



A Game of Ten Yards

Like him or not, the all-so-colorful ex-football coach, Lou Holtz commands a lot of attention when it comes to diagnosing the game. I was preparing to watch the late game on opening Saturday of the 2008 College Football season when I heard Lou ranting about a loss that happened earlier that day. He was going on and on about how the play calling had the team going for the end zone on every down from scrimmage. And in the end, this top ranked team lost the game and began the season at a huge disadvantage. His final comment was something I found to be so profound that it has me writing to you:

"Don't they get that football is a game of 10 yards!"

It is a fact folks! When playing football, the object shouldn't be scoring touchdowns; it should be getting first downs which means...10 yards! In other words, the best way to score touchdowns is 10 yards at a time. Think about how many areas of our lives in which we choose to focus on scoring "touchdowns" when the best thing we could do would be to get a first down.

Things like:

Exercise programs--- It takes 6 months to even start seeing improvements, yet if we don't start losing weight or getting stronger in a week we think there is something wrong. We believe there must be something wrong with the gym, the trainer or my workout buddies. Hey, everyone else in the gym is in great shape. Why aren't I?

Diets--- Like exercise, we "eat healthy" for a week and wonder why we aren't shedding pounds and feeling like brand new. The truth is, the effects of a healthy diet change won't be seen for months.

Relationships--- We learn some new interpersonal "tricks" by reading books, listening to CD's or by going to a high powered seminar. With these new skills we have the illusion that all the dysfunctional relationships we have developed over the years should repair themselves overnight. It took years to create the dysfunction, so it will take time to repair them.

Like all of the above, our beliefs when it comes to business are much the same. We search relentlessly for a silver bullet that will relieve the pressure and pain, and unfortunately there are plenty of them out there. The illusion they create is that

there is one thing that will lead everyone into the promise land of happiness, profit and overall sustainability... NOT TRUE!

The most successful businesses I have worked over the past decade have proven that business (like all of the above) is a game of 10 yards. Leadership in these organizations is NOT focused on the touchdown; they are focused on getting a first down. They aren't staring at the end zone; they are focused (see the difference in those two terms) on the next steps in the process. They know that is the accumulation over time of the right next steps that will get them and their team into the end zone. There is NO exception to this, and to be more direct, organizations and the leadership who choose to go for the score on every play are destined to a life of struggle and pain.

In our world of "quick fix," the one thing that will beat us every time is the law of nature. In the introduction to *7 Habits*, Covey discusses the importance of knowing there is no quick fix to anything governed by the law of nature. Things like our physical fitness, our health, our relationships and our businesses. Here's the real "trick:" know that accomplishing great things personally, interpersonally and organizationally means understanding it's a process. Settling in to the process with a vision and a smile is always the quickest way to get where you want to go. So, as our buddy Lou Holtz might say;

"Life, as well as football, is a game of 10 yards!"