

# **WHY THE BEST ARE THE BEST**

## **BY KEVIN EASTMAN**

You will be amazed at what you can accomplish if you just try.

Success and accomplishment are not about being a spectator, they are about jumping in and being a participant

If you want to be successful at anything, the first step you have to take is to try to!

The three most important things a leader can have from their team: their ears, their minds and their hearts.

“It will only work if you give yourselves up for the team. It will only work if you open yourselves up and allow me to coach you. But I am telling you, right here, right now- we have enough in this room to win it all THIS YEAR!”

I have learned that one man’s wasted time is another man’s learning time.

I know (and knowing this has helped me throughout my life) that if I can simplify my thoughts, philosophies and strategies, I will be able to call on them when I need them the most and get into execution mode without hesitation.

### **TRUTH-LIVE IT, TELL IT, TAKE IT**

While the trust can be something that is difficult to hear, it is also something that is critical to hear

You will be exposed for what you are not. The truth will tell you whether you belong or not.

Match the actions we take with the words we speak

You must make those decisions through the lens of what is best for the team, not necessarily what is best for the individual

We all know that the hard truths are called that for a reason; they are hard to hear and equally hard to tell

Being a leader requires us to do the uncomfortable thing in certain situations.

Letting people vent is often the best for certain people. My hope was that they could take some of their frustration out on me and not on whomever crossed their path once they left my office.

Put a lot of pre-thought into decisions and difficult conversations.

The truth may make your ears red with embarrassment, but the truth actually helps, not hurts

“I know what he said, but what did he *say*?”

Becoming our best is not a one-time step we take, it's a process we go through. Just stick with getting better each day without worrying about being the best.

It takes a lot of years to become an overnight sensation.

Have a truth teller in your inner-circle

Sit down with yourself and evaluate where you are relative to where you want to be, and list those things that are keeping you from getting there.

Change what you need to change. Learn what you need to learn.

When we look in the mirror, the person we see knows the entire truth.

### **ACTION**

Every day do something!

We have to make sure it remains important enough not to quit.

Remember that success is smart, and its biggest test is failure. It wants to know if you will quit.

Failure is part of all successful team and individual journeys.

You cannot fear failure; it happens to the best of the best.

### **INTENTIONAL**

What are you intentionally doing every day to make sure you do?

Success is a result of what we purposefully do, not what we accidentally fall into. It's an everyday mindset.

Intentional is all about keeping in front of mind and first to action.

Being intentional provides a focus on what we believe is the most important.

## **PREPARATION**

People need to understand that knowledge and confidence comes from preparation. Preparation allows them to be ready for the unexpected because they know knowledge is quickness.

### **BE THERE BEFORE YOU GET THERE**

Preparation trumps pressure, fuels confidence and becomes your separation

Like an iceberg, the depth of your preparation is where your strength will come as you tackle challenges.

## **ACCOUNTABILITY**

Success demands accountability and accountability demands ownership and truth

Accountability is an “inward-first” evaluation where you look at your part in the loss or the failure

Accountability has to fall on everyone every day if goals are to be met and potential is to turn into production

Losing teams look to blame someone else so that they can portray themselves as the victims. We talked about never allowing yourself to be the victim, never allowing yourself to play the victim.

Blame leads to resentment. Resentment leads to dislike. Dislike leads to disharmony. And ultimately all of these lead to a breakdown in the essential ingredient to team success: trust.

If you want to produce at a championship level, accountability has to be a staple of operation. These championship-level teams understand that they are accountable:

- to their teammates
- to themselves, their role and their improvement
- to the program
- for the results (both good and bad)
- for carrying out and policing a culture of accountability

The best way to create the buy-in to an accountability-driven team is for them to educate and exemplify that accountability is *mandatory*.

Accountability is a positive force for improvement, not a continuous admittance of failure.

As a leader, be willing to admit your mistakes and failures

## **TRUST**

There has to be an unwritten understanding that everyone will do their job to the best of their ability every time, every day.

Trust needs time, consistency and proof

It takes time to see how that person operates and to experience his or her intentions

It's not the words you speak, it's the actions you take and the intention behind these actions that creates true trust.

Trust needs consistency

Trust needs proof.

Trust is built upon action over weeks, months and years, but it can be destroyed in seconds.

## **SACRIFICE**

Convenient sacrifice is not true sacrifice

There is no expiration date on sacrifice if individuals or a team wants to reach their true capability level.

Sacrifice is giving up something that you may really want for something bigger that may or may not happen in the future.

