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November 24, 2008

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Bowling for big bucks

Amateur athletics is wonderful, entertaining and disgustingly exploitative

By Allen R. Sanderson

November 24, 2008

With political polling and voting now behind us, as we head to malls and moms this holiday season, how about a quick survey to name the most exploited workers in the American economy? Typical knee-jerk candidates might be Wal-Mart employees, agricultural laborers, immigrants (legal or otherwise) and maybe even the U.S. taxpayer. But I have a fifth candidate.

If one wants to know who really is being exploited—defined as contributing the most revenue to his employer compared with what he is being paid for his efforts—we have to go no further than our living rooms. For there, starting with the appropriately dubbed Congressional Bowl in our nation's capital Dec. 20 and ending in Miami on Jan. 8 with the Bowl Championship Series championship game, is the vast array—34 in all—of college football bowl games.

In those athletic contests, undergraduate football players—a.k.a. student-athletes— will entertain TV audiences and stadium crowds. And for what? A souvenir that implicitly says, "My university went to Pasadena and all I got was this lousy T-shirt." For while the quarterback's institution will bring home \$10 million (and receive several hours of free advertising), the coach will see a sizable financial boost and fans will extend their holiday pleasures, the player will get just coal in his stocking.

But doesn't he benefit at all? The experience? The exposure (for those harboring fantasies of a professional career down the road)? Of course he does; he was not drafted or a victim of some human-trafficking entrepreneur. And a week in Arizona or Texas in December can warm the soul. But his gain pales in comparison with that of others who have a stake in intercollegiate athletics. We have lengthened the college football season from 10 to 12 games and expanded the bowl schedule. (The college basketball season and tournament have grown even more dramatically.)

The university sells more tickets, and the player exposes himself to injury and academic probation for two more weeks—for the same pay: room, board, tuition, fees and a little walking-around money. The coach gets \$2 million in salary, a car, a country-club membership, a TV show and a summer camp. And if he—the coach—wants to bolt for another, more lucrative offer? No problem. But if the player wants to transfer to another university or try his hand and luck in a professional league instead? Big problem. A month before the first kickoff, there is the annual clamoring among ardent fans and sportswriters for a playoff system to determine the true national champion. Why not? This low-cost addition just means exploiting these kids for three more weeks.

If an accounting graduate could get only one offer, or an identical offer from national accounting firms that had colluded to set the salary, wouldn't he or she still benefit?

Of course, but not nearly as much as if those firms had to bid against one another for his or her services in an open market. The college president, professor, coach or even a secretary can play off one institution or employer against another and actually skip out early. None would fall into the "exploited" category unless collusion—illegal in those circumstances—played a role.

But what if the player wants to leave college early and decides to get onto a new stage—the National Football League or the National Basketball Association? As Jerry Seinfeld might blurt out, "Not that there's any wrong with that." In the sporting world, the National Collegiate Athletic Association and the NFL and NBA have a cozy working understanding and put up roadblocks. Are these universities and professional leagues really interested in the health and "human capital" acquisitions of star athletes or, more likely, only the costs associated with training them?

To add more complexity, observe closely the introduction of the starting lineups in bowl games. Whereas the coaches, students and fans in the stands are overwhelmingly white, the players—the ones actually producing the product that generates the revenues—are disproportionately African-American, young men drawn from inner-city neighborhoods and families with modest circumstances. At least Robin Hood stole from the rich to give to the poor; we're doing it backward.

Then come March—and culminating in Detroit on April 6—we'll do this all over again: March Madness, the NCAA's men's basketball tournament. Sixty-four teams, \$600 million in television broadcast revenues for the NCAA and its members and more caps and T-shirts for the players.

Our selfish interests in having athletes put in their years of indentured servitude so we can watch quality college sports, at a cost to them of half their productive earning years and several million dollars in lost earnings for the few who manage to move into the professional ranks, should be laughed out of courts, stadiums and sports bars. If college students want to protest something meaningful for a change, let them stage a sit-in on the 50-yard line or at center court until their institutions stop exploiting these young men and return to their academic missions.

Allen R. Sanderson teaches economics at the University of Chicago.

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Is The Term 'Scholar-Athlete' An Oxymoron?

I am a certifiable sports nut. I think my father intended that I should be. I grew up in Chicago during a great sports era — one of my first pro sports memories is the Bears beating the Redskins 73-0 to win the National Football League championship in 1940, and I saw the Bears play the Cardinals in Comiskey Park on December 7, 1941. I actually saw the Cubs play in the World Series in 1945! I was a small and skinny kid, but still dreamed of playing for the Bears some day. As it happened, one of the part owners of the Bears lived in the apartment below ours, and on some Sundays before home games, he had the whole team (about 20 players, I think) over for a steak breakfast. I was occasionally invited to join the team.

Imagine the bliss of an 8- or 9-year old to mingle with Sid Luckman, Bulldog Turner and, yes, Bronco Nagurski! But my hero was one of the Bears' guards, Danny Fortman. I liked him because he was a tough little guy who seemed capable of blocking much bigger players. One Sunday I told him I wanted to be like him when I grew up. He looked at me sternly, though, and replied that I would be an idiot to try to play in the pros. "Be smart like me, Stanley, and go to medical school!" I did not realize at the time that Fortman was actually attending medical school. He was later, and for years, the team orthopedic surgeon for the Los Angeles Rams. My high-school athletic career consisted of a month of football in my junior year, ending when I came to practice one day and found a trainer's cap in my locker instead of my pads. The coaches were afraid that I might get killed on the field. So I became a doctor, just as Danny had suggested. But a Doctor of History.

