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'THE CULTURE FACTORY'

"Thoughts from a Texas High School coach."

Welcome to **THE CULTURE FACTORY**. TCF will be a place I will share ideas every few weeks and where the few elite 'who get it' can generate discussion and grow together.

After writing Culture Defeats Strategy last year and feeling like I am contributing to the leadership profession I decided to continue to present my thoughts about the mental game, personal growth, and overall team culture.

There will be a little variance, but for the normal issue will consist of: a main article, a personal growth idea and a book or podcast worth discussing. We can then use our Culture Defeats Strategy Facebook group to discuss and allow others to expand with how they tackle the topic.

Full disclosure right off the bat: I am not a professional writer, blogger or grammar guru. I am a 'boots on the ground' coach who loves the mental game and others who do also. I believe in the honor of coaching and want to contribute in some small way to our profession. If you are thinking this will look like something Tim Ferris, Jocko Willink or Brian Cain would produce please lower your expectations. I do not have a budget to hire an editor or someone to produce cool graphics. If you want to read real-life strategies and culture ideas then you will enjoy The Culture Factory.

Let's go.

CULTURE GETS US TO THE 'ROOT OF THE PROBLEM'

The great preacher, Tony Evans, tells this story about getting 'to the root of the problem'. In the early part of the 1900's, there was a crude test to see if a patient was sane enough to be released back into society. The patient was placed in a room with a sink. The faucet was turned on and a stopper was put in the drain until the sink overflowed. The patient was then handed a mop and the door was closed. If

the patient had enough sense to shut off the water, pull the plug, and then mop up the water, he was considered capable of going home. But on the other hand, if the patient mopped like crazy and never bothered to shut off the water and/or pull the plug, he was considered still insane and needed to be detained a little longer in the mental institution.

I love stories because they create mental pictures in our brains. This story relates to the topic of core values because if your program or organization does not have a set of principles to give it direction and an identity then you are just mopping and hoping for the best. A great culture only happens when we turn off the faucet and focus on it daily.

CULTURE IS A HUGE BUZZWORD RIGHT NOW, BUT WHAT IS IT?

Culture is hard to define, but like a clean or dirty aquarium...you know it when you see it.



It's hard to know exactly why the top aquarium is dirty. We know there is dirt and food particles in it, but you can't just remove one or two things and make it all better.

Merriam Webster defines organizational culture as:
the set of shared attitudes, values, goals, and practices that characterizes an institution or organization

Culture for me is, how you think, how you speak and how you act.

I challenge the coaches reading this to go back to their team and ask them, "what are we about? What do we want others to say about us?" If you get a bunch of different answers then you need to work on your culture.

So, how do you work on your culture?

CORE VALUES - THE HOLY GRAIL OF BUILDING CULTURE

To have a great culture you must have a great system to hammer it home each day. You do this with CORE VALUES. At North Forney, we have seven core values (five for each day of the week and two more for game days). We have them posted also with our credo (core values defined) so all who walk into our facility know what we are about and what we stand for.

NORTH FORNEY FOOTBALL CORE VALUES:

Juice and Tempo - Compete - Blue Collar Tough - Family - Discipline - Finish and Pay Day.

These are our core values and we talk about them on a daily basis. I also call it "Falconese", our language we use in our program.

There is no set rule to have 5, but most do. We assign each of ours to a day of the week so it works out great for us.

If you are looking for a great culture start with identifying core values. To create core values for your team takes time. You must stand in front of them and talk about terms important to you, allow them to have input in the selection of the values and then define them.

"You must be able to define something if you want to achieve it."

Core values are not enough. You must define them to give clarity of what they mean to your

organization.

Our structure and system to create core values and a credo:

- Introduce words that are important to you and your staff to the team. (2-4 weeks)
- After they have a general understanding of you want your culture to be about, allow each player to submit 5 words (google form easiest way to do this).
- Coaches categorize the words and come up with the five most frequent. Example: family, brotherhood, servants...all of these would fall under one category and become one word. For us it was family, but it would be whichever you choose.
- Now that you have your core values you must discuss them.
- Take one week for each value and have you and/or your coaches go over it at length. The system we use is for me to introduce the word on Monday and then have a different coach continue on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday. On Friday the team and all coaches will define it. Example: Juice and Tempo - 'If you are juiceful you are useful. Falcon Fast is maniacal effort that makes their butts quit.' We talked about the word maniacal earlier in the week because we knew we wanted in the credo.
- You and your staff will be able to guide them to end up with the core values and credo you want, but they must feel like they were a big part of creating it. What you are in on you are in with!

