Charles Coonradt founded The Game of Work to answer the charge that U.S. productivity was not world class. Through it, he teaches businesses the principles that unlock keys to employee involvement, engagement, and energy. In The Better People Leader, the companion volume to The Game of Work, Coonradt takes it a step further to explore the crucial role leaders have in creating environments that foster success. Better people leaders motivate, inspire, empower, and lead their teams to greatness—greatness their teams often didn’t know they had in them. The Better People Leader contains the fundamentals that will help you get the most from whatever team you are called to lead.

Praise for The Better People Leader

"The Better People Leader should be required reading for anyone entering into management. Chuck Coonradt captures the essence of becoming a great people leader, and shows us how we can make a difference as leaders through a renewed focus on bringing out the best in our people."

David Lapp, VP of Manufacturing and Logistics, The Pepsi Bottling Group

"A brilliant, inspiring book. Chuck Coonradt is Knute Rockne in a business suit."

Lee Benson, Author and Journalist

"Chuck has hit another home run in his Game of Work series."

Fred Ferguson, Profit Enhancement Trainer, Associated Food Stores

"Chuck ties together and shares his insights from a lifetime of coaching, motivating and mentoring at a world-class level. [The Better People Leader is] a handbook for building great teams that can be used from supervisor to CEO."

Ron Hammond, President and CEO, U.S. Drinks
the
better
people
leader

Charles A. Coonradt

with Lisa Ann Thomson
Contents

Foreword vii
Acknowledgments xi
Introduction 1
Chapter 1: People Make the Difference 7
Chapter 2: The Better People Leader 17
Chapter 3: Get People Better 39
Chapter 4: Why People Don’t Do What You Ask 57
Chapter 5: Scorekeeping for Success 69
Chapter 6: Appropriate Feedback 77
Chapter 7: Honoring Your Mentors 91
Chapter 8: It’s the People 103
Notes 107
Resources 111
Index 113
As the head football coach of the University of Florida Gators, I experienced the honor of heading a team that was led to greatness by twenty-two seniors. I was hired by the University of Florida in 2004 to lead the football program to its expected high level of excellence. After two years at Florida, I found and helped cultivate the team leaders that would inspire the team to the 2006 BCS National Championship.

So I know what it means to lead teams to even greater performance levels or championship caliber. Early on in my coaching career, I had the honor and privilege of working for some "better people leaders," amazing coaches who I came to regard as my personal mentors. These men didn’t just do the minimum. They didn’t just get by. No, they wholeheartedly invested themselves in the success of the team and of each individual player and staff member. They showed...
me what it meant to go much further—and as a result, I learned what I had to do in order to win: develop leaders.

I started my coaching career as a graduate assistant for Coach Earle Bruce at Ohio State University. Coach Bruce knew everything about everyone on the team and staff and nothing escaped his eye. His attention to detail was astounding and he was always prepared for anything that happened to arise. He demanded that his players attend class and work hard academically and on the practice field. If a coach did not coach to his standards, he coached that person as well as the players. Coach Bruce invited me to join him at Colorado State University as the receivers’ coach and the program quickly started to improve under his guidance. After the first season, CSU was invited to the Freedom Bowl and defeated Oregon. It was CSU’s first bowl appearance in almost fifty years.

When Coach Sonny Lubick took over the helm at CSU, I was invited to remain as the receivers’ coach. Success continued under Coach Lubick. While their styles were different, Coach Bruce and Coach Lubick were extraordinarily similar in meticulous preparation, hard work, and knowledge of every player in the program.

At the University of Notre Dame, I was the receivers’ coach under head coach Lou Holtz. In addition to learning more about preparation and hard work, I was able to learn from an outstanding motivator who knew exactly what to say and when to say certain things to drive and inspire his teams.

What I learned from all three of these mentors was that people—both the players and the coaching staff—are a coach’s most important resource. I learned that the more you invest in your people and the more you do to develop their leadership skills, the more you gain from them. For me that means investing the time and effort to recruit the best. It means getting to know each and every player on the team, including each person’s strengths and weaknesses, so that I
can make sure his talents are being used to the full potential. It means knowing what best motivates my players and what needs they have that must be met in order to get the best effort out of them. Most importantly, getting to know your team members shows them that you truly care about them, about their success, and about the success of the team. And the more you care, the more your players care about doing the best they can for you and leading others to do likewise.