My interest in sports has continued during my career as a college teacher, and I regularly attend Princeton football and basketball games — and other sports in which my own students are performing. A couple of my students have gone on to the pros in football, but for almost all of the undergraduate athletes I have taught, college athletics was an end in itself. There are some very nice stories about how Ivy League athletes go on to do interesting things, like last year's Harvard [starting fullback](#) who is now training to be an operatic tenor at the Philadelphia Academy of the Vocal Arts. Or the Florida State [defensive back](#) who yesterday won a Rhodes Scholarship, and plans to become a physician, and has been working with Seminole fifth-grade students at a Charter School. But aren't these the exceptions that prove the rule, rather than evidence that sports are genuinely part of the educational process?

The NCAA has promoted the use of the term "student-athlete," but I believe that usage is an oxymoron in institutions that recruit athletes with athletic scholarships. Papers like *The New York Times* love to feature stories about such students, but they are exceptional *because* they are students. Much as I love competitive sports, I think that big-time, revenue-producing sports have done a great deal of damage to higher education in this country. NCAA president Myles Brand's protests to the contrary notwithstanding, I think many universities have lost control of their athletic programs. And the most profound losers are the students who happen to be athletes. More on this shortly . . .

Posted at 12:36:58 PM on November 23, 2008 | All postings by [Stan Katz](#)

Comments

1. I think the least we could do for our student athletes is offer them a four year scholarship once they fail to turn pro.
— James · Nov 23, 12:59 PM · #
2. When I first saw the title of your article, I was going to reply with the example of Myron Rolle (Rhodes scholar, athlete). However, you chose him as the rather silly argument "exception that proves the rule". Having taught statistics for a long time at a big-time athletic university (UM), I have not only taught my share of academic leaders that also happened to be athletes, but have observed that the support received by and the motivational levels of student-athletes has been significantly above that observed in the general student population. These students know that they have to be scholars first, or they will lose their athletic identity. I even work in a building donated by one of our successful student athletes (Bernie Kosar).
— Educator1 · Nov 23, 02:14 PM · #
3. "Educator1" proves Prof. Katz's point: Myron Rolle and Bernie Kosar are newsworthy because they're exceptions, i.e., man bites dog stories. Non-revenue-sport-athletes who become Rhodes scholars or non-athletes who become multimillionaires and donate college buildings don't get written up on the front page; they're dog bites man stories.

"Student-athletes" who are cross-country runners, fencers, gymnasts, wrestlers, volleyball players, etc. are the ones who enable the disingenuous NCAA to run TV ads about "student-athletes" with one of them saying "95 percent of us will turn pro...in something other than sports." If you want the real story on the hypocrisy of the NCAA, look at the graduation rates for BCS-conference football players or D-1 basketball players. Look at the 44 hours a week sports practice vs. 40 hours a week spent on studies. Look at the classes missed for the

NCAA D-1 basetball tournment. Look at the semi-autnomous athletic departments. Look at the open recruitment of avowed one-and-done basketball players such as O.J. Mayo and Michael Beasley.

I like big-time college revnue sports, too. They're fun to watch and the players give their all. So...*pay* the players, just like universities pay anybody else, e.g., the vice-president for development, whose job it is to rake in the bucks for old Alma Mater.

— Bronco N. · Nov 23, 05:48 PM · #

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Today's News

Thursday, November 20, 2008

JuicyCampus Is Blocked on 2 Campuses, and Gossipers on Another Face a Lawsuit

By [JEFFREY R. YOUNG](#)

Citing concerns about student safety, Tennessee State University last week began blocking the gossip Web site JuicyCampus from its campus network, and appears to be the first public college or university to do so.

At least one private institution, Hampton University, has also blocked the site, where users anonymously post insulting messages about their peers.

JuicyCampus has stirred controversy across the country as it continues to expand to new campuses (it has now set up discussion forums for 500 institutions, though the site has no affiliations with the colleges).

While online chat rooms have been around for years, JuicyCampus seems to have developed a volatile new formula, mixing a focus on individual campuses, a guarantee of anonymity for participants, and an encouragement of salacious speech (*The Chronicle*, March 28). Students often post insulting messages about their peers' sexual behavior, sexual orientation, and character.

Officials at Tennessee State say this is the first time they have blocked any Web site.

Michael A. Freeman, vice president for student affairs at the university, said he decided to block JuicyCampus out of concern for the safety of students. He said a parent had called him and complained that comments about her child on the site made her fear for the child's safety.

"We live in a post-Virginia Tech environment," Mr. Freeman said in an interview. "We need to be more thoughtful, and we really need to be more careful in targeting and attacking each other."

He added that "what some people may perceive as harmless gossip or poking fun could result in someone being attacked."

He would not describe the material that the parent had complained about, except to say that it "targeted" a specific student.

Mr. Freeman wrote an open letter to students that was published in the university's student newspaper, the *Meter*. "For our students to talk so openly and graphically, disparaging one another, brings shame and dishonor to this institution," he wrote. "A JuicyCampus gossip blog does not fit with the legacy, spirit, and reputation of Tennessee State University."