As you can see this is not a small task or one that will happen quickly. Before 2015 I had some words on locker tags, backs of t-shirts, etc. that "I" thought were our core values. They didn't mean ANYTHING to our team so they were worthless. Take your time and get it right. Below is our current credo we are using at NFHS. We will keep these for one more year and then, because the team needs to have ownership, we will reevaluate and tweak/adjust for 2019.

Once you establish your core values and credo it is a DAILY FIST FIGHT to engrain them into the minds of everyone. You must attack it EVERYDAY.



BE INTENTIONAL AND FOCUS ON YOUR CORE VALUES DAILY

If you want an elite culture you must have an elite system to emphasize your core values every day. There are several ways we do this, but assigning each value to a day of the week helps tremendously.

- Monday - Juice and Tempo
- Tuesday - Competition
- Wednesday - Blue Collar Tough
- Thursday - Family
- Friday - Discipline

Having each with a day of the week gives us a focus for pre and post-practice team talks. For example, on Wednesday I will ask the players and coaches to nominate who demonstrated the most competitive spirit that day. We will always get four or five players mentioned, they will stand in front of the team and one

of them will break us out.

Other specific examples we use to stress our culture daily:

Juice - we will periodically do 'Juice Factory' to open a practice. In this, our guys will high five each member of the team, circle up and all chant, "yes, yes yes" as they jump in the air and create lots of energy. Eventually one will break us out. This only takes about a minute and they love it.

Compete - each day in offseason we finish with an overtime period. It is a random 1 v. 1 competition that is usually physical in nature but can be mental as well. The guys pair up with someone similar to their size. The winner goes in to shower and get ready for his school day. The loser finds another Falcon to compete against.

Examples of activities: 400-meter run / combative (wrestling type drill) / cite the credo, etc.

Blue Collar Tough - 3 x 200 meter runs with only 3 min rest in between. Hal Wasson of Southlake Carroll H.S. gave me this a couple of years and my first thought was, "how hard can running 200's be?" This is tough because the times they have to make the small amount of time they get to rest.

We start this in January and will do every other day until our top 22 all make their times. If you asked our guys what the toughest thing we did last year when I got to NF was they would all say the 200s. In fact, my first day at NF last February we got on the track and ran one 200 for time. Two or three guys literally got sick. I gave them plenty of rest (6 or 7 minutes) then grouped them up by the time they ran. I told them they would run two more, but to their time would be +4 seconds. It was a 'come to Jesus' experience for some. Our trainer told me later a total of 15 got sick. I knew then we weren't very tough. We stayed with the 200's and eventually they got much better. It became a source of pride for them and helped bond them together.

My good friend Bob Wager, Arlington Martin H.S., finishes each workout with a 500-meter run. Why 500 meters? "Because everyone else runs 400 meters."

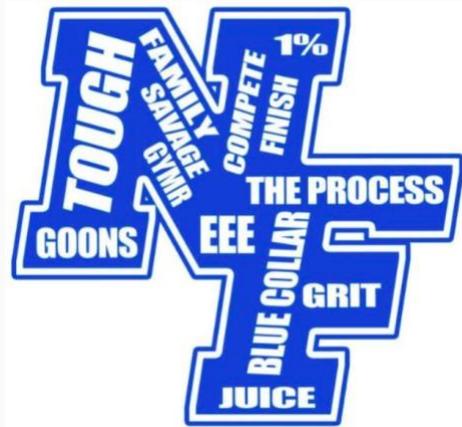
Family - One of my favorite ways we reiterate family is by assigning our guys to take a pic with their favorite teacher and post in our team What's App group (group text). The teachers love this! We also have them take pics with admin., custodians, cafeteria workers, mom, etc.

Discipline - after warm up we have our guys stand at attention with their feet together and toes touching the heels of the athlete in front. Shirts must be tucked, shoelaces tied, wearing the correct gear, looking straight ahead, etc. Anyone not 'up to speed' is sent to the **Pit of Misery** for a few minutes of tough love.

Our pit of misery is worth talking about here also. We have a coach stationed in a remote part of our facility ready to make things uncomfortable for anyone who "can't get right" in a discipline drill, does not have the correct weight on the bar, doesn't do all his reps, or has lack of effort. The pit of misery helps reinforce our core value of discipline...dilly, dilly!

