

Tony dungy book report essay



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Quiet Strength: The Principles, Practices, & Priorities of a Winning Life

Author: Tony Dungy A Book Report Michael Fors BUS 625/626 • Dr. David

Bess The book I chose was Quiet Strength: The Principles, Practices, &

Priorities of a Winning Life, by Tony Dungy. This is more than an

autobiography of the life of Tony Dungy, the coach of the 2006 Super Bowl champion Indianapolis Colts.

Woven throughout his life story are the principles, practices, and priorities of a life that is able to lead others towards positive change, not by focusing on success, but by focusing on building up men by focusing on character, respect and integrity. Not only am I a fan of NFL football but more so I'm a fan of strong, effectual leaders. Sure I really enjoy the big plays, the big hits, and the long bomb in the last seconds of the game that scores the winning touchdown. Most of all, though, I admire the leadership principles that pervade the sport.

You'll hear these principles touted in many of the interviews with the best coaches and players throughout the league. Tony Dungy made a name for himself around the league for being a coach that could come in and turn an entire NFL franchise around. When he took over as head coach of the Tampa Bay Buccaneers they were one of the worst teams in football; when he left they were Super Bowl contenders. When he took over the Indianapolis Colts he took them all the way to the Super Bowl in 2006 and won.

After that Super Bowl I took a special interest in this remarkable coach. I wanted to know what made him a strong leader who could lead men like this at such a high level. Moreover, I wanted to know his secret to being a strong

force for change among men of this caliber. This book is rich with real world examples of several leadership concepts and provides a practical model of how to bring about change in an organization.

In the next few pages I'll detail the character qualities Tony Dungy demonstrated, the leadership techniques he employed, and how he brought about change to a team and to the league as a whole. Finally I'll conclude with summarizing the principles that stood out most to me and how I can apply them to my profession and my personal life. CHARACTER QUALITIES I don't yell. In a league dominated by coaches known for their boisterous rants, angry outbursts and demeaning reprimands, Tony seemed to stand alone with his quiet, calm demeanor. For his players this took some getting used to.

For most of their careers they'd been severely berated when they missed a tackle or dropped a pass. Tony, on the other hand, would often tell his players that if that's what they needed to get motivated then they were on the wrong team. He refused to adopt this method of motivation; his method revolved around communicating respect and trust. "No excuses" was one of his mantras, or sayings that he would repeat over and over again. If you're not going to get yelled at after a bad play then there's no reason to give excuses.

Tony would rather have you simply walk to the sideline, sit down and focus on how you can get better. Players began to appreciate his even keeled persona as it helped them to settle down on the field and focus on the game rather the pressures of not failing. Be stubborn when you're right. Tony was

often criticized for his unemotional style among fans and other coaches. This criticism came to a peak after he lost his third straight playoff game and he was fired as head coach of the Tampa Bay Buccaneers.

Many began to view him as the kind of coach who can't win the big one. Many thought that because of his apparent lack of passion he was not able to get his team "up" for the big game. Tony stuck by his guns. He wasn't going to succumb to the pressures and change his philosophy of respect and trust.

Chuck Knowles, the Super Bowl winning coach of the Steelers, told him once, "Being stubborn is a virtue when you're right, it's only a character flaw when you're wrong." I admire a leader who can stand on principle, when it's a good one, and not yield to the pressure of critics. A man of deep faith. Tony was one of the few coaches in the league who was not only vocal about his faith but also integrated it into how he operated as a coach. Every team Tony led prayed before and after each game.

The interesting thing was that they didn't pray for a win, they would pray for things like playing to the best of their ability, playing with respect and class, or that no one on either team would get seriously hurt. In a world where it's becoming politically incorrect to "alienate" or offend anyone due to the expression of one's faith, Tony took a different approach. He encouraged everyone to express whatever faith they held and encouraged tolerance towards others. He felt that if that is truly a part of who you are then you shouldn't have to hide it. His players began to see him as someone who cared about more than wins and losses; they sensed that there was

something more beneath the surface. He revealed a personal side and they saw that coaching was not just a job for him and it was his faith that motivated him to genuinely care about the man inside the player's uniform.