A Free-Speech Argument

Matt Ivester, the founder of JuicyCampus, issued a statement on Wednesday likening Tennessee State's action to China's censorship of its online networks.

He said he believed the university was violating students' first-amendment rights to free speech.

"We are actually considering our legal options and investigating that right now," Mr. Ivester said in an interview.

He dismissed Mr. Freeman's concern about campus safety. "That is such a slippery slope to go down," Mr. Ivester said. "There are all kinds of things we could couch in the bubble of campus safety, but it is at the expense of our liberties."

Mr. Freeman, meanwhile, called Mr. Ivester's First Amendment concerns "nonsense."

"Tennessee State University's network is not a public forum," he said. "The network is built and supported specifically for educational purposes."

Officials at the university pointed to a 2003 Supreme Court decision, *United States v. American Library Association*, in which the court upheld a law that requires public libraries to filter out pornographic Web sites. Libraries had challenged the law as a violation of the First Amendment.

"I have nothing against this site—it's a free country," said Mr. Freeman about Mr. Ivester's site. "But Tennessee State University doesn't have to host his business."

Action Provokes Interest

The initial result of blocking the site on the campus was that more students rushed to visit the site, Mr. Freeman acknowledged.

"Very few students knew of it, so there was a curiosity effect," he said. But he said that the university plans to continue blocking the site, and that he hopes that interest in the site soon dies down.

Officials at Hampton University, in Virginia, confirmed that the institution is blocking JuicyCampus as well, though they referred questions to Teresa Walker, assistant provost for technology and director of academic technology, who was not available on Wednesday.

Both Tennessee State and Hampton are historically black universities.

Meanwhile, earlier this month a student at the University of Delaware filed a federal lawsuit against several individuals who posted comments about her on JuicyCampus. She does not know who those individuals are, since all postings on JuicyCampus are anonymous, so the defendants are referred to in court documents as John Does 1 through 5.

The lawsuit claims that the anonymous plaintiff suffered "significant psychological and economic injuries," and that the defendants knew their statements on the site were harmful and false. The comments called Jane Doe one of the "biggest sluts" on the campus and said she had "laid up" with three different men on one night.

Mr. Ivester said that the Delaware lawsuit does not name JuicyCampus as a defendant, and "we haven't received any papers" concerning the case. He would not comment further on the case.

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Los Angeles Times

Where Fans Buy & Sell
Sports, Concert & Theater Tickets GO

<http://www.latimes.com/sports/la-sp-streeter23-2008nov23,0,536881.column>
From the Los Angeles Times

KURT STREETER

Economy could bring out the bear in sports

With markets roiling in a tumultuous financial climate, teams and leagues can spend lavishly and, almost paradoxically, struggle at the same time.
Kurt Streeter

November 23, 2008

The latest economic news from the sports world presents us with a mixed-up, bipolar scramble.

ESPN just inked a fat, \$500-million contract to broadcast a full plate of college football bowl games beginning in 2011, a deal more than 50% bigger than the one currently in place.

But General Motors, cash-strapped and having already pulled support from two NASCAR tracks and golf's Masters tournament, announced it won't run a commercial during this season's Super Bowl.

The Yankees just ushered in the year's baseball free-agency spending spree, offering pitcher CC Sabathia the richest contract ever tendered someone at his position: a reported \$140 million over six years.

But last season, major league baseball attendance dropped for the first time in years.

The NBA is cutting nearly 10% of its workforce and has shuttered its L.A. office.

The NFL recently slashed playoff ticket prices and its commissioner frets publicly about everything from attendance to the fiscal health of corporate sponsors, to how the credit crunch may hurt new stadium plans.

Women's golf? Contracting. The Olympics? London 2012 organizers are scrambling to find top-tier sponsors and enough cash to build venues.

NASCAR? Two of its most prominent teams just melded together to cut costs.

All of this is more than a little confusing. In some parts of the sports world, it's as if the Wall Street meltdown is simply a stiff, inconvenient wind that can easily be ignored. Other, more cautious parts see not just a stiff wind but a terrible hurricane at the doorstep.

To gain some clarity on this matter I spoke last week with a handful of scholars who make their livings studying economics and athletics. A summation of their thinking: Yes, that is indeed a terrible hurricane at the doorstep. And yes, we can take the old adage that big-time athletics is somehow recession-proof, and toss it out the window.

But what of the news signaling that not much has changed? What, I wanted to know, of Sabathia and the reported \$55 million for two years offered Manny Ramirez and the fat TV deal that signals ESPN is bullish on the future?

A touch of silver-lining news in times like these should come as no surprise, said Wayne DeSarbo, director of the Center for Sports Business Research at Penn State. "In some sense every economic condition presents not only a loss, but an opportunity . . . which is exactly what we are seeing now," DeSarbo said. "Star players are going to get their money. It is going to be the middle-range guys who are going to get squeezed."

Adding to this scenario, DeSarbo said that on one hand, with the corporate world gasping for air, fewer athletes will have opportunities for gild-the-pocketbook endorsement deals. But on the other hand, a smaller band of athletes, likely the top tier or the extremely charismatic, will still make out like bandits.

