“Citius, Altius, Fortius” which is Latin for “Faster, Higher, Stronger” is the motto of the Olympic games. In February, the world watched while athletes from around the world gathered in Sochi for the Winter Olympic Games with the quest of being faster, higher and stronger. It was the same challenge taken up in 1992 when the United States men’s Olympic basketball team, nicknamed the “Dream Team”, was the first American Olympic team to feature active NBA players. At that time, the team was described by journalists as the “greatest sports team ever assembled.”

Inside organizations, leaders strive to build the “greatest team ever assembled” as well. It’s the stuff that dreams are made of and dreams really can come true – in Sochi or at work. While its true most leaders won’t have access to the NBA to build their own “Dream Team,” they do have access to four simple truths that can create an environment where employees can go faster, soar higher and grow stronger. It takes a game plan and it takes a DREAM.

**GAME PLAN**

Webster’s Dictionary describes a game plan as a “plan for achieving something.” Inside organizations, achievement is measured by business results. These results are delivered by people – people who are either engaged and motivated or disengaged and unproductive. To harness and optimize the talents of every player on their team, leaders at all levels need a game plan that executes on four major points:

1. **DEVELOP** – According to research by Career Systems International (CSI), one of the top five reasons employees stay engaged at work is the opportunity for career growth, learning and development.

2. **RETAIN** – The cost of replacing talented employees can average as much as two-three times that employee’s annual salary.

3. **ENGAGE** – Ongoing research by Gallup indicates that actively disengaged employees cost the United States over $300 billion a year on lost productivity.

4. **MENTOR** – People with mentors are twice as likely to stay inside an organization – stay longer and produce more.

A well-executed game plan can help leaders inside any organization optimize the talents of every player on their team. And, any good game plan will have strategies for setting the right game tempo, capitalizing on what your team does best, and practicing daily to draw out the best effort of all players. Coaches of sport teams will tell you most games are won and lost by your players executing the fundamentals and plays that you have taught them in practice. Forget the fundamentals and forget to practice – you lose.
WINNING FORMULA
Successful leaders and organizations build their winning teams around the DREAM by Developing, Retaining, Engaging and Mentoring their employees. “DREAM” is the fundamentals of a talent management game plan where teams must practice and execute daily to deliver business results with the highest levels of quality, productivity and safety.

Executing on the winning formula doesn’t have to be complicated. Keep it simple and focus on the fundamentals for each of your players. Following is a sample game plan with strategies for how to execute on each. Involve your team, make notes, scout out the environment, and learn to change the style of play when you’ve been doing isn’t working.

Player: ________________  Position: ________________

What you’ve been doing isn’t working.

LATE GAME STRATEGY
Building a DREAM team is not a one and done. It requires a sustained commitment. For some leaders, it may be a new commitment to a new way of thinking. And just because it may be late in the game, it doesn’t mean it’s not too late to change the plan. Create your “To Do” list with stay interviews with everyone on your team at the top of your list. Agree to a plan of action and then execute. Get feedback on how you are doing as the coach – go public with your plan and tell your players how what you are doing to build a winning team. Finally, realize you don’t have to go alone. Enlist your players, fellow coaches and the organization to put the fundamentals in place.

The time is right to build a game plan and create a work environment that is “faster, higher and stronger.” And, if you already have “greatest team ever assembled,” use your game plan to keep the DREAM alive. Go back to the fundamentals, practice daily, and “achieve your something.”

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