Sacrifice is doing something that may not be good for you but is better for the team

There are two ways to look at sacrifice; as the act of giving something up, or the opportunity to help something more

## **DISCIPLINE**

Doing what needs to be done when it needs to be done as well as it can be done and doing it that way all the time.

Success doesn't wait for anyone. It requires many, many discipline decisions, also known as success decisions. Are you disciplined enough to do the work on the days you don't feel up to it?

Routine is the daily discipline that is needed for success.

Discipline says not to be too easy and says yes to whatever it needs to to succeed and fulfill one's capabilities.

## **COMMITMENT**

Success is all about consistency

If you have "full timers" on your team, you at least have a shot, because they will attempt to do what is required, though even that may not be enough. Most every team that goes far does the required work, but championship teams not only do the required work; they separate themselves from others by doing the unrequired work.

Show up every day like you are on a job interview and everyone is watching

Commitment has to be a resolve to fight through difficulties when others around you are criticizing you, when teammates are doubting you, and when your goal seems out of sight.

## **BELIEF**

Belief keeps the mind positive and the body resilient

Ego is important; it's part of what got many of the best players to the level they have achieved. Ego is needed . . . but it must be a winner's ego, not a loser's ego!

The loser's ego is focused on me and how good I am, not the team or the team's success.

The winner's ego, by contrast, is a confidence in oneself- not cockiness- that is founded in all the work a person has to put in before even arriving at the competition.

Without belief, doubt creeps in.

They talked about how when you see every guy going through the rigorous training required of them, you start to understand that your teammates have invested in something more important than themselves.

Going through tough times together, whether in training, practice, or live competition is very powerful; it provides evidence for what the group can accomplish together.

### **UNREQUIRED**

Hard work is the price of admission to get in the door that may or may not lead to success. The separator is doing the “unrequired work.”

Repetitions create your reputation → “Your reps create your rep!”

### **CHOICES**

Every choice has a ripple effect that is the aftermath of that choice

Everytime I read an article about people who made a choice that came back to hurt them or their team I am reminded that I need to be more intentional about my choices

The choices you make often make you. Carefully consider each one.

Nothing should be more important than living by your values.

### **CIRCLES**

One of the biggest decisions we make each day is who we share our valuable time with. Their importance is not what they can do for you, but what they will do to you.

Your inner circle has to share a common objective and understand what it takes to succeed

Circles should not be based on friendship alone, but also on respect and trust

Our circles touch us almost every day. They guide us through our most difficult times and decisions

### **COMPETITION**

There will always be someone who wants to do what you do better than you do.

It is a mindset to bring the best you have in you each day, no matter how things are going.

True competition comes in when you are willing to continue to give the best of what you have even when you are losing.

The second unit cannot accept being the second unit; they need to make the first unit compete every day!

### **PASSION**

If you don't love what you're doing, there's no way you can get yourself through the difficult times. It's hard to be good at something that you don't really like doing.

When your knowledge catches up with your passion, that's when the magic really happens

Passion brings spirit to a team

The best of the best don't care about cool. To them, passion is critical

If it's present and shared through your best players, it becomes a force multiplier.

Sometimes you have to put your heart into something, knowing full well that it could be broken. Passion allows us to put ourselves out there even when we know that failure may be the result.

Passion brings a positive spirit to the day

Passion is a valuable part of successful people's makeup because success is hard.

Passion allows us to keep coming back.

Passion provides the resiliency needed to "get past" and "get through".

Passion keeps you on a positive track.

### **HABITS**

What we rely on in our most difficult moments of stress, pressure or uncertainty is habits.

The key for us is to find out what those good habits are and to do our best to replicate them within ourselves.

Habits come down to a decision followed by a daily repetition of what's needed. Habits take time.

Kobe worked on junior high skill level work for two hours a day.

The secret to greatness is that there is no secret. It is the habit of working on the fundamentals of your craft so that, when necessary, you can go beyond the fundamentals and make the incredible play that leaves people saying, “That was just luck.”

### **URGENCY**

The best of the best understand the importance of the now- this possession, this repetition, this drill, this report, this action, this phone call.

The best performers understand that a presence of urgency is how they gain separation from their competition.

We must make decisions between complacency to stay status quo or urgency to stay ahead.

Winning urgency is an attitude of now. Being prepared now. Getting things done now.

Creating a culture where passion thrives and translates into people wanting to get the work done when it needs to be done.

Procrastination is the enemy of growth, development, improvement and accomplishment.

One Word: the word that becomes the trigger that will get your mind to the place you need it to be.

### **STANDARDS**

We are not going to be satisfied with the standard of just winning regular season games.

