

DISPATCHES™

Insights On Brand Development From The Marketing Front

Monday, July 27, 2015

SOME COACHING TIPS FROM THE ULTIMATE COACH

Coaching—adding real value when providing reaction and direction to our agency teammates—is always on our minds. A few weeks back, we offered some thoughts on why so many marketing organizations don't coach. And since then, we have had the opportunity to work with a long-time client in leading a “coach's clinic” for their senior marketers (with the intention of helping them to better implement consistent, productive coaching techniques across their many brand teams). As always, at this clinic we also learned a good deal more about what it takes to make the transition from *e-evaluating* (telling people what they have done wrong) to *add-evaluating* (providing productive direction to take anyone's work to the next level—i.e., coaching!).

Becoming proficient on a consistent basis with any skill takes practice, lots and lots of practice. Attaining proficiency in coaching is no different. And in preparing for our recent coach's clinic, we naturally recalled the skill-building process that America's ultimate coach, John Wooden, espoused (and that we have mentioned once or twice in these DISPATCHES). According to Coach Wooden there are 8 essential steps to gaining proficiency at any skill:

1. Explain the skill
2. Demonstrate the skill
3. Have students mimic the skill, and then...
4. Practice
5. Practice
6. Practice
7. Practice
8. Practice

Recalling Coach Wooden's classic steps inspired us to look up some of his other coaching principles. Not surprisingly, we found many that while aimed at skill-building in basketball, also apply beautifully to commenting and providing direction in marketing. Here are some of the ones that stood out for us:

- ***“We don't have to be super-stars or win championships...all we have to do is learn to rise to every occasion, give our best effort, and make those***

around us better as we do it.” We particularly respond to the last ten words: aiming to always make the team around us become better. This thought jibes so well with that original definition of the English word “coach”—“a vehicle for transporting a group of people to some place they could not easily reach on their own.”

- ***“Some of my greatest pleasures have come from finding ways to overcome obstacles.”*** What effort in creating brand communications doesn’t face obstacles? From discovering a compelling consumer or customer insight to having the courage to break the usual category or company “cookie-cutter” patterns, there are obstacles at every turn. The best marketing coaches relish such encounters. They pride themselves **not** in solving each obstacle alone but rather in guiding and motivating the entire team do the solving.
- ***“Be most interested in finding the best way, not in having your way.”*** This one really strikes home, or should anyway, with every marketer. Marketers are inherently idea people; they love ideas of all kinds and they take great satisfaction in coming up with original, winning ideas. But the very best marketers know only too well that one person can never have all the ideas. In fact, most of the time, ideas bubble up from a wide variety of sources. When it comes to providing value-added coaching to a creative team’s work, it’s always more productive to inquire “Why did you choose to do it that way?” than to assert, “I wouldn’t have done it that way.”
- ***“A leader’s most powerful ally is his or her own example.”*** When you think about the dynamics in most creative presentations, it’s a wonder they don’t come to blows! On the one hand, you typically have the Brand Team with an average communications development experience of, say, five years or less. On the other hand, you have a combined account management and creative Agency Team with an average communications development experience of, what, five times that? And some new Brand Manager is telling a twenty-five year Creative Director what she or he doesn’t like in their work. But there **is** a better way, a much better way that young marketers can employ to gain instant respect from even the most seasoned creative types--consistently follow the 3-Step Coaching Process: Provide an overview of the entire work; Talk about what you like and what ideas you have to take what you like to an even higher level; and Summarize in a few words the key next steps that would move the work forward. Adding real value will always gain respect and set a motivating example.
- ***“It’s what you learn after you know it all that counts.”*** For us, this particular Wooden-ism was simply a great reminder that, no matter how many years of marketing or communications development experience we have, there is still so much more to learn. It’s a shame when, after reaching the Marketing Director or VP Marketing level in an organization, that one no longer feels the need for on-going learning...for further professional development of their coaching skills. If you really think about Coach

Wooden’s “practice, practice, practice” process, none of us—regardless of years in the business or level in the organization—ever has enough practices. The best coaches know they need coaching also.

John Wooden passed away in 2010 at the age of 100. He had a remarkable life that affected thousands, probably millions, of people. We marketers should be among them.

Richard Czerniawski & Mike Maloney

Richard Czerniawski

.....
430 Abbotsford Road
Kenilworth, Illinois 60043
tel 847.256.8820
fax 847.256.8847
.....

reply to Richard:
rdczerniawski@cs.com or
richardcz@bdn-intl.com

Mike Maloney

.....
1506 West 13th Street, #17
Austin, Texas 78703
tel 512.236.0971
fax 512.236.0972
.....

reply to Mike:
mikewmaloney@gmail.com or
mwm@bdn-intl.com



© 2003 Brand Development Network (BDN) International. All rights reserved.