In this powerful, insightful leadership book, Chuck Coonradt teaches you the fundamental lesson that every leader needs to know—that every leader has the power to lead a team that was just getting by to extraordinary accomplishments. This book will show you exactly what it takes to do that. It’s not easy—it takes lots of commitment and hard work. But it’s far from impossible. On the contrary, it’s extremely possible for anyone who is willing to invest the time and effort to understand and apply the principles that Chuck outlines so well in this book.

Here is a book that finally articulates the secret to the success of the world’s better people leaders: the fact that in order to experience success, you have to first create an environment for success to happen in. It’s something I do every day as the coach of national champions, and if you do it too, you will lead your team to greatness.

Urban Meyer
Head Football Coach, University of Florida
Introduction

What is it that we love about certain movies? Think about *Miracle*, which is based on the story of the 1980 U.S. Hockey Team and their dramatic Olympic gold medal victory. *Remember the Titans* is the story of a newly integrated high school and its football team in 1971 as they overcome prejudice among themselves and the community to achieve an undefeated season. What about *We Are Marshall* and its telling of a young coach determined to rebuild the football program at Marshall University after seventy-five members of its football team and coaching staff were killed in a plane crash in 1970? Who doesn’t feel inspired by these stories, particularly knowing they are based on real events and real people? Even fictional characters like Akeelah, her teacher, and her principal in *Akeelah and the Bee* make us cheer as we watch this young girl rise above her circumstances to excel and win the National Spelling Bee. And one of my favorites is *The Mighty Ducks*—the tale of a ragtag group of
teen hockey players and their unlikely coach who turn a losing team into a championship team.

We love to see average people do above-average things. We love to see people change their minds and hearts and reach a new level of understanding. We especially love to see inspirational leaders motivate others to reach new levels of greatness. And whether the characters are real or fictional, the underlying principles are true: average people can do above-average things; people can change their minds and hearts; and great leaders inspire people to greatness every day.

I see it happen in businesses regularly. In my work as a management consultant, I have taught many principles of leadership, and I have been thrilled as I’ve seen people take these principles to incredible levels, far beyond my own expectations. I love to see teams and their coaches come from behind and win.

One such team I know was led by Don Pritchard. Don was hired at a manufacturing company to manage inventory, shipping, and receiving. His department was responsible for warehousing inventory and fulfilling requests to supply materials for other departments. Don had almost twenty years of experience in manufacturing, but he had never managed a warehouse before. To make the situation more challenging, the department was suffering from an extremely bad reputation in the company. This department experienced only ninety percent accuracy when a request came in, meaning one in ten items was not on the shelf when they went looking for it, and therefore, one in ten requests could not be fulfilled. That caused tremendous frustration for the workers within the department and for others outside the department who relied on the warehouse stores. The department was widely criticized by the rest of the company, and they were blamed—rightly or wrongly—for a variety of problems. Morale within the department was terrible. “I think if I were to put it in one phrase, they lacked self-esteem as a group,” Don told me.
Don’s challenge from the company was to improve the way this department functioned. Now, many managers might come into a situation like this and clean house. If they fire everyone who has been causing this mess for so long, they can get new bodies and train them how they want them to work. But Don took a different approach. He didn’t clean house. He remodeled.

Don decided he needed to get to know each person on his team individually. He wanted to learn their strengths and their weaknesses and hear their frustrations. He took the time not just to interview each person but also to work alongside each of his employees. By spending the time to work with each individual (and, Don assures me, it does take an investment of time), he learned a lot about the business, the department, the problems, and the people on his team. He also discovered many of the reasons why the system was not functioning well. He began to understand why it was taking ten minutes to fulfill one order and why one in ten times the item was not on the shelf when someone went looking for it.

But perhaps more importantly, by learning about the department from the employees themselves, Don empowered them to help solve the problems. He was able to say to people, “That’s an interesting problem. What would you do to solve it?” Through the process, he learned individual strengths and weaknesses and was able to better utilize his people. “I don’t think there’s anyone who comes to work and wants to do a bad job,” Don says. “Just play to their strengths. Don’t put them in a position where they will fail.”

In the end, his department, as a team, developed a new system of organization. They reorganized the warehouse, they improved their processes, and they let go of inefficiencies. As a result, accuracy went from ninety percent to more than ninety-nine percent. In reorganizing the warehouse they saved warehouse space by thirty-five percent. And with the same number of people on
staff they were able to accomplish ten to fifteen percent more work each day.

Don didn’t wish for better people. Don coached who he had. As a result, his department changed dramatically. Everyone in the department was formally recognized and commended by the company for the significant improvements he or she had made. You can imagine what that did for morale.

