

Lou Holtz coaches you all the way to #1

Harvey Mackay

Do you have what it takes to be successful?

One of my closest friends, Lou Holtz, the Hall-of-Fame college football coach, believes there are four things any person or organization needs to be number one.

Few people know more about success than Lou, the only college football coach to lead six different programs to bowl games, and the only coach to take four different programs to the final top 20 rankings. Along the way he guided Notre Dame to the 1988 national championship.

“First,” he says, “you have to make a commitment to excellence.”

Second is complete attention to detail. “It is the teams that play strict attention to little things that win,” says Holtz. The third thing is to have sound fundamentals. “You can’t be bored with such basic things as blocking and tackling.”

The fourth requirement is discipline. “Virtually nothing is impossible in this world if you just put your mind to it and maintain a positive attitude.”

Let me give you my take on all four:

Commitment to excellence. When you are interested in doing something, you do it when circumstances permit. However, when you’re committed to something, you accept no excuses, only results.

Commitment is a prerequisite to success. Commitment is the state of being bound – emotionally, intellectually, or both – to a course of action. Commitment starts with a choice and is sustained by dedication and perseverance. Actions speak louder than words.

Have you ever seen a team run on the field yelling, “We want to be number two?” Everyone wants to be number one. Those who actually achieve it are those who are willing to put the blood, sweat and tears into their effort.

Attention to detail. I like to add one word – Fanatical attention to detail. The difference between failure and success is doing a thing nearly right and doing it exactly right.

Having a fanatical attention to detail is a mindset. It must be an obsession. It has to be part of a company’s culture or an individual’s mindset. You can’t just talk about it. You have to practice it every day for years.

It is not enough just to do the best you can. You also have to do everything you can. There are no shortcuts in the world of sports – or life. If it were easy to become the best, everyone would do it.

Sound fundamentals. Look at the great athletes and musicians. There are no walk-ons at the Super Bowl or Carnegie Hall – or in corporate boardrooms for that matter. The level of performance in those exalted places is only partially a reflection of talent. Practice sound fundamentals.

It’s kind of like a stonecutter hammering away at his rock, perhaps 100 times without a dent in it. And yet on the 101st blow the rock splits in two. And it was not that blow that did it, but all that had gone before. If you’re not willing to practice – and practice until you get it right – you will never make the 100 blows that make the

breakthrough on the 101st.

Whatever it is you do, you can be better at it if you just keep on learning and practice. The minute I persuade myself that I have learned all there is to learn about a subject and can relax, that's the moment my competition will hand me my head and slam me into the pavement.

Discipline. Most people aim to do right, but they fail to pull the trigger. For whatever reason, they just don't have the wherewithal to finish the job. They are lacking discipline.

It doesn't matter whether you are pursuing success in business, sports, the arts, or life in general. Hope is not an option. The difference between wishing and accomplishing is discipline.

Discipline is all about setting goals, figuring out a schedule to achieve those goals, and then following your plan.

The formula is the same for athletes, business and professional people and students: have a no-nonsense attitude, work hard and improve every day. Arrive early and stay late if that's what it takes to get the job done. Go the extra mile. It is one stretch of the highway where there are seldom any traffic jams.

It's the old adage: The more you put in, the more you get out. To me it is better to prepare and prevent instead of repair and repent.

Mackay's Moral: *There aren't any rules for success that work unless you do.*

Comments

comments

Powered by [Facebook Comments](#)