

Why The Best Are The Best: 25 Powerful Words That Impact, Inspire, And Define Champions (Eastman, Kevin)

“I think we have enough in this locker room to win the title this year,” were Doc’s first words. This is a classic case of a statement that made a statement, the kind of message the best coaches send to their teams not just to create hope, but to set expectations

“You have to give yourselves up to become a team!” They had to understand that: “We need you for what you can do ... but only if you understand it cannot be about you.”

My mantra has been: “Old School—New School—ONE SCHOOL.” That is the school of growth, development, and improvement.

My philosophy throughout my adult life has been that “success lies in simplicity; confusion lives in sophistication.” As Albert Einstein once said, “The definition of genius is taking the complex and making it simple.”

The average players want to be left alone. The good players want to be coached. The great players want to be told the truth. Doc Rivers, NBA Championship Coach, Boston Celtics There’s an irony in the word truth.

It’s not about what you want. It’s about what you do every day. Brad Stevens, Head Coach, Boston Celtics

So often we know what to do, but we fail to do what we know. When action becomes a core ingredient of who you are, you will consistently do what you know should be done. Action is incredibly powerful ...

Prepare for the future because that is where you are going to spend the rest of your life. Mark Twain, Author

Preparation trumps pressure. Preparation fuels confidence. Preparation becomes your separation. Preparation is the unseen grind that produces the biggest plays under the brightest lights.

“I spend one hour preparing for every ten minutes I will be speaking.”

Whereas success demands accountability, and accountability requires us to look within ourselves, failure encourages us to look outward first. To blame first. It had to be someone else's fault. Losing teams look to blame someone else so that they can portray themselves as the victims. They play the victim and look for sympathy rather than looking inward and finding solutions.

On teams Doc Rivers coached, we talked about never allowing yourself to be the victim, never allowing yourself to play the victim. In a competitive environment, victims never succeed and blame teams never win. Blame leads to resentment. Resentment leads to dislike. Dislike leads to disharmony. And ultimately all of these lead to a breakdown in the essential ingredient to team success: trust.

Trust needs: time, consistency, and proof.

I want to make sure I overemphasize “everyday” because convenient sacrifice is not true sacrifice. There are certain things that success declares we do every day. One of them is sacrifice.

Convenient sacrifice never wins; it is actually selfishness disguised.

I encourage everyone to look at discipline as the tool we need to get us through the days when we don't feel like doing the very thing we know has been a key ingredient to our success. We all have those days where we just don't seem to have the mindset, the energy, or the will to remain disciplined. Such days are simply a test that success often throws in front of us. Will you do what you know is leading to your success on this day at this time when you simply do not feel like doing it?

As with many things in life, what was true in the past may not be so true today. Hard work does not guarantee success in today's competitive environment, because everyone is working hard.

The best of the best always do a little bit more. They work harder and more often. They do more than the people who they pass on the climb up the success ladder are willing to do. They deliver more than is expected and work more than contracts require. They do unrequired work.

if a player truly wants to win, must be made with the ripple effect in mind and what effect that choice will have on teammates and team.

Becoming the best is supposed to be hard. Competition is supposed to test your best.

Where some players may be too cool to be passionate, the best of the best don't care about cool. To them, passion is critical.

Kobe Bryant. Kobe has talked about one of the habit separators for him—coming in at 4:00 a.m. He committed to being there at that early hour to get his first workout in before anyone else.

The work he put in on the simple parts of the game are legendary. He would work on the fundamentals: perfect the form on his jump shot, the exact footwork on his jab step. These were the skill-set habits he was making sure were part of his game. While others become bored with the basics, Kobe made a habit of mastering them, working every day to turn those basics into separators.

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“Kobe, you are the best player in the world. Why would you spend two hours on some of the most fundamental drills in the game and do them over and over again?” Kobe’s answer: “Why do you think I am the best player in the world?”

Maybe the best way to think about urgency is this: the more you put thoughts like “tomorrow and later” before actions like “right now, immediately, at this moment,” the more you will fall behind your competitors and in fulfilling the dreams that you have for your life, your company, or your team.

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We set our standards very high and we don’t apologize for that. We embrace that.

I do think, however, that we are living in a time when investment is at risk of decay along with the rising tide of entitlement. We regularly hear complaints about the millennial generation’s sense of entitlement, but let’s not fool ourselves into thinking that entitlement is a characteristic that only the young possess. I have seen it in people who have been at a company for a long time and feel they are owed something simply because of their years of service. I like to look at it this way: your pay check is your responsibility, not your employer's.

Entitlement is the enemy of success as a team or for an individual no matter what age. It brings with it many team and individual killers: complacency, a weak work ethic, an “I’m-better” mentality—none of which can exist if growth, development, improvement, and success are the goal.

Teams of entitlement never win titles!

“Every team knows your strength as a player. When they take that away, how else can you help this team win a championship?” What is that extra dimension you can bring to your team?

“You’re not training to be the best in the world, you’re training to be the best in the world on your worst day.”

Doc brought Ubuntu to our team before the 2007/2008 season. It is a word that means “humanity.” The literal translation is, “I am because we are.” At its core are two basic tenets: People are people because of other people. I can only be all I can be if you are all you can be.

Ubuntu is about an understanding that a player cannot be his best unless his teammates are at their best. And the only way to do that is to help the other players be their best. Because at its core Ubuntu is all about sacrifice, Ubuntu rewards those who engage in a teamwork approach.

The longer you wait, the less likely you will take action. We all know about the “Law of Diminishing Intent.” The longer you “intend” to do something and never get around to it, the more you will guarantee that you are unlikely to achieve it.