

## LEVINE ON LEADERSHIP

**Focus, clear perspective  
will lead to victory**

Last year at this time, I wrote a column about the important and humbling lessons I learned losing my club golf championship on the last hole. Well, a few weeks ago I got in the B1 (18 handicap flight) at my club and made it to the finals again – but this time I won.

I'm struck again by what an intense personal challenge teaches us about leadership and, this time, I gained new perspective on winning.

On this exceptional day – and for an 18 handicapper, shooting in the low 90s is an exceptional day – I experienced the zone of complete, purposeful, concentration. I can say without hesitation that's critical when we lead. What's more, that's how we want our teams to be functioning, as well. So how do we get there and take them with us? These are my takeaways:

**Get OK with wanting to win.** I wanted to win and I knew it. I didn't qualify or shrink from my goal or say "I'm just in it to have fun and enjoy the beautiful day." I wanted to win and I owned that fact completely. When I work with clients, I press them for the same thing – to set the bodacious goal and commit to it. If you can't say, "I want to be No. 1, no ifs, ands or buts," then you probably can't do it.

**Have a plan.** When I approached the first hole tee box, my tour caddy, Dennis Schack, said, "I thought about

it all last night and I have a plan. You're playing against a good player who hits long – you're going to have to beat him on the greens and around the greens." I recognized the value of what he was saying right away, and so the strategy was set. Now we needed to implement.

**Find people with great insight and listen to them.** By this time, I'd worked with Dennis for several days and we'd gotten good results. He'd gained my confidence and I really respected what he was telling me and teaching me.

Sometimes leaders feel pressure to have all the answers and it keeps them from finding smart people and listening. Dennis is both an MBA and a professional caddy. At this point he really knew my game, so we were able to move quickly and in sync. It's a huge difference for a leader to have access to a smart, independent voice – and the humility to listen to it.

**Concentrate.**

Easier said than done. But the strong presence of the first three components on my list set me free to concentrate completely on implementing my plan to achieve my goal. We'd come across a bad patch on the course and my advisor would

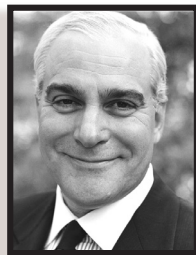
warn me, "Don't get distracted by the quality of the course – it doesn't matter. Stay focused on the strategy." Having a clear goal and plan let me

stay relentlessly calm as I moved forward. On 11, I hit a tee shot that went into the rough. It was short and could have destabilized me. I punched my ball out and refocused. I ended up losing the hole, but was able to maintain focus. That was my victory on 11 – keeping my concentration.

**Don't be afraid to believe.** A few weeks before the tournament, I'd had dinner with Monsignor Tom Hartman, who many readers will know as half of the God Squad. As you may also know, Hartman has Parkinson's disease. That night, we talked about his feelings on the disease. He talked about a challenge that Pope John Paul II often laid down: "Don't be afraid to believe." I actually lost the first hole of my final round, but as I walked the course to my second, I thought about Hartman. Instead of starting to feel afraid, I felt a pure sense of confidence and that led to my playing better and better. He had both inspired me and given me a sense of perspective. It was an incredible gift.

Make no mistake about it: For an 18 handicapper, it's a very good day when you can win the club championship in the B1 flight. I'm a competitive guy. I like to win. But the leadership lessons I took away were every bit as important that day.

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