This is the power of a good leader. It’s not just about making the department work better. It’s about making the people work better and feel proud of their accomplishments. Because people do want to feel proud of their accomplishments. Like Don said, nobody comes to work wanting to lose. They want to win.

I founded my business, The Game of Work, on the belief that if you apply the principles of sports and recreation to the workplace, you can create a sense of motivation, urgency, and, yes, even fun in your company that will translate into better productivity, happier employees, and a more successful business.

I’ve observed over the years that people will pay for the privilege of working harder than they will work when they are paid. It’s a mouthful, I know, but follow me on this one. I see it all the time. I live in a ski town in the Rocky Mountains and I see people collectively spend thousands and thousands of dollars every day during the winter to spend hours and hours freezing, falling, and flying down the mountain until they can hardly catch their breath. I’ve seen people spend hundreds, even thousands, of dollars on backpacking gear so they can walk for fifteen miles a day for a week, sleep on the ground every night, cook freeze-dried food over a fire, and battle bugs, rodents, reptiles, and sunburns. I’ve seen people pay to jump out of airplanes, climb mountains, backpack through Europe, and drive cattle at a dude ranch. In short, I’ve seen people pay an awful lot of money to work awfully hard.
I’ve also seen people call their union rep if they didn’t get an afternoon break. I’ve seen people absolutely refuse to come in a minute early or stay a minute late. I’ve seen people spend hours writing e-mails for every reason except work. I’ve seen people spend hours “tidying” their desk and watching the clock. One of my favorites was a receptionist who rolled her eyes and told the person on her cell phone to “hang on” while she grabbed the company’s main line—like it was an interruption.

People will pay money to work their tails off, yet they will not work their tails off when they are being paid money. I’m not suggesting all American workers are lazy. There are a lot of hard workers out there getting it done every day. I am suggesting there are principles that motivate people to work hard when they are recreating and those principles can be successfully applied to the workplace.

I’ll say it again—everybody wants to win. Yet millions of workers go to work every day and do their jobs without knowing how to win—without knowing their goals, without knowing if they are progressing toward those goals or even how progress is measured, without knowing the rules, and ultimately without bringing their best productivity to the company. Unless people believe winning is possible, they will never exert the kind of effort it would take to win. They won’t exert even half that effort. When that happens, nobody wins.

I don’t blame the workers. I actually blame the coaches. Oh sure, there are workers who don’t work and won’t work no matter how ideal an environment they are in. Let those guys work for your competition. There are lots of people who work hard. They give you their all and would give you more if they knew how. As a coach, you can have incredible talent on your team, but if you don’t create an environment for success, your team will never be incredible. And without incredible teams, companies don’t become incredible. They plod along at best and falter at worst.
So I’m going to focus on the coaches from here on out—or as I like to call them: better people leaders. In this book’s companion volume, *The Game of Work*, I expound more thoroughly on how the principles that lead to motivation in recreation can lead to motivation—and remarkable success—in the workplace. But because people are central to any success (and any failure) in a company, the concepts of becoming a great coach and coaching your people to greatness merit special treatment.

Better people leaders motivate, inspire, empower, and lead their teams to greatness—greatness their teams often didn’t know they had in them. How that is done will fill the rest of this book. I have observed and coached and worked alongside thousands of leaders in my career. Over that time, certain themes have come up continually in the best of the leaders I have worked with. I have compiled those themes in this book in hopes of helping others become the kind of leaders who inspire, like Don Pritchard and others do. But I’ll warn you up front: I believe in fundamentals. I hope as you read you say again and again, “Yes, of course!” because you knew it all along. These are fundamentals that can be applied at work, at home, and even at play that will help you get the most from whatever team you are called to lead.
The first step to becoming a better leader of people is knowing what one looks like. I often use the term “coach” in my work not just because it fits with the whole philosophy of the Game of Work, but also because I believe that for managers and executives, or even parents and spouses, “coaching” is a better description of what we do, or should be doing, than just about anything else.

But recently I’ve found myself using slightly different terminology. I’ve taken to calling coaches “better people leaders.” Lots of people lead people. But some are better people leaders than others. What makes them better? What sets a better people leader apart from an average people leader? It begins with a leader’s attributes and ends with the execution of those attributes in leadership situations.

So we start with the attributes. This is a list of what I have observed over the years in better people leaders. As I take you
through these attributes, think of yourself and do a little self inspection. I even hope you squirm a little. Honestly assess yourself against the attributes of better people leaders—even if it means you have to admit your weak points as well as your strong points. I’ll ask some self assessment questions at the end to help you gauge your current standing and then offer tips for improvement.

