

# Published TMG Articles

As seen in the Asheville Citizen Times WNC Business section.

## **FAMOUS CHOKES**

ESPN is celebrating its twenty-fifth anniversary this year. In honor of that milestone, they have selected an “esteemed” panel to determine the Top 25 in each of several categories. Recently the chosen category was, “The 25 Worst Chokes in Sports”. Now, for the sports-information-challenged, a “choke” is that moment a professional athlete, trained to perform under the most adverse conditions (such as before a hostile crowd or during an un-negotiated contract period), fails to do what he or she does best. They “choke”.

All of the most memorable choke events made the list: Greg Norman in the '96 Masters (golf), Chris Webber in the '93 NCAA Basketball Championships, and the '03 Chicago Cubs in the playoffs. The winner of the top spot was, of course, Bill Buckner in the '86 World Series.

As I watched reruns of these memorable failures, I wondered what the coach, the manager, and the owners of these sporting franchises must have thought while watching their players fail. My heart went out to these talented athletes. Years of sacrifice, training, practice, plus past successes had brought them to the world's stage where they were being watched by millions. Everyone expected them to perform at the consistent world-class level they had demonstrated time after time. But, as the coach helplessly watches, the player fails to come through and perform; the player chokes.

Such events bring important business principles to mind:

Your team may have performed its responsibilities perfectly, time after time.

You may have the lowest failure rate in the industry.

You may make your customers happy 99% of the time.

However, which of these times is most important? It is the NEXT time.

Your past successes won't matter to your customers if you fail them now. Nine successes in a row? Not noticed. Fail on the tenth attempt, and that is the event that is remembered. In fact, you may even make an ESPN top 25 list! Consistent execution is the key. Doing it right EVERY time is the standard and the goal for the successful leader.

Your reputation is only as good as your most recent performance. Nowhere is this more realized than in our entertainment industry. An actor may have won the prestigious Academy Award®; however, if their next picture is a “Bomb” and loses millions of dollars, they may sit a long time before another offer to appear in a motion picture is tendered. As the saying goes, “You are only as good as your last picture!”

What causes these public failures in sports, entertainment, and business?

Lack of Focus. Distracted by the wrong things, and not keeping your mind on what's important now!

A casual attitude about execution. One wrongly believes that their level of performance will be the same without concentration, practice and execution.

Failure to perform the basics. Doing what you'd been trained to do. The leader ensures that everyone on the team is committed to the basics.

It is important that your business continues to be a winner. To assure this, the leader must continuously check and recheck that each customer is receiving satisfaction and value for their continued support of your product and company. Remember, it only takes ONE failure to produce a landslide into the realm of those businesses that used to be great.

Don't allow your Customer Service function or product quality to "CHOKER"!