

Mark Othmer

New Kind of Motivation Required for Today's Employees

By Mark Othmer, Nebraska Field Director

As most of you know, I'm a bit of a sports junkie. Since my favorite football team is looking like the keystone cops these days, I've been spending a lot of time reading newspaper and Internet articles, trying to figure out why Nebraska has become such a poor team.

Recently, I ran across the following article titled, "New Kind of Motivation Required for Today's Student-Athletes" by Spencer Tillman, a sports analyst for CBS Sports.com. As I read this article, I was struck by how much Tillman's thoughts fit the business world today and, more directly, equipment dealerships.

I encourage you to substitute the words "players" and "team members" with "employee," and to change the word "coaches" to "owners" or "managers" while reading this article. In doing so, you'll discover some insight into the type of "coaching" or "management" style necessary with employees today. Enjoy the article.

When you see a defensive collapse like Nebraska's, despite the team's quality players and a high-profile coach, the reasons are far more than play calling and execution.

Teams are up and down for a variety of reasons. Key players are lost. There is more parity because everyone is dealing with the same number of scholarships (85).

But this Huskers team, especially on defense, is different. I see a team with no passion and drive, with players acting like they're meandering through a San Francisco fog. All of the symptoms of disconnect between coaches and players are there. Remember the famous line in *Cool Hand Luke*: "What we have here is

a failure to communicate."

Bill Callahan and his charges aren't dealing with your average group of adolescents. The Big Red of the Big 12 North division, and every other university team, are members of a special breed: *Generation Y*.

You can trace part of this generation's outlook to their cultural upbringing. They've seen parents or relatives laid off by employers whom they previously trusted. They see political corruption and even religious icons fall from grace.

Minority young men are the most affected by their culture. Inner cities are much the same wherever you go – poverty, single-parent homes and a climate of intimidation.

I know firsthand today's youth are coming from another point of view. Each week, Houston-area high school players are spotlighted at the television station where I do some work. They tell me flat out that they're not nearly as interested in glitzy college athletic facilities as most think they are. They just want to play.

The way I see it, reaching this particular brand of youth requires personal engagement. I've played under coaches that ruled with an iron hand and it was my way or the highway, brother. That works with kids who grew up in a highly structured way with a promise of, shall we say, punishment when rules were ignored.

Applying psychology and reason are popular tools to motivate today's players. But they're why some of these cerebral geniuses such as Charlie Weis and Callahan are faltering, and the Urban Meyers of the college coaching world are thriving.

Why? Coaches like Meyer are tough to be sure, but they also work hard at establishing personal relationships with the individual team members. All recruits meet Meyer's family. Each week there's Family Day, when coaches' children do some fun time with the players.

Mike Muetzel, an author and anthropologist, grew up in football-crazed

Pittsburgh, and as he puts it, is a "sports junkie." As a successful lacrosse coach he finds parallels and lessons between business and athletics. Coaches need to know that players no longer come to a program with blind trust in authority figureheads.

In one of his books about a similar, yet older age stratum, *Generation X*, Muetzel quotes coach Bobby Bowden: "Ten years ago if you told a kid to run through a wall, he ran through a wall. Today, they ask why."

The most effective coaches establish a cause, a purpose and a mission. We aren't building walls. We're building cathedrals. The teams I played on at San Francisco were the epitome of dedication and commitment. If we failed, then we let our team down.

John Blake, an associate head coach for Butch Davis' North Carolina Tar Heels, and one of America's elite recruiters, offered the following:

"When my players make a mistake or error in assignment, they're not down because they made an error; they're more disappointed because they feel they've let me down."

Experts say this sort of familial connection yields the most productive, long-term results. Few coaches, however, have tapped into this shift in culture and adjusted their coaching strategies accordingly. Blake continues, "If I'm ahead of any curve, so be it. For me, it's a core value; I cannot operate any other way."

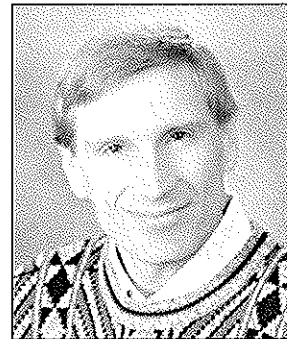
Today's coaching also requires skills often associated with the business world, namely collecting the opinions of one's players, the people who work for you. Players aren't drones who jump through hoops. Gen-Y players often need to know how they're doing. You need to ask them how they feel about their own development.

