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**PEOPLE**

**Huddle up, team — the coach has something to say**



## **Huddle Up, Team — The Coach Has Something to Say** **LIFE LESSONS for BUSINESS OWNERS**

I love to be inspired. I get inspiration from a lot of places, including my family, my team and the entrepreneurs I work with every day, as they strive to be better leaders and better people. But, there's one group of people who've turned inspiring teams into an art form: football coaches.

When was the last time you watched Rudy and didn't get a tear in your eye and a surge of motivation to be your best? Have you ever listened to Jim Valvano's 1993 ESPYs speech? If not, I suggest you take a moment to after reading this article; I promise you'll be inspired to take on the world. A good locker room speech — real or fictionalized — has the power to inspire. Great coaches seize those moments to share who they are with their teams and demonstrate true leadership.

So, what differentiates these leaders? They demonstrate the most important traits a leader needs to inspire a team: passion, inspiration and personal connection.

Football coaches have been a staple source for speakers in corporate leader training sessions for years, and I often see famous quotes from coaches plastered on motivational office posters. However, in my experience coaching companies across the U.S., I've found that many leaders who take cues from their favorite coaches consistently miss the same key piece of the puzzle: the personal connection.

### **KEY STEPS TO BUILDING PERSONAL CONNECTIONS**

On average, employed people spend eight hours a day working Monday through Friday. If you assume that the average person works for 50 years (starts a part-time job around age 15 and works until age 65) you can estimate that most of us work 100,000 hours in our lifetime.

With so much of life spent at the workplace, why wouldn't leaders make an effort to know colleagues on a personal level? The answer is fear of vulnerability. Many leaders have trouble letting down their guard in front of team members. They give the same excuses: "I can't look weak in front of my team," or "It's unprofessional to make a habit of talking about non-work-related topics." They couldn't be more wrong.

Truly great coaches live outside their comfort zones, show their teams who they really are and share the personal side of their life in order to solidify strong relationships with team members and inspire loyalty. It's natural to fear vulnerability, but it's crucial to be vulnerable if you truly want to be great.

Here are three steps to overcoming your fear of vulnerability in order to build personal (yes, personal) relationships in the workplace:

## **1. EMBRACE YOUR OWN EXPERIENCES, POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE.**

As a leader, you're probably accustomed to doing things your way. My guess is that you've also experienced your fair share of disappointments and struggles. Trust me: This is not just normal for leaders, it's expected. But anyone who refuses to acknowledge past struggles or failures will never learn from them.

The first step to overcoming fear of vulnerability is to look at your wins and especially your losses square in the eye and see them for what they are: learning experiences. Why did [insert situation here] happen? What is the lesson from that experience? How can telling this story help my current team?

Begin your journey to overcoming fear of vulnerability by making a list of the learning experiences of your past. Then, prepare to share.

## **2. SHARE OPENLY AND HONESTLY, THEN LISTEN.**

Having a personal conversation with team members can be stressful, even panic-inducing for many leaders, especially the ones who tell me they "focus on the future, not the past." It's true that forward-looking initiatives are crucial to business success, but vulnerability with your team is even more important.

Take a moment to think about why you respect your colleagues and team members. Consider why they deserve to hear from you and why building a relationship with each of them will yield positive results. Express your gratitude to your team. It will help you reflect on and appreciate what you have and make your team feel appreciated as well.

If you get emotional or break down, that's fine — it can even be a good thing. When team members witness you being vulnerable, they'll follow you through hell and back.

Once it's over, it's time to listen. You may be surprised at how your team responds to what is now a more honest, two-way conversation.

## **3. MAKE CHANGES AS NECESSARY.**

Once you've heard from everyone, take appropriate action on any suggestions or requests in order to demonstrate to the team that you respect and welcome outside opinions. Your actions will go a long way to building a foundation of trust and understanding.

The more you practice vulnerability in the workplace, the more it will become ingrained in your culture and the norm rather than the exception. You'll not only build closer ties to your current employees, but you'll begin to attract people who fit into the culture you've created.

If you commit to mastering your fear of vulnerability and building personal connections with your team, I promise that your reputation as a leader will soar and your business results will follow suit.

*This article originally appeared in Forbes.*

# THE PETRA EXPERIENCE

**The Petra Experience is like a Mental Marathon of focused effort to create a specific set of priorities and a planned process to achieve them... as a team.**

## **Looking to change your business life - forever?**

The daily grind of growing a business is tough... it doesn't have to be that way. We work from our own business experiences while focusing on your business – as coach and an accountability partner. We implement the Petra Process in a way that ensures it “sticks” then we stay engaged to keep you on your path to success and less frustration. We don't want this to be just another thing you start – then it gets ignored and finally dies... let's stop that cycle in your business. The Petra Program 'clarifies' what is most important to be done – by whom, by when – **AND** creates an accountability structure to ensure **IT GETS DONE.**

*Andy Bailey is lead entrepreneur coach with business coaching firm Petra and serves as the Entrepreneur Organization's global membership director. Visit his blog at [www.petracoach.com](http://www.petracoach.com) for more business and leadership insight.*

### **PETRA COACH**

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