'BRAND' YOUR CORE VALUES TO YOUR TEAM AND COMMUNITY

We not only are intentional about things we do in practice to emphasize our culture with daily core values but we also going to make sure our guys see it as many times as we can. Put your core values on the back of t-shirts (there is SO much power in t-shirts), signage is very important, twitter hashtags, whatever you can think of.



This is our game ball with 'Make Them Quit' on it. It is part of our Juice and Tempo credo.



CORE VALUES ARE ALSO IMPORTANT FOR INDIVIDUALS

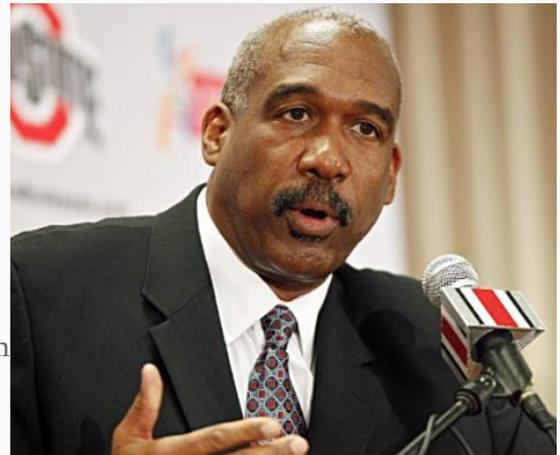
Gene Smith, the Athletic Director for Ohio State University, believes strongly in core values not only for his teams but in our personal lives. "Anytime I am interviewing a potential coach for Ohio State I ask each candidate this question: what are three personal core values you live by?"

What a great question. I have stolen this and asked candidates about their personal core values also, but I usually just ask them what their #1 core value is and why.

When evaluating coaches core values give you a structure to use. Going back to our core values if I have a coach who "doesn't have a presence" then I will tell him we believe in 'Juice' at North Forney and I need to him to have more energy on the field.

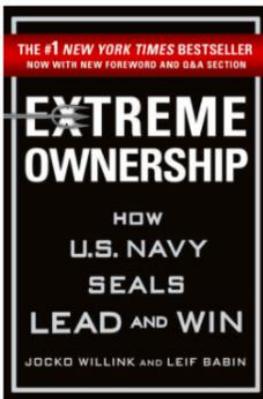
One of my core values is 1%. I constantly want to be getting 1% better each day in every aspect. I fail at times, but I have an 'always moving forward' mindset.

What are the three core values you live by? You wouldn't be reading this if you did not have a growth mindset. Take some time to think about your three core values so you will know where you want to grow the most. Don't spend weeks developing core values for your group without analyzing yourself also.



A GOOD READ

'EXTREME OWNERSHIP'
Jocko Willink and Leif Babin



This book explains thru military operations in Iraq (fascinating) how no matter what happens we should 'own it'.

J. Willink and L. Babin are former Navy Seal commanders who have taken their training and are helping the 'real world' with leadership, health and personal growth. One of my many (many) faults through the years has been frustration with others when things go sideways. Extreme Ownership is all about it being our fault. We did not explain it correctly, we did not go the extra mile and make sure others knew exactly what they needed to know. The more I am typing this the more I am being convicted I need to read it again!

Leif Babin (co-author)

"The biggest takeaway that you can have from this is looking yourself in the mirror and thinking, 'Where can I do better?' 'Taking ownership instead of blaming others, finding excuses, or maybe even denying that problems exist ... And a lot of that is about checking your ego."

"It isn't about the words you say. Its about the energetic message you send. Pete Carroll (bring the juice)

"Toughness is the product of struggle."

"You must own everything in your world. There is no one else to blame." Jocko Willink.

WHO I AM

Most of you reading this are probably friends of mine, but for the few who aren't I am a 28-year veteran coach and educator. I am currently the head football coach and campus coordinator at North Forney High School in Forney, TX. NF is a 5A school with 1,600 students that was opened in 2009. This past season we finished 10-3, the best record in the history of the school. We achieved a few milestones; defeating three teams they had never beaten, avg. 53 points a game (top 10 in 5A Texas history), won the first 5A playoff game and advanced to the third round for the first time. None of this would have happened w/o great players, coaches, and administration support. But, it also would not have happened if we would not have changed the culture with an intentional, daily commitment to the mental game.

I want to share some of the things we did and to learn from you out there who are also on this journey. The bottom line for me is I love coaches and believe in our great profession. I wanted to contribute and writing CDS allowed me to do in a small way. Now, The Culture Factory newsletter will not only allow me to share my experiences but will connect like-minded leaders. I plan to learn as much as I give by doing this.



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