On one hand, team owners will feel the heat if ticket sales sharply decline. Yet, even here lies opportunity. Television probably will take up the slack. Outlets such as ESPN know that if attendance drops more people probably will be watching live events from their homes, boosting the kind of captive audience that TV advertisers love.

That's a complex economic mix. What became of the much simpler view, the adage that a wall exists between our sports teams and economic shocks that hit broader society, such as the Great Depression?

And what to make of the fact the Lakers, Dodgers and Angels told me last week they've yet to feel a crunch, or the recent study by John Moag, founder of a Baltimore investment firm that specializes in sports?

"The sports industry may take a hit, but it won't be major," Moag wrote in the preface to that study, which asserts pro teams have actually thrived in the last several bear markets and that there's little reason to think much will change.

Don't get fooled, the experts warned. The recession has yet to bottom out, yet to really hurt gold-plated franchises like the Lakers, yet to damage sports in mega-cities with diverse economies such as L.A. But if the storm keeps brewing it will soon break through the doors of the standard bearers.

Moreover, to compare other downturns to this one is folly. The current climate in the athletic marketplace -- with its deep reliance on corporations and revenue from the behemoth that is modern media -- makes this period uncharted territory.

Yet some fundamentals never change. "I explain it to my students in terms of basic economics," said Sunil Gulati, an economics professor at Columbia who is also president of the United States Soccer Federation. "First off, there is going to be a big effect on sports, no doubt. It is really pretty simple. People are going to have less disposable income and that affects consumption. . . . Sport is not a necessity, it is a luxury. [That means] you are going to go to the ballpark, but you are going to go a few less times, and when you go you are going to buy less, you are going to carry the hat you had for your favorite team from last year and not buy the new one. How can this not have an impact?"

Gulati added that he's warily paying attention to corporate advertising, particularly ad revenue from the auto industry, which has long been lifeblood for our leagues and teams. Indeed, as the Big Three carmakers beg Congress for a bailout, the auto industry is primed to cut back on ad spending. General Motors plans a rollback of 20%, a spokesman told me last week, partly with cuts in marketing through sporting events.

"This is simply an economic picture" that we've never seen before, Gulati said.

Ken Shropshire, a professor at the University of Pennsylvania's Wharton School of Business, firmly underscored that point. In the early 1980s, Shropshire worked to reel in corporate sponsors for the 1984 Olympiad hosted by Los Angeles. The average cost for sponsorship then, he recalled, was \$4 million. He said that for this year's Games, sponsorships routinely cost roughly \$100 million, an outlay that Beijing sponsors such as Johnson & Johnson have decided is too costly right now to continue.

"That kind of difference explains how this environment is different than any we have seen before," Shropshire said. Four million dollars? A CEO would practically pull out his checkbook and write a check on the spot for that, he said. But \$100 million? That's an outlay companies are not readily willing to make now.

"When companies like Johnson & Johnson start pulling back, that's going to have a big impact on sports, no question," Shropshire said.

Even if the impact is a hard one, I found it heartening to hear some of the experts say it could end up making the sports world a better place.

Perhaps we will see teams and leagues less willing to take fans for granted, less willing to gouge us and trot onto the field of play a group of inaccessible, out-of-touch multimillionaires.

Perhaps tough times will teach fat-cat owners to run their ballclubs with the savvy shown by this year's Tampa Bay Rays -- who made it to the World Series with a small payroll by growing and keeping in-house talent we could identify with because of their scrappiness. There's no need for CC Sabathia in Tampa Bay.

"We may well come out of this seeing teams that are smarter and not as bloated as in the past," said David Carter, professor of sports business at USC, capturing my sentiments perfectly. "They can emerge from this stronger than before, better run . . . more attuned to fans and sponsors. Maybe they will have to learn to do more with less."

Nice sentiment. With the dark economic hurricane in our midst, there's hope for a better day, even as it relates to sports.

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PR Tactics and The Strategist Online

From manager to leader: The nine action steps to get you to a leadership role

Nov.20, 2008

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By Ken Jacobs

The following article appears in the fall issue of The Strategist.

For those of us who have toiled under ineffective managers, it's safe to say that managing and leading are two very different things.

While managers have many of the responsibilities of leaders — executing processes, supervising teams and achieving goals — their purview is more nuts and bolts. "It's about being on top of projects, having the right people on the right jobs and keeping the tactical work flowing in and out," says Brian McPeak, vice president, communications and public relations for [Rohm & Haas Company](#), a Philadelphia-based global supplier to the specialty materials industry. This isn't to denigrate the critical importance of management excellence. Leaders' visions can't come to life unless they have talented managers on staff with the proven ability to make things happen.

And leading is exactly that — having a vision and inspiring others to execute that vision. Our profession must develop these abilities among the current and next generation in order to secure our proper place in the C-suite and at the forefront of a communications industry that's changing with unprecedented speed.

For this reason, making the leap from manager to leader may be the most important move in one's PR career. Experts agree on nine actions people moving into leadership positions can take to become true leaders: articulate the values, create a vision, build trust, provide inspiration, act courageously, share the credit, establish empathy, be open and empower the team.

Articulate the values

To effectively lead a communications organization—be it a corporate communications department or a PR firm — it's critical to articulate its values. What's most important to you? By what standards does your organization live? What are the fundamental beliefs that define who you are and inform everything you do?

