

Published TMG Articles

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A PLAYER-COACH IN YOUR ORGANIZATION

The leader of any organization or sales team fills many roles. However, no role is more crucial to the team's success than that of the "Player-Coach". This term, Player-Coach, has lost its meaning for many business people, so let me give you some examples of the "P/C". Sports enthusiasts will recall the days of several successful Player-Coaches such as Bill Russell or Pete Rose. These individuals were hired by their organizations to play on the team and, at the same time, to serve as the team's coach. More recently, many great athletes have filled the role of Player-Coach — but in a less official capacity. Officially, they are players; but, because of their on-the-field leadership, they also fill the role of coach while actually playing the game. They give instruction to the rest of the team while themselves competing; some famous examples are Michael Jordan, Lance Armstrong, and Brett Favre.

Performing as a Player-Coach is different than just performing as a player. In the world of sports, the P/C while competing is also providing critical support and instruction to the other members of the team.

At some level, most businesses require the successful performance of a "Player-Coach". Managers and supervisors are charged with getting today's work out today. Most of these people were promoted to these positions because of excellent performance as role players. So, these individuals may be among the best in the organization at doing the work of the organization - sales, production, marketing, distribution, etc. The company may need these people to continue providing these functions. Additionally, they are also called on to lead their team.

It is a challenge for the Player-Coach to keep a proper perspective. The most important perspective being that of the overall company, the so-called "big picture" of the company: what is the company working toward?

Here are the traits of the successful Player-Coach:

1. The Player-Coach is an excellent performer. The P/C knows what the company needs and knows how to get it accomplished at the highest levels.
2. The Player-Coach understands the "big picture". This individual "gets it". He knows company's mission and business goals, and he believes in the company's direction and plans.
3. The Player-Coach is committed to the team's success. Sometimes an individual's personal goals or performance conflict with the needs of the team. Early in his career, Michael Jordan scored 63 points in a playoff game at Boston, and yet his team still lost the game. He learned the meaning of being a team versus being a solo star; he then went on to win six championships. The P/C puts the team before personal goals.
4. The Player-Coach is committed to the individual team members. This is a key reason that everyone can't be a Player-Coach. Such commitment entails having a healthy dose of emotional intelligence. Successful team leadership requires empathy, the consideration of the needs of others. The P/C provides timely feedback and instruction to other team members. Often this feedback occurs during times of high pressure and stress, times when we may not be at our best. A great P/C knows how to handle these situations and still leave each team member feeling valued — and yet performing at a higher .