I believe that every good leader should possess qualities that naturally draw men to him. Whether it be his faith, his heritage, his strong character qualities or something else. For Tony these intangibles seem to create a synergy that translates into respect, admiration, and loyalty and are highly motivating for those he leads. LEADERSHIP TECHNIQUES How do you change a culture? Tony Dungy utilized several key techniques to bring about change to each organization he managed.

Each organization was different so some of the techniques he used for one would not be used for another. When he was called in as head coach of the Tampa Bay Buccaneers he was asked to bring about radical change to this historically unsuccessful organization. The first thing he did was fire all of the existing assistant coaches. He took this extreme measure to bring about an extreme change. Over the years the team had cultivated a fragile mindset that infected their play; they always expected something to go wrong and it usually did.

He was set on changing more than just the staff of the Buccaneers — he was set on changing the entire culture of the organization. Ask your team what needs to be fixed. It seems simple but many leaders fail to even ask their team what they think. That was the second thing Tony did, he began meeting with the players to see what needed to be fixed. All the issues were minor but they contributed to the team's second class defeatist, excuse-

laden mentality. Tony felt that by addressing minor issues he could bring about a major culture shift.

For instance, the Buccaneers' previous owner was cheap and had the team staying in low-class, out-of-the-way hotels to save money. Tony arranged for them to stay downtown at the Marriott, Wyndham, and Ritz Carleton. He upgraded all their facilities that had fallen into disrepair and he expanded their weight room. These were all small changes that were part of a bigger shift he was trying to make.

Hire the right direct reports. Tony didn't just look for coaching ability when he interview assistant coaches. To change a culture he needed coaches that had other qualities like character and integrity. He wanted good teachers who were committed to teaching fundamentals and those who were willing to make a long term commitment. He knew the players would respond to coaches with these key qualities even if they had less coaching experience or skill.

Have clearly defined goals. Tony wanted to make it clear that he wasn't just going for the win. His goals set a high bar for the team to reach and they were going to relentlessly pursue them until they were attained. Those goals were:

- Top 5 in NFL for giveaway take away ratio
- Top 5 in NFL for fewest penalties
- Top 5 in NFL for overall special teams
- Make big plays, don't lay down big plays
- It doesn't matter how you win, just play to your teams strengths
- Win with players who positively influence the Tampa area

The goals were simple, easy to remember, and measurable, and Tony has kept these same goals for every team he's coached throughout his career.

You need to have a mantra. Each coach in the NFL has their own mantra that they will repeat to their players over and over: “ Commitment. ” “ We win as a team, we lose as a team. ” “ There is no ‘ I’ in ‘ team’. ” A coach’s mantras encapsulate the ideas or principles that are most important to them, those that he wants to be at the forefront of all his players’ minds at all times. Tony carefully selected the mantras he wanted to put into play for the Buccaneers because he knew that they would be the key to shaping his new culture.

Mantra #1: No Excuses. Tony would repeat it over and over in practice, on the field and in the locker room. He began to sell the philosophy that the team alone are responsible for what happens, not anyone or anything else. No excuses! Before one big game, he listed all the excuses they could have used: they have a young quarterback, they have a new coaching staff, they are learning a new system on offense and defense, they have subpar facilities, they never get the benefit of the doubt from officials, they never win in cold weather.

He finished, “ these are all great excuses, we could use all of them. But excuses were not an option. They needed simply to be professionals, take ownership and do whatever it takes without excuses. Because of this, team meetings began to be more upbeat and instead of hanging their heads they began to walk with a swagger of confidence about them.

Mantra #2: Do the ordinary things better than anyone else. Many have speculated that this one principle has afforded Tony’s teams much of the success they’ve had thus far. His attention to detail and commitment to fundamentals would not be overlooked. He wasn’t looking for spectacular

lays in big games; Tony was looking to get every player to do what they do just a little bit better, a little bit faster, a little bit sharper than the other team. During a big game the mantra became, “ Do what we do, don’t panic, stay the course. ” Mantra #3: What do you benefit if you gain the whole world and lose your own soul? This last mantra was the most controversial.

In other words, he dared to assert that there are more important things than success on the football field. Tony preached and exemplified a “ family-first” philosophy. Tony was one of the few coaches to allow players’ families to be at the office. He started meetings later so they could take their kids to school in the morning. After reaching the Super Bowl they took all their families out to dinner and they all stayed there until 4am the next morning.