**They have a global vision.**

They see the big picture, they think outside the box, they don’t have tunnel vision—use whatever cliché you want, but the fundamental remains the same: the better people leader has a bigger view of her world. She sees where she is heading, where she currently is en route, and what’s around her. You can compare her to the architect who sees the final skyscraper before it’s articulated on paper, to the composer who hears the whole symphony before he scribbles out a note, to the artist who envisions the finished work and knows just where to paint the first stroke.

Or you can compare her to the CEO who knows where her company is today and where it should be next month, next year, in five years, in ten years. She also knows where her competition is and where the market is, and she watches closely to see where they both are heading. She knows the skills and talents of her people today and what they can be in the future. She doesn’t just plug away at today’s questions or even tomorrow’s, but she thinks, plans, and prepares for the long run.

**They can break down the global vision into steps.**

The beauty of the better people leader is that he doesn’t lose his head in the realms of global visions. He also has his feet firmly planted on the ground and can determine—and communicate—the sequence of steps that will achieve the vision.
Perhaps most importantly, the better people leader knows the *next best step* to attaining the global vision—by month, by player, by account, by behavior, by whatever digestible chunk it might be. He has the ability to link the details to the vision. You might say he has a micro understanding of the macro and can determine the next best step for reaching his larger goals.

For example, I knew of a printing company that had a great reputation with its current clientele but wanted to significantly expand its client base and revenue. However, the company had older equipment and hadn’t kept abreast of changes in printing technology.
The owner wanted to see the company grow, but he failed to acknowledge that printing technologies had changed and his competition had changed with them. Until the company identified and then took the next best step—upgrading its equipment—it could no longer offer competitive services because of its dated technology. The company finally did and it continues to thrive as a regional printer.

**They focus on team excellence rather than their ego.**

When it came time to take the 2006 USA Basketball Team’s official photo, the new head coach and managing director were positioned right in the middle. But that’s not where they stayed. “We aren’t going to sit there. Coaches will be on the side,” said Mike Krzyzewski, coach of team USA and Duke University’s men’s basketball team. “The players are the most important, and they are supported by us. The only way to accomplish what we want to accomplish is to do it together. It’s not about me or any single individual.”

The better people leader supplants his need for a personal win with the need for a team win. He seeks to develop the potential of the team, motivate them to victory, and then let them take the credit. Through the research that became *Good to Great*, Jim Collins found that superstar (read: super ego) CEOs rarely led “great” companies. They often led “good” companies. The great companies were more often led by CEOs with very different characteristics: modesty, self-effacement, and humility. They were also fanatically driven to achieve company, rather than personal, success.

Shackleton could have let his ego get in the way when his ship became trapped in the ice and the expedition came to a halt. He could have let himself become despondent and miserable at this failure; instead, he turned his focus to the team and to leading them through the winter.
The better people leader is always focused on the growth and success of the people on his team. If the consequence is that he gets squeezed out the top because he’s trained people on his team to be better at his job than he is, then good for him. He’s probably onto something better himself.

Charles Percy is a great example of this. He was a business leader and a former senator for Illinois. In 1949 he was made CEO of Bell & Howell Corporation—at just twenty-nine years old. A national business newspaper interviewed him shortly after he was named president, and the conversation went something like this:

Reporter: “How did you make this incredible jump in such a short time?”

Percy: “I read the book.”

Reporter: “What do you mean?”

Percy: “When I got my first position at Bell and Howell, I applied the standard time-management principles:

1. Itemize. I listed the results I wanted and the tasks required to achieve them.
2. Categorize. I put similar items together.
3. Prioritize. I decided what things were most important and which ones could be put aside for later.
4. Delegate or eliminate. I decided on what could better be done by someone else and, more important, what didn’t have to be done at all.”

Reporter: “What’s so unusual about that?”

Percy: “Some might find it unusual that I delegated or eliminated everything.”

Reporter: “Everything? Weren’t you worried about having nothing to do?”

Percy: “No, not for long.”

Reporter: “What happened?”

18 | chapter two
Percy: “Interestingly enough, another position opened up in the department. When the personnel manager called down for the specifications to begin the hiring search, my manager said, ‘We don’t need to hire anyone. Let’s just give the job to Percy. He doesn’t have anything to do.’”

Reporter: “What did you do then?”
Percy: “The same thing I did before: I itemized, categorized, prioritized, and delegated or eliminated.”

Reporter: “How much of your work did you delegate or eliminate this time?”
Percy: “All of it.”

