

Coaching Enables A Leader to Go Farther, Faster

by Dennis Hooper, published April 15, 2003 in the Houston Home Journal

“You may be good. You may even be better than everyone else. But without a coach, you will never be as good as you could be.” So says Andy Stanley in his latest book, The Next Generation Leader. This column shares information from one specific section of this new book.

Stanley reports he has learned two valuable lessons about coaching:

1. I can go farther and faster with someone coaching me than I can on my own.
2. An effective coach does not need to possess more skills than the person he is coaching.

Age and experience do not diminish your need for a coach. On the contrary, age and experience tend to leave us in a rut. When there is no one around to spur us to change, we do the same things in the same way.

Young leaders face a different problem. Some feel they already know everything. Some feel the need to prove themselves. Whether it's pride or the way they are wired, young leaders with great potential often resist being teachable.

Learning assumes an attitude of submission. Whether older and more experienced or younger and just beginning a career, drop your refusal to submit yourself to the counsel of others. Find yourself a good leadership coach.

In the world of athletics, nobody performs his or her way out of needing a coach. In the world of leadership, however, we operate under the misguided assumption that because we are leaders, we don't need support, encouragement, and feedback. Unfortunately, we measure our leadership against what others are doing rather than against our God-given potential. And in the end, we never become all we could have been.

How are leadership coaches different from the athletic coaches we see charging up and down the sidelines? Leadership coaches are not as visible. They operate behind the scenes, making their presence known only before and after the game. They help you think creatively about potential approaches and appropriate follow-up. A coach will know what you are capable of and will push you to your limit.

An effective leadership coach observes, instructs, and inspires.

Observes. Leadership is a public performance, and your leadership is constantly on display. Why not plant a coach or two among the crowd?

Instructs. Good leadership coaches are teachers, providing feedback and helping you understand the effects of your behaviors. What you don't know about yourself does limit your influence with others.

Inspires. A good coach will instill in you a mental image of what could and should be true of you as a leader. The coach will help you clarify your preferred future and hold you accountable for doing everything in your power to achieve it.

Solomon, the wisest man ever, wrote more about seeking wise counsel than all other biblical writers combined. Why would the man who needed it least recommend it most? He realized that the wise man knows his limitations; it is the fool who believes he has none. Only the naïve operate under the assumption that they can make all the right calls without input from the outside.

If you can't find someone to serve as a leadership development coach, Stanley suggests you gather a group of peers and work through leadership literature together.

This opportunity is available to you through a Wednesday study group beginning next week, April 23. Over a six-week period, we'll be meeting for lunch at "The Swanson" restaurant in Perry to study Andy Stanley's book The Next Generation Leader.

If you want to join or just obtain information, give me a call at (478)-988-0237.