Competing against ourselves is actually competing against our own personal standards

High standards are synonymous with successful teams and athletes.

“The key is not to get through your day, it’s to get from your day.”

### **COURAGE**

Sometimes courage manifests itself in trusting your instincts even when you know that you will face ridicule if your instincts prove wrong.



The best of the best are driven by the courage of their convictions. They are not scared off by popular opinion. They are driven by educated guesses.

Courage has nothing to do with how tough you are physically and everything to do with how strong you are mentally.

Understand that as a leader, you will be critiqued from inside and outside the organization. You will be questioned from inside and outside the organization. You will be criticized from inside and outside the organization. Based on these “will be’s”, you must have the courage to stick with what you believe to be right.

### **CURIOSITY**

People who are curious know they cannot reach their goals with their current knowledge

Improvement is a drip, drip, drip, get better, get better, get better proposition

If you can't beat them, learn from them!

The best of the best make sure they find time to simply think. Thinking allows us to disregard opinion and contemplate information.

### **RESPECT**

I noticed that all the great ones received respect, but they also gave it back to their teammates, their coaches, their opponents and the game. They received respect because they earned it first.

Respect creates awareness, provides a warning and gives us inner strength.

I also discovered that respect diminishes the possibility of being upset by an inferior opponent.

### **ADJUSTMENT**

One more thing on change: to sustain, we must change. We may not like it, but we have to live with it, and even more than live with it, we have to make it work.

Just as with any change, success is not guaranteed. Change is a researched, educated guess/hope for the future sustainability of the organization.

Adjustments are those subtle tweaks we have to make when the game plan may not be working as well as we thought it would.

Before we adjust anything, we have to first make sure that we are doing it the way we have taught it. First we need to do it harder, then we need to do it better. Then we adjust. Why would we change just because it didn't work a few times?

The coach who wins is the coach who is prepared for and is willing to make that second adjustment.

Coaching and leadership are every bit as much about resetting mindsets either for the individual or the entire team and organization as they are about making strategic adjustments.

You have to have great eyes to see what you need to adjust. You have to have great ears to hear what you may need to adjust. You have to have a great mind to know what strategic adjustments you need to make. And when you make a difficult adjustment, you have to have the courage to stay with it and make it work.

### **HUMILITY**

It's often been said that true humility is not thinking less of yourself, it's thinking of yourself less. Humility keeps us on that path of self-improvement that all greats travel.

When your best player is humble, that is when special things can happen for the team.

In competitive fields you will be humbled, so don't get cocky

### **INVESTMENT**

Do most people invest in their own development to the level of their goals and dreams? The answer is likely no.

They understand that success has a price, and that price is the investment you put in toward the goal you seek to attain.

“Hard work is not punishment. Hard work is the price of admission for the opportunity to reach sustained excellence.”

Entitlement is the enemy of success as a team or for an individual no matter what age

“You need to ask me questions. The information in the notebooks will come out, but you have to ask me questions.” I had to earn the ask.

Teams can't expect their paths to be easier because they are supposed to be good or because they are ranked or because everyone says they have a lot of talent. Teams of entitlement never win titles!

We invest and then it grows; it often takes ten to fifteen years of hard work for someone to become an "overnight sensation".

### **TALENT**

Talent is part of success, as you have to have some level of talent to have a chance to reach the highest levels of any competitive environment.

The way I see it, there are players who have talent, and there are talented players.

If you asked championship coaches which player they would rather have, they would go for the talented player.

Every team knows your strength as a player. When they take that away, how else can you help this team win a championship?

You're training to be the best in the world on your worst day!

### **THE CHAMPIONS COMPASS**

We had done a lot of winning but never were the winner. Succeeding is not about doing a good job, it's all about doing your best job.

Many of their strengths from a tactical and physical standpoint were similar, but there were differences that each of the winners possessed from a mental standpoint. I call this separator "The Champions Compass". It provides direction for teams. The teams that are mentally tough enough and buy into these mindsets are the ones that have the best chance of creating the separation needed to give themselves a much-needed advantage.

### **NEXT**

No matter what happens to us, we have to move on to the next play, the next challenge, the next day, the next project

Success has many tests, and one of them is failure

Next level effort, preparation, focus, discipline and thinking

From a team stand point we find that the best-the strongest teams and the most resilient teams- are that way because of their belief they have in their teammates, those next to them in the trenches.

Finally, it has been my experience that the best learn to take two or three “next steps” each season to get to that “next level”.

### **SIMPLE**

Success lies in simplicity; confusion lives in sophistication

I decided we needed to show the team the impact of each of these “significant”, simple possessions actually had on the game.

