



MAY 2021

On Par Leadership How to Be a "Hole-in-One" Leader

Photo by Cristoph Keil Unsplash

Here in the Philadelphia area, the weather is gorgeous, sunny, and warm. This kind of weather gets me really ramped up because I know that we are in golf season. I haven't been able to play for a couple of years so I'm itching to get back at it this year.

Recently, I had a bit of an "ah-ha" about how the game of golf and being a leader are connected. Great golfers are constantly making choices throughout their game in an effort to reach the minimum number of golf strokes or "par". Similarly, great leaders make lots of day-to-day choices to reach their business goals. For both the golfer and the leader, the quality of their results depends on an accurate assessment of the situation upfront. Situational golfing = situational leadership!

Suppose you and I were going to play a round of golf together. For each step in playing that round, I'll share my thoughts about how I see the leadership elements in that step.

First, we would review what the weather is going to be like on the day we want to play. Will it be sunny? Or will it be stormy? If lightning is predicted, our game would be a no-go. That would be too dangerous. When leaders are looking to make a new play with a key change, they need to accurately assess their environment. Is it the right time? Will people be receptive? Or is it too stormy of a time? Leaders want to make sure there is no "lightning" that might come at them unexpectedly and impact their ability to implement the change.

Then we would choose the course we want to play. Do we want to play a more challenging course than we are used to? How well do we know the course? Will our skills be able to handle it? We might decide to stretch ourselves a bit. Being self-aware of what we do well and what our limitations are, informs us which course we will play. Leaders who desire high performance need to accurately assess the skill levels of their employees. This tells them how they need to lead their teams. In some cases, they may decide to push or "stretch"

their employees in order to reach new levels of performance. No issue with this as long as that leader has a game plan on how to support those who may falter at times. Otherwise, it is likely to demoralize their teams.

Now we need to think about our equipment. Having the right tools to play with helps lead to our success. There are lots of tools in the game of golf just as there many different leadership philosophies and practices. And all of them probably work, though some better than others. The trick is picking the right tools that work for one's own game. Because at the end of the day, your game is your game and yours only. And at the end of the day, a leader leads in his/her own style. That's what makes them authentic and builds trust. And they have to figure out what tools or methods work for them to reach the performance they desire.

Are the spikes in our shoes sharp or are they worn down? Spikes in our shoes will help us to "stay on our feet" when swinging the club. I liken spikes to the values and beliefs about who you are and why you lead. Leaders that are strongly connected to their own values and beliefs heavily rely on them to bring stability and grounding to their leadership game. Particularly when those unpredicted, tough challenges come at them.

So we get to the course, pay for our round, and get our golf cart. The cashier reminds us to keep up our pace of play – "don't play slowly as it will hold up other groups behind you". The pace of play is really important in a round of golf and if we don't keep it moving, we could get kicked off the course. Business has its own "pace of play" with constant change that demands its leaders to keep up when playing their game or else they could get kicked off the marketplace course.

After playing a couple of holes, both of us realize we're not having the best round of golf. Though we have been choosing our clubs to hit the distances we know we are capable of, our shots are either landing in the thicker grass, in the woods, or worse, in the "drink". But that happens and so we keep on going. Sometimes as leaders, your best-laid plans don't get you the results you want. So you step back, reassess and change the tools or approaches you use. Often as leaders, you need help getting off the "tee". Use coaching resources and other support to help you out. You take another tack and do it over again – a "mulligan". As long as you keep moving forward towards the goal.

Leaders will be confronted with blind shots during their game, needing to make decisions without being able to clearly see the pin or final destination. As in golf, layups or making small steps towards the goal help you reach the green.

And throughout the leader's course, there will be the messes or "divots" created by others that as a leader you will need to clean up. Or you may make your own mess. Great leaders admit their mistakes and are open with their directs. But they clean up and fix their messes to make it a smoother play for the next leader that will come behind them.

And as we play our final 18th hole, we are already beginning to taste the refreshing drink we'll take in at the 19th hole bar. We will enjoy our rewards for a game well paid. Even if we didn't make that hole in one or even make par. Because we are celebrating how we played our game. That we played our game with clarity and made the best decisions we could with the information we had at the time. This is more important than actually reaching our goal. Leaders that make time for their teams to celebrate will reap their own rewards. They will have teams that are engaged, motivated, and are willing to play the round again with them.

And that my leader friend, will be your "hole-in-one"!

REMOTE WORK QUICK TIP!

Don't be the "Knights of the Round Table" remote work team!

Those who aren't as closely located with you can feel like they are left "out in the forest to forage" while those who can "sit round the table" can seem like the inner circle!

Create your "**Camelot**" team!

Pay special attention to those that are furthest away from you!



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Speaking Engagements

"Tricia was a featured speaker for our Spring Conference "A Change Would Do You Good" and she did not disappoint! She was flexible when we needed her to pivot from our in-person to a virtual learning event and our membership truly benefited from learning about how change styles play a part in leading successful change strategies."

- Karen Snyder, Global VP Talent Management

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