Reporter: “Didn’t that worry you?”
Percy: “Not really. Before long the department manager’s position became available. When the personnel manager called down for the position specifications, the boss said, ‘We don’t need to hire anybody. We’ll just give the job to Percy. He doesn’t have anything to do.’ This went on for some time, until, five years later, the board of directors was looking for a new chief executive officer. Guess what they said: ‘Let’s give the job to Percy. He doesn’t have anything to do.’”

Under Charles Percy’s leadership, company sales grew thirty-two-fold, employment grew twelve-fold, and the company went public.

They know their team members.

Knowing the individuals on your team is more than just knowing their names and knowing what projects they are working on. Knowing their names is a great start, and knowing their projects is even better. But what else do you know about them? Do you know their husband’s or wife’s name? Do they have kids? What are their names? What do they do when they aren’t at work? Did you know Bob runs marathons and Annie loves to water ski? Do they have a
particular talent or hobby you could tap for the next company party? Are there situations at home you ought to be aware of?

I was discussing this point at a workshop, and someone mentioned an Army squad leader he knew. The leader kept a book full of information about every member of the squad—if they were married, if they had kids, what their back stories were, etc. His rationale for keeping such a record was simple: one of the best ways to keep his soldiers safe was to know them. If he knew his soldiers and did everything he could to keep them happy, then those soldiers would give him everything they had. If those soldiers were worried about their families or had other things occupying their minds that he didn’t know about, then he couldn’t do anything to help. And that didn’t help the individual or the team.

They care about their team members.

To know your team is to be concerned for them. You’ve heard the saying, “I don’t care how much you know until I know how much you care.” Better people leaders genuinely care about their employees, and their employees feel their sincere concern. They care about employees’ successes on the job, and they care about their happiness off the job. It may be something as simple as recognizing a contribution and saying, “Thank you for your hard work.” Or it may be something as dramatic as helping during a family emergency.

I love the story told in Ken Follet’s On Wings of Eagles. It recounts a dramatic rescue mission undertaken by Ross Perot, founder of Electronic Data Systems Corporation and chairman at the time. During the Middle East hostage crisis, he set out to free two of his employees from an Iranian prison and safely evacuate dozens of Americans. The main story itself is a dramatic example of a leader showing his employees how much he cares by orchestrating a rescue mission even the U.S. military couldn’t do. But there is an anecdote
within the bigger story that exemplifies on a very personal level how a better people leader cares about his employees on and off the job.

Jay Coburn, who was a key player in the rescue operation, relates an experience when his son was born. The baby appeared to be healthy, but the day after his birth, doctors detected a heart abnormality. Coburn and his wife were beside themselves. Coburn called his boss to tell him of the problems, and his boss put him on hold. When he came back on the line, he had Ross Perot with him. Coburn was a low-level employee in a different state; he was shocked that the founder and chairman was on the phone. In the course of a short conversation, Perot got a leading cardiac surgeon on the line who was in turn able to get the child immediately transferred to a larger hospital with top specialists. In the end, the child’s problems were addressed and he went on to thrive. For Coburn, the experience left a lasting impression about what the chairman of his company was willing to do for his employees.

Whether it’s a dramatic display of concern such as this or a simple acknowledgement of a tough day, the better people leader demonstrates to his employees how much he cares by his actions as well as his words.

They know their stuff.

Once they know how much you care, they actually do care how much you know. People generally have little patience for bosses who they consider less than competent. Can I invoke Dilbert here? Have you ever read a Dilbert cartoon and thought, “Hmmm. I wonder if Scott Adams knows someone at my company.” Dilbert is popular because far too many workers can relate, particularly to the Pointy-Haired Boss and the frustration of his staff. The Pointy-Haired Boss is depicted as a manager who knows nothing about anything, really, and least of all about the business he manages. Dilbert
wouldn’t be funny if the Pointy-Haired Boss were intelligent, informed, and understood his business. The better people leader isn’t funny.

One of my favorite better people leaders is Bob Wheaton, president and general manager of Deer Valley Ski Resort in Utah. Each winter, the Game of Work hosts a coaches’ ski retreat at Deer Valley, and Bob gives us a tour of the facilities. I’ve been on the tour dozens of times, but I am continually amazed at what Bob knows about his resort. He’ll take us through the snow-making operations and he’ll tell us every detail about those machines—how much snow they make, what pressure is involved, how often they are used, you name it. Then we’ll go over to the ski school and he’ll know how many instructors he’s got, what countries they are from, how many students pass through his resort each year. Then we’ll go to the business offices and get the same detailed story. Bob knows his stuff. As a result, he’s got a crackerjack staff who respects his knowledge and respects him as a leader. His resort has one of the highest percentages of resorts in North America of returning staff and of existing staff referring others to job openings. Deer Valley consistently ranks in the top three resorts in North America for best customer satisfaction by readers of SKI Magazine; in 2005, it was rated as the #1 overall resort in North America by SKI Magazine readers.

