

Leadership Lessons from March Madness

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It's the most wonderful time of the year; March Madness is here! While it's always fun to root for our favorite team and see who can make the best bracket, there are some valuable leadership lessons we can take away from the big dance, too.

In sports, we tend to celebrate a player or position. The high-scorers tend to get all the glory, and yet in order to win a championship, it takes everyone from the point guard to the small forward to the coaches and all the support staff on the side of the court. Without them all working together, they couldn't be successful. Just like in organizations we might celebrate the CEO, but the reality is that it's the frontline men and women who do the work every day – who are looking for opportunities to lead. It takes all of us to build successful organizations. It's important for us to build capacity throughout our organizations at every level – much like they do in college basketball, the NBA or the NFL.

Every player, no matter their position, has to practice and get the training he or she needs to make the team successful -- that's where winning teams come from. It doesn't come from devoting ourselves solely to the talents of one person.

As leaders, it's our job to build the team's capacity to perform. If we are not asking questions, giving feedback, inspiring others, or challenging the status quo, we are not building capacity. We are not helping others develop their own ability to think, to reflect, to solve, and ultimately to perform. We become the star player on a weak team.

So, how can we become better leaders?

- **Ask more questions.**
- **Seek more often than you tell.**

- **Give and get feedback.**
- **Get curious.** Continue to learn and remember that curiosity requires listening, too.
- **Resist the urge to take the ball,** even if you really want to.
- **Take the time to help others think deeply about issues,** and they will perform better. Support your teammates and they will have your back, too.

How are you building capacity throughout your organizational? Comment below or send me an email at thomas.epperson@innerwill.org. I'd love to hear from you!

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