He felt that if football were to cost someone their marriage or their relationship with their kids, then they would lose a piece of their soul. This philosophy generated a great deal of loyalty among his players, as they realized that he was more interested in them as people than as players. Whereas other coaches may have been interested in developing good players, Tony was interested in developing good men. He wanted men who were good role models to the young people who looked up to them.

He wanted men who would give back to their communities and who would be leaders there as well as on the field. He wanted men who would be good fathers to their children and good husbands to their wives. Though many thought that this philosophy would weaken his players’ focus on the game, it actually had the opposite effect. Because their personal lives were in order

they tended to be less distracted on the field. In the corporate world the same would ring true for me.

If I'm sacrificing my family for my work then it's just a matter of time before my work begins to suffer. If my manager is looking beyond just what I can do for the company and takes a genuine interest in see me becoming a good father and husband and member of society then two things would happen. First, if my family and personal life are in order then I will be able to focus and be more productive at work. Second, my manager would gain my trust, loyalty and respect long after I leave the firm.

A NEW BREED OF NFL COACH Changing a league. There is a new breed of coach that is emerging in the NFL due in large part to the success of coaches like Tony Dungy and ultra-successful New England Patriots head coach Bill Belichick, who operate their teams more like a CEO would a large company. Both maintain a calm demeanor in practice and on the sidelines. The days of the in-your-face, cursing, demonstrative head coach may soon be a thing of the past. Many coaches have begun adopting the CEO philosophy as well, passing responsibility for play-calling and one-on-one game time coaching to their assistant coaches. It is a difficult culture change for many coaches who are unwilling to put that much trust and confidence in their direct reports.

Still, Tony learned how valuable this could be in a game that they were losing badly going into the fourth quarter. Tony wanted to take the starters out to rest them for the next game and prevent injuries. Tom Moore, his assistant coach, asked to leave them in for one more series. Tony decided to trust Tom's instincts and they went on to score three touchdowns in the last

3 minutes and 43 seconds of the game and won by a field goal in overtime. No team had ever come back from a three touchdown lead in the last 4 minutes of any NFL game until that day. A reassuring voice.

Sometimes a team needs to be challenged or exhorted when they are getting lazy or sluggish in their performance for the company. Other times when the team is doing everything they need to do but without much success, they need to be encouraged. Tony's Indianapolis Colts had just lost two games in row after going undefeated for several games. Many of the players thought for sure he was going to finally break down and read them the riot act. He would later find out that many of them were sure they were going to lose their positions or even get cut. Instead, at a Monday team meeting he told the team, " Men, we're not going to bring in any new players.

We're not going to add any new defensive schemes. In fact, we're not going to change anything. We are the same group that went to the playoffs last year. We just have to do our jobs a little bit better, a little bit faster, a little bit sharper.

" The players would later tell him how inspired they were by his calm reassurance. A good leader is able to sense how the team is feeling and knows how to guide the team's emotions. CONCLUSION There are many leadership techniques that Tony implemented that I found valuable. •I need to stick to my guns when I know my decision is right even though it may be unpopular at the time.

Being unpopular is the price one must pay at times to be a leader who stands for what is right. •I need to use positive, supportive words to motivate

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the people I'm responsible for as opposed to negative, harsh, or cutting words. •I need to make sure everyone has clearly defined goals that are simple and easy to remember and are measurable. If they are measurable the I can use them during performance reviews to encourage them as they see that they are getting closer to their goals.

•I need to do the ordinary things better than anyone else if I want to get ahead in my company. In my workplace I've often wondered what it would take to differentiate myself among my peers so that I wouldn't be just another body filling a cubical in a large corporation. I need to start doing the ordinary things like status reports, timesheets, and employee reviews, better than anyone else. I need to look for opportunities to be that reassuring voice when things are not going well for someone.

This will garner trust and loyalty among my co-workers. •And finally, I don't need to be afraid to be a man of faith in the workplace; it just might inspire someone else to do the same. Tony's tremendous example has provided me with a real, practical model to follow as I develop as a leader. His character, integrity and the principles he lives by everyday inspire me to be not only a better leader but a better man.