They have great confidence in their players.

In fact, they have greater confidence in their players’ abilities than the players themselves have. Bill McCartney, former University of Colorado football coach and founder of Promise Keepers, said it simply enough: “Coaching is taking them someplace they don’t believe they can get on their own.”

A better people leader sees potential in the individual and the team that they can’t even see in themselves. A land developer can look
at a raw piece of land and see that if he added infrastructure and enhancements, he could change the market value of the resource. The better people leader sees similar long-term potential in her team members. To achieve this, a coach is entitled to be unreasonable—in a reasonable manner. A great example of this is my personal fitness trainer, Jodi. I’ve worked with her for years, and for most of that time I’ve considered her completely unreasonable in the things she’s asked me to do, things I absolutely knew I did not have the capacity to do. But working with me step by step, she has continually managed to get me to a new level of fitness beyond whatever my previous capacity has been.

The better people leader does the same. She motivates, inspires, empowers, and leads her team to greatness, and she does not allow team members to substitute excuses for improvement.

They coach their players where they need it.

Legendary UCLA basketball coach John Wooden, known as the “Wizard of Westwood,” coached his team to nineteen conference championships and ten national championships. With a record like that (and he had many more records under his belt before he retired), you might imagine he had some pretty slick coaching techniques—and he did. One of his most famous was a little trick he picked up while coaching high school ball: teach them how to put on their socks.

Coach Wooden found early in his career that if he could help his players prevent blisters, he could get more out of them. So one of the first things he did with his teams was teach them how to properly put on their socks, smooth out all the wrinkles around the toes and heel, and determine the right size of shoes.

The better people leader knows the point of need for each individual on his team and works with the individual from that starting point. In Coach Wooden’s case, if blisters were the need, then he
had his players put down the basketball and put on the socks—properly. He coached them at the point of their need even if the need seemed to have nothing to do with the game.

They know when to cheer and when to challenge.

My wife takes tennis lessons. She often comes home from a lesson and raves about her coach. In her mind, he is the best tennis coach in the state. I have no doubt that he is very capable, but the best in the state? Why does my wife feel so strongly about her coach? Because he knows when to cheer and when to challenge. She could do fifteen lousy serves in a row, and he still cheers her on. He will gush over the things she did just right, and then he’ll appropriately point out ways she can make her next serve better. And what will she do? She’ll hit that ball fifteen more times. It’s not a matter of faking the positive or ignoring the problems. It’s a matter of keeping the balance.

Constant criticism is a terrible people motivator. Constant cheering might seem a little Pollyanna. But better people leaders know when to cheer and when to challenge—and how to keep the balance appropriately tipped. I wish I could explain exactly how this is done. It is most certainly done on an individual basis—some people will need the balance tipped a little more to the “cheer” side, while others will do well with constructive challenges.

I knew of a young lady studying piano at a university. This particular woman was rather sensitive about her skill level because she had only started playing the piano in high school, whereas most of her classmates had played since they were children. She constantly felt behind the curve despite her obvious talent. At the university, she started with a piano teacher who was supportive and encouraging yet demanding and unyielding. The balance worked well for this young woman. She needed it tipped to “cheer,” and her teacher understood that. However, after a year her teacher went on sabbatical and this
young lady was forced to start with another piano professor. She soon
discovered her new teacher preferred fear and berating to motivate
her students. Her new teacher would constantly tell her how terribly
she played, how poor she must be at practicing, that she was lazy and
didn’t work hard enough, and how she would never be an accom-
plished pianist. The poor thing buckled under the constant barrage
of criticism. She developed stomach ulcers and clinical depression,
and she almost dropped out of her program. Fortunately, a new
teacher joined the staff and teaching assignments were rearranged.
This young woman went on to thrive under a new teacher and com-
pleted her music degree.

A better people leader knows, even if just through an attuned
sensibility for her employees, when to cheer and when to challenge
and the appropriate ways to do both. They publicly cheer and pri-
vately criticize. And they get the most from the people they lead in
terms of productivity and loyalty.

They are patient, persistent, prodding.