Followers only follow when they sense an alignment between the organization's values and their own. So you must answer those questions honestly. Nothing's more transparent to a group of potential followers than claiming to hold values that don't match the reality of your organization.

Commit these values to writing and seize every opportunity to reinforce them—in memos, newsletters, large meetings and informal one-on-ones, as well as via e-mails, blogs, your Web site and your company intranet.

More important than stating the words is living by them daily. When it comes to values, what you do always trumps what you say.

Tom Coyne, president and CEO of [Coyne PR](#), says that his company's mission statement, which includes being the best place to work, "gets me to do the right thing . . . every day."

Create a vision

Leaders wake up every morning wondering, "What comes after what comes next?" according to Joel Curran, APR, senior vice president of [Manning, Selvage & Lee](#) and managing director of its Midwest region. They constantly look outside the current framework to see where their organization is going and what it can be.

To lead, you must have the "broad, far-reaching vision that takes into account the macroenvironment and anticipates where the organization should be in the future," says McPeak. "It's your job to help potential followers see your vision and understand their part in making it happen."

According to Kim Sample, founder and CEO of New York-based [Emanate PR](#), getting others to make your vision their own is the true test of your leadership. "You know you're leading when it goes from 'my' vision to 'ours,'" she says.

To achieve this, leaders must strike a balance between being loyal to their values and having enough flexibility to modify their vision so that followers can have a stake in it and embrace it. "If you commit to a joint vision, you must be willing to let people follow their passion, experiment and take risks," says Sample.

To that end, Sample recommends setting big goals for the agency and for individuals. "Taking things a step higher galvanizes people behind the vision," she says.

Build trust

Followers don't follow a title; they follow someone who has earned their trust and inspired them to action. Effective leaders recognize that they derive their power from their followers, and with that comes enormous responsibility. Abuse that power or fail to live up to that responsibility and you erode trust. Without trust, your potential followers won't even consider your vision, let alone embrace it.

For potential followers to trust you, they must believe what you say and see you take consistent action.

Says Curran: "Building trust is the first step. Once you've done that you can say, 'Here's what I think is best, here's why, here are the milestones and here's how I'm willing to be measured. I can't promise you this approach will work, but here's why I believe it will.'"

Patrice Tanaka, co-chair and chief creative officer of [CRT/tanaka](#), says the best way to build trust with your followers is to "know what's right and act on it, no matter the consequences."

Trust is a critical part of the leadership equation. It's important to remember that while it can take months or years to establish, it can be lost in a moment and is enormously difficult to rebuild.

Provide inspiration

The ability to inspire followers may be the most important of the leadership skills, because "you don't choose to have followers. People choose to follow those they find inspiring, who present a vision of a better world," says Tanaka.

It's really about "head, hearts and feet," adds Sample. "First, can I get them to imagine the possibilities? Next, can I reach people in their hearts so that they embrace my vision and make it their own? Finally, can I inspire them to follow me?"

To inspire others, Sample says you "must believe that you can do anything you set your mind to." Ultimately, this type of thinking will permeate your team. "You know you're a leader when you've inspired your team to do something it didn't know it could do," she adds.

Act courageously

All the leaders interviewed reinforced that leading isn't for the fearful. If the ability to inspire is the most important leadership attribute, acting with courage is a close second.

It's one thing to have the vision, but the test of true leadership is "having the courage of one's convictions to act on it," says Tanaka. At these moments, "it's act or perish."

Tanaka has acted on her convictions a number of times during her career. This includes assembling a group of co-workers to purchase the firm where they worked to create Patrice Tanaka & Co. Inc., in 1990; risking a newly won client by telling them that their longtime strategy wouldn't work; and eliminating two clients that Tanaka felt were abusive to staff members. "I never regretted any of it," she says.

In 2005, when Tanaka was looking for a buyer for the agency, rather than focusing merely on purchase price, she sought a company that shared her firm's values. Tanaka felt that doing so was the best way to fulfill her obligation to those who had followed her for so many years.

She ultimately sold the firm to regional agency Carter Ryley Thomas, which, like PT & Co., had won multiple workplace awards.

Sample says it's the tough times that "get you to flex your leadership muscles." In 2006, she left Ketchum, which is known for its supportive network of senior leaders who've worked together for years, to found Emanate PR.

"It's exhilarating when you can make things happen on your own, without the safety net," says Sample.

Share the credit

Coyne encourages leaders to remember that “although the credit may come to you, that’s only because credit naturally is given to the top. So don’t believe your own hype.”

Instead, he recommends that when you get credit, respond “with a tennis racket, not a catcher’s mitt,” and spread the credit around the organization. “That’s where it’s deserved,” he says. Coyne also recommends giving praise in writing, publicly and often.

McPeak feels that one of the most important leadership tests is “the ability to let others get the spotlight.” This builds the confidence of future leaders.

Establish empathy and listen

Leadership isn’t a monologue. In order to ensure that the organization’s vision remains relevant and shared, leaders must understand their teams’ values and motivations, their worldviews, and their dreams for the organization and themselves.

To do so, leaders must regularly engage in dialogue with their followers and heed what they hear.

Establishing empathy is more than an auditory skill. According to Curran, leaders must be skilled in reading nonverbal cues, which tell you far more than words and indicate if listeners believe in and align with what you’re saying.