The lesson is that everything counts once the final buzzer sounds. Simple wins a lot more games than spectacular ever will!

### **EVERY**

Every second of every minute of every quarter of every game, by everybody, every time out, every night, in every arena. Teams that take plays off significantly reduce their chances of becoming champions.

Every day counts when it’s the last day!

### **WILLING**

Winners are open minded. They want to learn new things. They are willing to play for the team and not for themselves, to play for a teammate not just with a teammate

But the only eyes that counted that day were the eyes of the Patriots staff and players.

### **SUCCESS TRIANGLES**

Scientists will tell us that the average person may only be able to hold three or four things in mind at once

**THREE GAPS (Recognizing the gap between where we are today and where we want to go):** Capability, knowledge and team-ness

-Teammate: Being a teammate means you have one, and only one, agenda: a team agenda. There can be no personal agendas on a championship team. Being a teammate is

immersing ourselves in doing everything we can to help the team and our teammates succeed while knowing that we will get the same in return

-The key part in being a teammate is understanding and accepting your role. Each role is not equal. Whether a player accepts it, understands it and executes his role will be the difference in success or failure

-Teamwork: We all must work with each other, and more importantly, for each other in order to bring out the best in each other. Champions are formed when a coaching staff finds the players they need and defines the roles for each player.

-Team: This is playing without jealousy. The best companies are the ones that have jealousy-free cultures. Without necessarily knowing the word, they are organizations that live the Ubuntu philosophy (Ubuntu: you cannot be your best unless your teammates are their best)

### **THREE DIMENSIONS OF SUCCESS:** Yesterday, today and tomorrow

-Yesterday is all about evaluation and education

-Today is all about execution

-Tomorrow is all about preparation

### **THREE SETS:** Skill Set, Mind Set and Reset

-Skill Set: Individuals focusing on what they can do better and bring to the table

-Mindset: Win the mind first and determine that today is going to be a good day

-Reset: Every team has issues, but the winners get through and past them

-Don't let the fear of failure prevent you from starting

### **THREE C'S:** Complacency, Conceit and Compromise

-Complacency: We don't have to work as hard because we know how to win

-Conceit: The opposite of humility; the team revolves around you

-Compromise: We can skip a step or not work as hard today because we know we can always turn it on

### **Behind any success is every day**

**Success is not a game of perfect:** There will be mistakes and failures along the way. Understand that these happen to everyone who has become successful.

**Success is not a game of genius:** It is more about the consistent work you put in

**Success is about discipline**

**Success is about self-evaluation**

**Success requires a choice**

**Success leaves footprints:** Find them, follow them and fit them.

**Success requires your all:** You must put your entire heart into something knowing it may be broken. Success is never guaranteed.

**You have to fail before you succeed.**

**You can treat failure as a devastation or an education.**

**THE THREE BESTS:** The Best, My Best, Our Best

- To be the best you have to beat the best
- To be the best you have to bring your best every day
- To be the best you have to learn the best from the best
- To be the best you must demand the best from each other
- The best are the best for a reason

**THE THREE DON'TS:** Do not dismiss the obvious, age and ideas

- Prepare for change before it happens
- Focus on the things that are obvious to control
- Seek wisdom from those that came before you
- Listen to all ideas, even if they seem crazy or from an unlikely source

**THE THREE BATTLES:** Combatting fear, failure and limitation

- Our trust must be greater than our fears
- Our belief must be greater than our doubts
- Our resolve must be greater than our failures
- Our preparation must be greater than our limitations
  - We need to talk to ourselves more than we need to listen to ourselves. Frame the conversation in your head. Initiate positive thoughts
- Trust in yourself by having meticulous preparation and organization
- Believe in yourself by putting in the hard work
- Resolve to fight through things when they don't go your way

**THREE INGREDIENTS FOR SUCCESS:** Respect, trust and like

- The players respect, trust and like the other players
- The players respect, trust and like the coaches
- The coaches respect, trust and like the players
- The coaches respect, trust and like the other coaches

**THREE "IN'S":** All-In, Not-In, Give-In

- All-In needs to have buy in before we get to believe in, and all of this requires trust

**THREE UPS:** Showing up, Shutting Up, Keeping Up

-Showing Up: Everything you do you have to be engaged in, and you have to be at all available opportunities to improve

-Shutting Up: Know when you don't know something, so you shut up so you can learn what you need to learn

-Keeping Up: You take what you learn and you invest time to make it part of your life

**THE POWER OF NO**

-No settling

-No stopping

-No procrastination

-No excuses

-No regrets

-No "me firsts"

-No Burned Bridges