The better people leader is in it for the long haul. Change,
 improvement, training, and reaching goals all require time, effort,
and focus. From the better people leader, that requires patience, per-
sistence, and prodding—of his team and of himself. Coach Wooden
again is a good example of this principle. He began his coaching
career in 1932 at a high school and moved on to UCLA in 1948.
Guess when he won his first national championship? More than thirty
years after he started coaching—in 1964.9

“If you want good things to happen, work for it,” Wooden
once said in an interview. “Know that you can’t stand still. You’ve got
to continue to improve. I don’t think anyone stops improving. I hope
I was a better coach my last year coaching than I was the year before.
But I know full well in the earlier years there was more improvement
needed, and I improved more in the earlier years. But I never lost the fact that I must continue to improve. Never be satisfied. Always look for ways to be better.\textsuperscript{10}

They minimize uncertainty.

Someone recently told me about a place at which she used to work that illustrates this point well, in the converse. It was a large corporation and she was an early-career employee in one of its many departments. The head of her department had become known for sitting in his corner office and scheming up ways to make improvements to the department. Shortly after she started working there, she saw a disconcerting pattern. Every few months the employees were called into last-minute meetings and were given new and seemingly random directives. In one particularly dramatic meeting, a slide was flashed for all to see (a slide that none had seen prior to the meeting), outlining a new organizational chart with everyone’s new assignments, effective immediately. High-level managers who had been with the company for twenty-five years were spun off to non-managerial slots before everyone’s eyes. As a result, the department was thrown into a tailspin. Tension skyrocketed, productivity plummeted, and unscheduled meetings were dreaded. The young employee told me that the actions of her department head proved to her that no matter what time and loyalty she gave, she would always feel uncertain of her present and future with the company. As a result, she left.

The better people leader does everything in her power to minimize uncertainty. In sports, the rules do not change midgame. They don’t even change midseason. And when they do change, there is much discussion and expectation for the coming rule changes. Players never step on a field of play uncertain of the rules. The better people leader doesn’t expect that of her players either. A business is dynamic and in constant motion. It is therefore the responsibility of
the better people leader to minimize wherever she can the uncertainty her team feels, and prepare them wherever she can for the uncertainty that can’t be controlled. Most importantly, she needs to make sure her actions don’t unnecessarily cause uncertainty.

To do this, she minimizes uncertainty wherever she finds it. If someone has a question about the direction of the company or concerns about the latest rumor, the better people leader answers it. The cost of not answering questions is the perpetuation of uncertainty, which leads to fear, which leads to paralysis. No one does their best work in a state of fear.

The better people leader also insulates her team from the vagueness of changing management initiatives. When the better people leader establishes goals, correctly prioritizes scorecards, and consistently coaches to those priorities, she not only reduces uncertainty but also instills confidence in her team members.

**They are consistent.**

The better people leader consistently coaches. One of the best tools for managing uncertainty—and one of the most desirable traits in a better people leader—is consistency. This doesn’t mean she can’t be flexible, quick-thinking, or open to change. It means she’s predictable in her attitudes and trustworthy in her actions.

For my colleague and friend Bob Stauth, who served as chairman and CEO of Fleming Companies, Inc., consistency in leadership is synonymous with integrity. He described it to me like this: “Integrity says to others, ‘Can I trust him? Is he consistent in his thought processes? Does he have a different response depending on who he’s talking to?’ ” The better people leader demonstrates integrity through consistency in action, speech, and attitude.
SELF-ASSESSMENT

Now think about yourself. Coach Wooden liked to say, “It’s what we learn after we think we know it all that really counts.” As I listed the above attributes, I purposely talked about the better people leader in the third person since I can’t assume I’m describing you. Perhaps I am, or maybe I am describing the person you hope to become. Only you know how many of these attributes describe you today and how many will describe you in the future.

So take a few minutes to assess. First, make these attributes more real to you. I gave several examples of people who demonstrate these attributes; now think of examples from your life. Think of those in your life you would consider better people leaders. What attributes do they possess from this list? Do they have other attributes not on the list that you admire? On the pages provided at the end of this chapter, make a list of these people and then for each person, note the specific attribute and a specific experience that demonstrates the attribute in action.

Next, think of yourself. What attributes do you know you already possess? Make a list. What attributes do you think you possess, but would like to strengthen? Make another list. What attributes do you know you don’t possess and need to focus on? Make a third list.

Keep these lists where you will see them often, and use them to set goals. Set a goal right now. Choose one thing from your want-to-strengthen list or your need-to-focus-on list and decide on something you can do immediately to improve that attribute in yourself. Do you need to cheer more than you challenge? Can you offer five people some positive feedback every day this week? Do you need to be better at learning your players’ needs and coaching to meet them? Can you identify the needs of one player and think of one way to meet them at their point of need this week? Do you need to subordinate your own ego and focus on team excellence? Can you
identify a recent situation in which you may have focused more on yourself than your team? How can you do better next time?