Through empathetic listening, leaders can successfully explain to their followers their importance to the organization’s success and inspire them to even greater heights.

Be open

There are at least three ways to demonstrate openness. First, be approachable and let your followers know you want their input, suggestions and ideas. Next, acknowledge when you haven’t succeeded.

“Leadership is a messy business,” says Tanaka. “Everyone thinks you have all the answers, but no one possibly can. Admit when you don’t know the answer, need help or have made a mistake. Articulating what you’ve learned from your failures will encourage your followers to take risks,” she adds.

Finally, stay open to new ideas, knowledge and learning. “In addition to having your moral compass as your guide, you must be a fully informed leader in order to make the best decisions,” says Tanaka.

Empower your followers

One of the most important things for a leader to learn is when to let go. “Whether your team is three [people] or 300, articulate the vision, create the strategy, show the direction and get out of the way,” says Curran.

“If you don’t empower others, it’s impossible to achieve a vision that’s truly shared,” says Tanaka. “Letting go is essential to leadership. Otherwise, you’re leading an organization of one.”

And while you should set the bar high, Curran cautions against judging your team’s performance too harshly. “Even if a team fails in achieving a particular goal, if you’ve inspired them and they’ve collaborated and functioned as a team, they haven’t failed, and you haven’t failed as a leader,” he says. “You’ve increased the odds that they’ll succeed the next time.”

You’re the leader: Now what?

When McPeak was promoted to his current position, he employed a two-part strategy for leadership success that others who have recently made the jump from manager to leader may well consider.

First, articulate the two or three most critical areas that must be addressed in order for the organization to achieve its strategic goals two to three years hence.

Next, take a long, hard look at your management structure. “Maintain what’s working, but now’s the time to consider getting some of your senior managers into new roles that will facilitate achieving your organization’s longer-term strategic goals,” McPeak says. “Doing so tends to encourage everyone to think more broadly while keeping the trains running on time.”

Developing your leadership potential

All agreed that one doesn’t need a senior title to act like a leader. In fact, leaders start to demonstrate these skills early on in their careers.

Sample encourages potential leaders to move out of the “complete the to-do list” mode as soon as possible and instead ask themselves such questions as, “What can I do to ensure that we’re heading in the right direction?” and “How can I make this project better?”

Curran suggests finding mentors within your company and “rather than graze, do a deep dive. Consistency is critical. So finding one or two who are willing to spend real time with you six times a year is far more valuable than having many who won’t devote time on a regular basis,” he says.

He recommends finding mentors who are outside your direct reporting line. This allows the mentor to be objective and the person being mentored to be candid. “It’s hard to tell your boss you’re having boss issues,” Curran says.

Also, it’s not necessary to seek mentors from your specific category of expertise, Curran says. “In fact, it’s preferable to find someone from a somewhat different function or practice area because that person can better help you look from the outside in,” he says.

To find the best mentor, particularly in organizations that don’t have formal mentoring programs, Curran advises observing company leaders and reaching out to those who appear to be natural coaches — who are compassionate listeners and who have a passion for, and are successful in, business. Likewise, they should have some seniority yet be interested in the careers of those below them.

McPeak recommends that future leaders seek seasoned “supermentors” from within the communications field but outside their organization, to provide an objective perspective.

Curran also recommends maintaining an insatiable appetite for knowledge and to “never be a passive learner. Ask questions and propose your own ideas to get reactions from your organization’s leaders.”

Says Coyne: “Success leaves clues. Observe those in your company who are the best leaders. Get to know them and ask what they feel makes them a good leader. [In addition], devour leadership books. There’s a lot of great thinking on leadership that’s out there for the price of a library card.”

McPeak cites three critical competencies he sees as valuable for any PR professional but essential for leaders in communications organizations: “A singularly important need for communications pros is to develop problem-solving skills. Next, understand business and build fluency in articulating a communications strategy that will enable business success. Finally, be extraordinarily adaptive and open to new ways of doing things.”

Remember that leadership isn’t bestowed. Like John Houseman said in those long-ago Smith Barney commercials, you have to earn it. What Houseman left out is that you must re-earn it daily. You’ll know if you’ve done so by turning around and seeing how many people are following you.

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Published: 11/20/2008

Do you really know how to start a speech?

By Peter Jacobi

Be sure you have command of the four 'knows' before writing your next speech

Know your speaker.

Know your audience.

Know your objective.

Know your subject.

Let's elaborate.

Over time, of course, you get to know your speaker, though even then you may permit yourself to forget the essence of his or her personality.

At the beginning of a relationship, you have to make sure you know enough about the speaker to make that person appear in your words.

Is your speaker dignified or down to earth? Use informal language or the folksy? Devotee of esoterica or prisoner to Sunday television sports? Serious only or humorous also? Jokester or humorist?

Is your speaker dynamic or low-keyed? Extrovert or introvert? Salesman or scholar? Entertainer or teacher? Coach or preacher?

What are his/her mannerisms? Style?

Talking to your speaker tells you a lot. Observing your speaker in various situations with various people does too.

What's in the speaker's office? Family photos? Trophies for bowling or trophies in the form of animal heads? Pictures of handshakes with the famous? Pictures of handshakes with employees? Whatnots and thingamabobs gathered in places ranging from Coney Island to Jakarta? Tribal masks or paintings or sculptures?

