



IN SEARCH OF BUSINESS PERFECTION

BY: JAMES M. KERR

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FIVE "PERFECTION FACTORS" FOR THE ULTIMATE BUSINESS SUCCESS

With another NFL Super Bowl on the books, who can forget the hoopla from last year surrounding the New England Patriots as they were but one game from completing a perfect season? The 1972 Miami Dolphin team was the last to do it. But, theirs was a shorter season and predated the age of free agency. Indeed, the notion that a team could go undefeated in the current era was nearly unfathomable by football insiders. The New England Patriots almost achieved the unfathomable.

All of this does serve to make one ponder, "Is perfection achievable?" "Can a team go undefeated?" "What about business perfection?" Can a business execute flawlessly?" "Can a business achieve perfection?"

The Dolphins have proven that it can be done in professional sports, and perfect collegiate sports teams, like the two UCLA Men's Basketball teams of the 70s and the two University of Connecticut Women's Basketball teams of the mid-90s and early 2000s, serve to prove it can be done in the amateur ranks, too. So, why not in

business?

How Does One Measure Business Perfection?

That's not to say that an enterprise must devastate the competition at every turn in order to gain perfection. Certainly, perfect teams didn't beat their opponents on every play, either. But, when the final scores were tallied, these teams had won every one of their games. Businesses must approach their competitive environment in a similar way.

Even if they don't win every battle with the competition, they can still win the war by dominating the markets in which they compete and becoming the dominant brand within their niche.

How do you measure this? It's quite simple, actually. Perfect companies are the provider of choice, employer of choice and investment of choice within the markets that they serve. When a business can sustain this, it can be said that it has reached perfection. But there are several factors that all winning franchises share.

Perfection Factors

Certainly, all of the perfect



James M. Kerr is the Managing Partner at the Best Practices Enterprise Group. He can be reached at 1-860-632-0580 or at jkerr@best-practices-group.com

teams of recent years had great talent. So, the talent quotient goes without saying. Businesses and sports teams, alike, need the horses in the stable in order to compete. What traits, besides great talent, did these perfect organizations share?

There are five, what we'll call, "Perfection Factors" that each of these perfect teams share. This white paper explores these five factors and translates them into concepts that every business can benefit by. So, read on...

Takeaways:

- Business perfection is achievable
- Five "Perfection Factors" are shared by all undefeated teams
- Businesses must work to establish these same five "Perfection Factors" in order to become perfect enterprises

FACTOR I: PERFECT EXECUTION BECOMES THE ONLY GOAL

All of the perfect teams made the notion of perfection realistic and achievable by making the pursuit of perfect execution the goal. The Miami Dolphins never made a perfect season the goal, but, their coach Don Shula made sure that the team sought perfect execution on every play. Anything less and he would remind the team about how humiliating it was to have lost in Super Bowl VI, the year before, when they failed to execute their game plan and were manhandled by the Dallas Cowboys by a score of 24 to 3.

Business leaders can do the same. Seeking business perfection in the marketplace can seem lofty and conceptually difficult to realize. However, perfect execution can be measured and achieved. It should be sought everyday. It is through perfect execution that business perfection is accomplished.

Consider Toyota's dominance in the automobile industry. The firm's focus on continuous improvement has led to lower production costs and higher quality products than its competitors. By working towards perfecting its execution in the manufacturing of its automobiles, Toyota has captured market share and drove up its stock price in a very difficult economy. #



By continuously preparing for various scenarios, an organization learns how to adjust and react without hesitation .

FACTOR II: STAY IN THE MOMENT AT ALL TIMES

How does a team go undefeated? One game at a time. Clearly, you can't have an undefeated season until you play (and win) every game on the schedule. The most any team can hope to accomplish at any point in time is to win the next game. To do so, teams must prepare for each game, one game at a time.

Coach John Wooden of the UCLA teams never spoke of running the table. He drilled it into his players. At no time in their perfect seasons did he, or any of his players, address any of the media's questions about going undefeated. Instead, they stayed in the moment. They focused on the next game and let the media speculate and prophesize about perfect seasons. Business leaders can do the same.

Too often today's enterprises get dis-

tracted. They abandon their game plans and begin to blindly chase shiny objects in the corner – only to find that the distraction caused them to lose ground and squander precious assets while they were at it. Perfection is achieved one game at a time.

