: Establishing expectations, the foundation for accountability.

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