How is the office furnished, and does that give a clue?

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What books are on the bookshelf? (Indeed, is there a bookshelf?) What books and periodicals are on the desk, on the coffee table?

What's on the desk besides paper? And what about the paper? How much of it? In stacks or in disarray?

All these observations and reflections on your part will help you write a better speech, or at least one more manageable for your speaker.

Also, does the speaker speak in brief bursts of punchy language or in longer, more languorous fashion? What about expressions and/or quotations?

Getting to know you, as the song goes, is what you should be attempting unceasingly so that the writer and speaker can merge on paper.

Writers learn early in their careers the importance of understanding their readers or listeners or viewers, but somehow they tend to forget when they turn to the task of writing speeches for others. To know your audience is essential in the preparation of a speech.

Is it going to be friendly, ready to cheer no matter what it hears, or is it going to be suspicious, prepared to boo unless the speaker is awfully careful? That may depend on whether it's an awards dinner with your speaker as the award-giver or a gathering of environmentalists who felt they better hear from one chemical company representative, and your speaker is it.

Based on that, you make decisions on how to approach the subject, how to develop it and how far to go with it.

Does the audience know the subject or not? Is the audience tired of the subject or not? Can the audience understand the subject or not?

Based on your knowledge of these troublesome questions, you make decisions on how a speech is put together, how deep to dig and how long to make it.

Is it an audience of colleagues or clients or competitors? Is it an audience of the highly educated or the less so? Is it an audience of senior citizens or collegians or grade-schoolers? Is it a business gathering or the weekly meeting of the local Rotary?

Based on your knowledge of who they are you can decide what to feed them.

And will the audience be tired or fresh? Will you speak first during a long day, just before lunch, just after lunch or last? Will the speech be the primary order of business or are eating and drinking? Are they there to learn or to be kept busy? Are they present because they chose to be or because they have to be? Does golf or sailing come next or is your

speaker the entertainment?

All preparation can turn to disaster if the nature of the audience and the nature of the situation in which that audience gathers are not understood and taken into account. There's no better way for your speaker to be embarrassed. There's no better way for the speech to bomb.

Speakers too rarely know why they're giving a speech except that in a weak moment months and months ago they agreed to accept the assignment. But he/she and you must know your objective.

Will you want them merely to leave with added bits of knowledge to help them do their job better or live their lives more pleasurably?

Or will you want them to buy a product or an idea?

Or will you want them to leave ready to vote your way or go door-to-door in support of your campaign or picket?

Or will you want to inspire them?

Just what is the purpose of the speech? The speaker has to think enough about it until he or she knows, and you may have to ask questions until that purpose actually comes into focus. You have to know because there's no writing an effective speech without that in your mind.

A speech requires a sense of direction. It must go somewhere.

It's simply not enough for a speaker to want to talk to fill time with words. Too many speakers do just that; which is why too many speeches are unbearable.

So is the speech to be a diversion or a lesson or a sermon?

Get your speaker to verbalize a goal: "Here's what I want them to leave with." In one clear sentence. That'll make your job ever so much easier.

That'll make what you do much more effective. There may be two by-products:

1) The audience will remember the speaker, and 2) the speaker will remember you and let you keep your job.

Yes, and you should know your subject. Know it well enough that your copy can go beneath the basics to the fascinating and so rise above the basics to the momentous or consequential.

If you know the subject, you're much more likely to concentrate on one or two or, at the most, three points because you have sufficient support material at your disposal to expand and elaborate and drive a point or two or three home.

The scattershot approach to speechcrafting results from, 1) a speaker wanting to cover too much because he/she doesn't know any better and because he/she hasn't been educated properly by you, and 2) from the writer's lack of knowledge about the subject.

Through interviews with your speaker, through research and reportage and surveying, find yourself enough material to end up with examples and anecdotes, with quotes and statistics, with analogies and contrasts, with testimonials and definitions, and with a thorough appreciation for the process you're asked to unfold.

When you have enough juicy material, you can keep an audience involved. You can also select, discarding the less than best. You can tailor your stuff to what suits the speaker: stories for the storyteller, jokes for the jokester, inspirational quotations and passages for the ministerial sort, figures for the figure-oriented man or woman. And so forth.

When you have enough material, you'll come up with a better beginning, a more memorable ending and more intriguing information for in between.

A better-covered subject means you're more likely to have achieved your objective which means your audience will be better served which means your speaker will be a success which means you're appreciated and safe (and that's a good feeling, isn't it?).

Peter Jacobi was a contributing writer to Ragan Communications for many years, and is currently a professor emeritus at Indiana University's School of Journalism.



November 24, 2008

FSU's Myron Rolle garners media spotlight as Rhodes Scholar

Wetherell unapologetic for positive attention on FSU athletics

By Gerald Ensley
DEMOCRAT SENIOR WRITER

COLLEGE PARK, Md. — Paul Hamminen has done a few things in his life, too. The University of Alabama senior, who wants to be a filmmaker, has made documentary films, won awards for his short-story writing, tutored students in math and plays in a rock band.

Then he arrived in Birmingham as one of 13 District 7 finalists for a Rhodes Scholarship, only to find the spotlight was on a football player: Florida State defensive back Myron Rolle, who was also a candidate for the Rhodes Scholarship.