It would have been easy for CEO Bob Iger to lose focus on extending, what many industry observers considered, a "dated" Disney brand during this time of great turmoil in the media industry. Instead, he redoubled his commitment to invigorate the Disney brand by crafting a business environment where mega franchises, like High School Musical and Hannah Montana could grow and prosper – revitalizing the Company in the process and positioning for long-term success. #

FACTOR III: CONTINUOUSLY PREPARE

Geno Auriemma has made preparation a religion at UConn. Every week in practice, he drills his women's basketball players in all types of game situations – regardless of its probability to actually occur during a game. He wants his team to be able to think and react to what's happening on the court. This improves anticipation and playmaking. It enables flawless execution.

Businesses can do this, as well. They can be deliberate in the ways in which they anticipate and plot the future. By continuously preparing for various scenarios, an organization learns how to adjust and react without hesitation – staff knows what to do and how to do it, no matter what situation arises in the business environment.

"They focused on the next game and let the media speculate and prophesize about perfect seasons."

Royal Dutch Shell, for example, uses scenarios to explore the future. Unlike mathematical forecasting, scenario planning anticipates how people behave and react and describe ways in which those human actions can play out in the marketplace. The resulting scenarios reveal different possible futures. In turn, Shell proactively develops action plans to address the most likely scenarios in the event that one day they occur.

This enables the Company to stay one step ahead of the competition every time. #

FACTOR IV: MAKE MID-COURSE ADJUSTMENTS

While most teams go into every game with a plan for victory, sometimes those plans get foiled by a rival's equally accomplished game plan. So, coaches have to make mid-course adjustments. Three times during the 1972 season the Miami Dolphins went into the locker room with a half time deficit, only to emerge victorious by game's end. There's no doubt that their coach, Don Shula, was a genius in making real-time adjustments.

By monitoring execution and recognizing trends and nuances in the marketplace, a business improves its chances of making winning mid-term adjust-

ments. Coupled with flexible strategic plans and solid processes for quickly implementing changes separates good enterprises from great ones.

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When online travel broker, Travelocity, first arrived on the scene, its strategy

was based on being the low cost provider within its niche. The firm was one of the first to offer low cost guarantees. However, with the emergence of worthy rivals pursuing similar strategies, Travelocity has had to adjust its business model to include impeccable service delivery.

Travelocity's new programs like the Customer Bill of Rights (which outlines what customers should expect from travel agencies) and the Proactive Customer Care program (that identifies and investigates issues that may impact a customer travel) are paying handsomely. Last year, Travelocity's sales jumped 35% over the prior year. There's certainly something to be said for consistently monitoring and adjusting business strategies. #

FACTOR V: BELIEVE IN THE LEADER

When preparing his team for the next game, John Wooden never talked about winning, or, basketball for that matter. Famous for not having organized plays, Wooden would talk to his team about values, loyalty and team. He firmly planted the notion within each of his players that they did not play for the glory of winning, but, for each other. His players responded by winning. In fact, his UCLA Bruins had two perfect seasons during his tenure. Clearly, his teams believed in their Coach and gave their all to make him proud.

Unquestionably, senior leadership sets the tone for the organizations that they lead. Staff members are much more inclined to watch what their management team is doing and emulate that behavior than it is to respond only to the words that are being said. It is through actions, not words, that senior leaders become living examples of the traits and values that they want their organizations to embrace.

Iconic business leaders like Berkshire Hathaway's Warren Buffet and Apple's Steve Jobs come to mind. Apparent opposites, Buffet a conservative and unassuming Midwesterner, and, Jobs a hip and flashy west coast techie have both crafted compelling visions for their organizations which serve to attract and cultivate the best and brightest talent available. #

TO CLOSE

A business enterprise that regularly decimates its competition is running the table. The only difference between perfect sports teams and perfect businesses is that the sports team had the context of an established game schedule to set the boundary for their perfection. Perfect businesses don't have that luxury. Presumably, their competitive schedule goes on forever.

With that said, these five factors are shared among the perfect teams discussed here. Certainly, these teams all had the personnel, coaching and plays necessary to win.

Businesses seeking perfection in execution need to have the same. Without the talent, leadership and business strategies required, business perfection may not be attainable – regardless of how vigorously a management team pursues the adoption of these five traits. Nonetheless, their adoption can only serve to improve an organization's ability to reach perfection, and, to become the provider of choice within their markets, the employer of choice where they do business, and, the investment of choice among investors. ##

About The Firm:

The **Best Practices Enterprise Group** is a top-tier management consulting firm that specializes in Strategic Planning, Business Transformation, Organizational Engagement and IT Strategy Development.

It's clients have included many diverse organizations including The Home Depot, Mitsui Sumitomo Insurance and the U.S. Marine Corps, among others.

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