SELF-ASSESSMENT STEPS

1. Make the Better People Leader attributes more real to you. Think of those in your life you would consider better people leaders. What attributes do they possess from this list? Do they have other attributes not on the list that you admire?

2. Think of yourself. Make a list of the attributes you know you already possess. Make a list of the attributes you think you possess, but would like to strengthen. Make a list of the attributes you know you don’t possess and need to focus on.

3. Keep these lists where you will see them often, and use them to set goals. Set a goal right now. Choose one thing from your want-to-strengthen list or your need-to-focus-on list and decide on something you can do immediately to improve that attribute in yourself.

4. Make the Platinum Pledge: “I will coach my team better than I am being coached.”
See the global vision of becoming a card-carrying better people leader, and then start with digestible chunks to get you there. Be patient with yourself, but persistent and prodding at the same time, as you constantly seek improvement. And most of all, have confidence in yourself and your ability to lead people better. If you can do all that for yourself, chances are strong that you can do it for your team.

Finally, make the Platinum Pledge: “I will coach my team better than I am being coached.” That pledge will mean different things to different people. If you are already working under an exceptional better people leader, then the bar is high for you. You need to lead your people more than exceptionally. If you are working under a less-than-exceptional leader, you are still required to give better than you get when it comes to coaching and leading. It’s your chance to do better for yourself and your team.
THE HEART OF THE MATTER

Better people leaders exhibit similar traits. They:

• Have a global vision
• Can break down the vision into steps
• Focus on team excellence rather than their ego
• Know their team members
• Care about their team members
• Know their stuff
• Have great confidence in their players
• Coach players where they need it
• Know when to cheer and when to challenge
• Are patient, persistent, prodding
• Minimize uncertainty
• Are consistent

Assess yourself to find out what traits you already have and what traits you should be cultivating.
Traits of better people leaders I know:

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________
Traits I have:

_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________

_______________________________________________________________
the better people leader
Traits to strengthen:

_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________
Traits to develop:

_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
What Is the Game of Work?

Why can ten people with a volleyball and a net achieve teamwork, goal directed activity, and become a well managed work team in a matter of minutes at the company picnic, but those same ten people can totally fail to achieve that kind of harmony on the job.

The answer lies in providing the keys to “Enjoying Work as Much as Play.” The Game of Work examines the phenomenon that people often work harder at sports and athletic endeavors than they do at their jobs. Why? Because in sports a participant has constant feedback on how he or she is doing. The score is known and the effort necessary to win is established. In work, feedback is often unreliable, inconsistent, or nonexistent. The participant seldom knows the score or what it takes to win.

We take the motivation of recreation and apply those winning principles to the workplace to increase profitability and productivity. A small sampling of clients who have implemented these techniques include Pepsi Cola, US Postal Service, Coca-Cola Consolidated, General Foods Corporation, Associated Grocers, Leslie’s Poolmarts, Abbott Labs, Wild Oats, xpedx, US Air Force, Boeing, American Express, Molina Medical Centers, Coors Brewing, Chicago Tribune, Young Electric Sign Cos., and Ralph’s Grocery.

Our money back guarantee on measurable results achievement provides a no risk path to higher profitability through increased productivity and employee enthusiasm.
WHAT YOU CAN EXPECT TO LEARN

- *A fresh look at motivation and scorekeeping through:* attitudes of winners—choices—observation—judgments—scorekeeping—implementing a system—turning measurement into a benefit—setting criteria for goals.
- *Motivation:* self-evaluation—feedback—types of motivation—coaching
- *Feedback:* graphs and charts—rules and mechanics of scorecards—guidelines for effective feedback
- *Areas of control:* the power of the Results to Resources Ratio as a scorekeeping tool
- *How to set up a Results to Resources scorekeeping system*
- *Goal setting and motivation*
- *Understanding the Field of Play*
- *Learning how to win every day!*

PROFESSIONAL SERVICES

- Speeches (two-hour, four-hour, or full-day)
- Workshops for your personnel, customers, associations, company meetings, and so on.
- Implementation—a fully customized program of five half-days of specific Game of Work implementation with guaranteed results.
- Ski & Scheme—3 day executive ski retreat at Deer Valley Resort

For additional information, call:
1-800-438-6074

or write:
Game of Work
3100 Pinebrook Road, Suite 2500
Park City, Utah 84098
email: game@gameofwork.com
www.gameofwork.com