As I told one young man recently, never be ashamed to ask for advice and counsel. Some of you who work in large

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Iowa Agriculture – More Than Just Ethanol and Biodiesel

By Tom Junge, Iowa Field Director



Tom Junge

No doubt about it, ethanol is big right now. Every week, an article is published about the newest agricultural industry in Iowa and we should be proud of it. Iowa produces more ethanol per year than any other state. Iowa has the capacity of producing 1.9 billion gallons annually from 28 ethanol facilities using 690 bushels of corn.

Iowa remains “First in the Nation” in the production of biodiesel fuel, producing 138.5 million gallons in 2006.

With all the excitement surrounding ethanol and biodiesel, it’s easy to forget that Iowa agriculture is much broader than just producing corn for ethanol and soybeans for biodiesel. Following are some Iowa agricultural facts I recently discovered:

- In 2006, Iowa led the nation in the production of pork, corn, soybeans and eggs.
- Iowa is ranked second in the nation in red meat production.
- About 88 percent of the land area in the state (or 31.5 million acres) is in farms. Corn was planted on 12.6 million acres and soybeans were planted on 10.15 million acres.
- Iowa’s total cash receipts for farm commodities in 2006 totaled \$16.1 billion – the third highest in the country.
- Iowa produces approximately 19 percent of the nation’s corn for grain and about 16 percent of the nation’s soybeans.
- Iowa ranked third in oat production at 8.36 million bushels, and fourth in hay alfalfa at 4.6 million tons.
- Thirty-one thousand farmers raise cattle. Iowa ranked seventh in the U.S. with 3,950,000 cattle and calves (Jan. 1, 2007).
- Iowa has about 5 ½ hogs for every person in the state or 9,200 farms with 17.2 million hogs (Dec. 2006). One in every 3.5

pounds of pork is shipped from an Iowa plant.

- A hen lays an average of 268 eggs per year. Total Iowa egg production in 2006 was 13.8 billion eggs with the average number of layers in Iowa at 51.6 million.
- Iowa raises 8.2 million turkeys. In a turkey’s lifetime, they consume approximately one bushel of corn and 1/3 bushel of soybeans. Yearly, Iowa turkeys will eat about 62,000 acres of corn and 69,000 acres of soybeans!
- A milk cow produces an average of 20,146 pounds of milk per year. (That’s equivalent to about 2,410 gallons or 38,560 glasses of milk per year, per cow!) Iowa had an average of 205,000 milk cows on hand during 2006.
- Iowa ranks ninth in sheep and lamb production with 235,000 head.
- Iowa’s beehives produced 2.18 million pounds of honey in 2006, with production value totaling \$2.51 million.
- Iowa has nearly 450 certified organic operations, with approximately 100,000 acres of farmland

under organic management.

- Iowa has 325 commercial vine yards covering 700 acres and including 51 wineries.
- Iowa’s total agricultural exports for 2006 were valued at more than \$4.2 billion, ranking the state second in the nation for agricultural exports.
- There were 172 farmers’ markets in Iowa during the 2005 growing season. In 2004, our state ranked third in the nation in number of markets, and first in number of markets per capita.
- Iowa ranks first in the nation for the number of acres set aside as riparian buffers, grassed water ways, contour buffer strips, field borders and other buffers on private farmlands – reducing soil erosion, protecting water quality and stabilizing stream banks. As of March 31, 2006, Iowa had 514,680 acres enrolled in these conservation programs. ■

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corporations know exactly what this means. The contract between employer and employees is pragmatic at best. The same is true for student-athletes at major colleges. There are no real promises on either side. That four-year “full ride” in reality is a series of one-year, renewable contracts.

We have an abundance of talented young men – bigger, faster, smarter, – who want to play the game, not ride a bench. That’s why, as I said,

today’s players are drawn to teams where they can play, to contribute.

Why go to USC and sit it out when you can go to a second-tier school and make your mark? Ultimately, a coach’s challenge is to use this talent to its maximum advantage. That means patterning schemes to fit players.

But more than any time in the game, it means connecting with your players, motivating them and building a team. Gen Y to the rescue.

Source: CBS Sports.com, October 23, 2007