Reporters were camped out at the hotel where the candidates gathered, and Rolle's story was all over newspapers and TV.

Saturday morning when Hamminen and his father awoke to get ready for Hamminen's interview with the Rhodes committee, they turned on the TV in their hotel room and the very first thing they saw was an ESPN feature on Rolle's pursuit of the Rhodes.

"(The attention) was surreal," said his father, Pavo Hamminen, an administrator with the University of Alabama's College of Business. "When they got to the part about how (Rolle) was going to take a jet to the Maryland game, I joked to Paul, 'They don't even mention that you're going to take a Kia Sorento back to Tuscaloosa.'"

Eight hours later the hype finished with a flourish: Rolle and Duke graduate Parker Goyer were selected as the two District 7 winners of a Rhodes Scholarship. The scholarship allows students to do post-graduate study in Oxford, England. A total of 32 U.S. students, two from each of 16 districts, win Rhodes Scholarships each year.

The pursuit of a Rhodes Scholarship by a major college football player drew inordinate attention. The *New York Times*, *Washington Post* and *Sports Illustrated* did stories on Rolle. He appeared on National Public Radio and ESPN. *The Chronicle of Higher Education* — whose sports coverage is generally limited to examinations of NCAA regulations — was one of three publications that joined Rolle on the private plane from Birmingham to Maryland.

The *Miami Herald* sent a reporter to Birmingham to cover the selection. Bill Bradley, the former U.S. Senator, NBA star and Rhodes Scholar, appeared on a radio show to wish Rolle good luck in his pursuit.

After Rolle won, he was whisked to the Birmingham airport in a police escort, boarded a private plane to Maryland, then raced with another police escort to the stadium where he helped his teammates beat Maryland 37-3.

Fans at Maryland's Byrd Stadium greeted Rolle with a standing ovation. Rolle's teammates celebrated his accomplishment by giving him a Gatorade bath as the game ended.

Even football fans had to wonder if it was all a bit too much fuss.

"The media attention was not something we went after; it just occurred," FSU president T.K. Wetherell said. "What it shows you is the influence of athletics on people's lives. It says athletics is a great place to showcase your students."

Even so, FSU tried to tamp down attention in the final days because of concern expressed by Rhodes officials.

Rhodes Trust American Secretary Elliot Gerson — essentially the CEO of Rhodes operations in the U.S. — acknowledged he was dismayed by the publicity about Rolle's candidacy.

Gerson, himself a Rhodes Scholar, said it's not Rhodes' policy to announce the names of finalists — though "there is no prohibition of universities doing so." He said that while a "fondness for and success in sports" is one of the four criteria for the Rhodes, "frankly, it's always been the least important."

Gerson said he was a sports fan, but he worried the attention was unfair to Rolle and the other finalists.

"While certainly not angry, I have been concerned about the pre-selection publicity — which is extremely unusual to see," Gerson said Thursday. "I have no concern in any way that it will affect the deliberations of the committee; I'm confident they will make an objective decision.

"But I would not want any awkwardness or discomfort for the other candidates or Mr. Rolle."

The other candidates seemed largely unperturbed when they gathered in Birmingham. One candidate, Chris Chiego, said he had watched a report on Rolle's candidacy on ESPN last week and thought it was "neat" — even when he realized, "Hey, that's my district."

Chiego met Rolle at a Friday cocktail party for all 13 candidates in District 7. He was impressed by the football player, who chatted easily with everyone — "He's a really nice guy" — and said he was unworried Rolle's publicity would affect the selection process.

"Every (candidate) here is good, everyone here has done great things," said Chiego, a University of Georgia senior majoring in international relations. "I don't think (Rolle's fame) will have any effect on the committee."

Four years ago, FSU created an Office of National Fellowships to help undergraduates pursue the numerous prestigious post-graduate scholarships available. In four years, FSU students have won two Truman, two Goldwater, 18 Fulbright — and now three Rhodes — scholarships.

Wetherell was unapologetic for the positive attention Rolle's pursuit of the Rhodes focused on that program and FSU athletics — especially in a year that has included an academic-cheating scandal by FSU athletes and the suspension of five football players for an on-campus brawl.

"We've been getting a lot of attention for (athletes) who get in trouble," Wetherell said. "I'm not going to apologize for the ones who do the right thing."

Besides, the attention was unavoidable, said former FSU track and field All-American Garrett Johnson, who was FSU's second Rhodes Scholar in 2005. Johnson said his own pursuit was "kept under wraps" because FSU at that time had not had a Rhodes Scholar in 30 years and "we didn't

want to get anyone's hopes up."

But Johnson, who helped Rolle prepare for his Rhodes interview, said Rolle was in a different situation.

"Football is king in the South. There was no way that Myron was going to fly under the radar on this," said Johnson, who recently finished his two years at Oxford.

Certainly, Rolle was the talk of college football Saturday as most marveled at the academic achievement in such a time-consuming sport. Members of a visiting lacrosse team at the Birmingham hotel congratulated Rolle when he returned after his selection, with one player telling him, "You're what's good about college sports."

Rolle hopes so.

"I thought the attention was helpful and positive, not only to me but for Florida State and for student-athletes across the nation," Rolle said. "It showed that the stereotype that jocks are not students does not exist everywhere."
