

Chapter 10

Take Action To Promote Yourself, Your Ideas, Your Business, Products And Services

Today, I had lunch with Coach Bill Foster, currently in charge of the entire Southwest Conference of college basketball, after a long, incredible distinguished coaching career. Bill gave the famous Jim Valvano his first coaching job. Bill had a phenomenal tenure at Duke and then at the University of South Carolina. *ESQUIRE MAGAZINE* featured him as “Dale Carnegie on the basketball court,” because of his reputation as a powerful motivator. He turned Northwestern’s program around. In every case, everywhere Bill went, attendance soared, alumni support increased, and community involvement with the team improved dramatically. Bottom-line: Bill Foster knows how to fill seats.

And that’s what we talked about at lunch; what he is now busily doing for the SWC’s schools, most with sagging attendance; he is teaching and motivating coaches to become promoters, and he is relentlessly promoting. Last year, the tournament’s big Tip-Off Luncheon, for example, had only 300 in attendance; this year, 1,000; and Bill’s goal for the next one, 1,500 – a 500% increase in two seasons. Schools with game attendance down to 2,000 will, within a single season, climb to 4,500 with Bill’s determined influence.

What Bill Foster Knows About Success That Most People Don’t (Or Don’t Want To)

Here’s what Bill told me, that everybody needs to hear and take to heart (whether they like it or not): *Coaches*, he told me, *often don’t understand that what they do off the basketball court, all year round, in their communities and with the national media, promoting, is as important as what they do on the court* – because if attendance sags, the university’s easiest fix is to fire the coach and bring in a new coach with new excitement and new promises. Because if attendance sags, recruiting suffers. Because if attendance sags, player confidence and commitment suffers.

In other words, a very, very important part of the coach’s responsibility is promotion. In other words, the “core” of coaching (like the “core” of operating a restaurant, owning a pet shop, writing books, being a jeweler, whatever) is not of sole importance; it is not *the* key to success. The smart coach is an assertive, creative promoter. “One of the signs on my wall says a terrible thing happens when you don’t promote,” Bill said, smiling. “Nothing.”

I have watched Bill's career closely, both at the University of South Carolina, then at Northwestern, now at SWC, and I'll tell you something; if you didn't know where he was, you could figure it out just by collecting and looking at the promotional literature, the calendars, the newsletters, the mailings of each school. One would stand out above all others. And that's where you'd find Bill Foster.

You see, in EVERY field of endeavor, in ANY field of endeavor, the winners are promoters.

Now, some people will want to argue about how unfair that is. I saw some clown from the ABA on a talk show the other day blaming the legal profession's disfavor with the public on "those few attorneys who do a lot of advertising." At Arizona State University, the academic in-crowd just about ostracized the professor who turned "Where There's A Will, There's An 'A'" into a giant nationwide bestseller, making himself famous and rich along the way. That's all crap. It's jealousy. Ego speaking. Those unwilling to promote are always the biggest, most vocal critics to those successful through promotion. Pick any field and you'll find both. You'll find very vocal critics of promoters. And you'll find tremendously successful promoters.

General Patton was viewed by many of his peers as a shameless, egotistical promoter. Madonna, throughout her career, has been sneered at as a no-talent self-promoter. Brandon Tarkintoff. Donald Trump. Richard Nixon brought himself back from utter, unparalleled disgrace to respected status as an astute elder statesman through an aggressively-implemented, thorough strategy of self-promotion. And let's add the adage, "*There have been many statues erected to honor those highly criticized, but very few statues erected to critics.*"

You Only Get To Choose
From Door #1 Or Door #2

You really have two choices. You can choose to stick your nose up at the promoters, criticize them and criticize promotion, view it as unseemly, as beneath you, as crass, and stand around grumbling about it. OR you can get good at it and use it to create influence, prominence, prestige, credibility, celebrity, career and financial success. It is your choice.

The coaches Bill works with face these choices. Some of those who choose "Door #1" will lose their current positions and move "down" to smaller schools, and there they may very well find happiness, peace of mind, a "home," and that's okay. Many, though, will move "down" and be puzzled and embittered by it. They'll

live forever in envy of others they judge to be less qualified, less capable coaches than they are. The world is full of such people.

A few will pick “Door #2.” *They’ll get the message.* They’ll somehow get intellectually and emotionally okay with the way things really are. They’ll dig in and learn and adapt and grow. They’ll become great promoters. And those are the coaches whose names you and I will know.

This Guy Could Start An Argument
In An Empty Room – How Can You Succeed
With A Personality Like *That?*

Buddy Ryan, when Defensive Coordinator at the Chicago Bears, irked head coach Ditka, the owner and countless others with his braggadocio self-promotion. Then he went on to be head coach in Philadelphia, and, in short order, so aggravated the owner and local media that he was fired. Then, as Defensive Coordinator of the NFL’s Houston Oilers, Buddy Ryan lost his cool and got into first an argument, then a fistfight with the Offensive Coordinator on the sidelines, during a nationally-televised game. His “sin” was shown over and over again during the game and on newscasts, in Sports Illustrated and newspapers, and every pundit said, “Now he’ll never get another head coaching job.” Many peers, sportswriters and others rejoiced in Buddy’s demise. Finally, his big, fat mouth had destroyed his career, as it should.

Nuts. As soon as the season ended, the owner of the Phoenix Cardinals grabbed Buddy Ryan like a drowning man clutching a lifesaver. And Buddy grabbed the mike at the press conference and instantly insulted past coaches, players, the owner, and said, “Well, Phoenix, you’ve *finally* got a winner here.” And 20,000 season tickets sold like hotcakes.

Buddy Ryan now has a very real chance to recreate his universally-feared, “killer” defense here in Phoenix and immediately take the Cardinals from the cellar to a winning record. Next year, he’ll have a very real chance to take this team to the Super Bowl. But do not misunderstand how that opportunity has come about. That opportunity exists for one reason and one reason only: because Buddy Ryan’s aggravating, controversial, bombastic self-promotion was a “lock” to fill the stadium in Phoenix. He has his shot because he fills seats.

Reading what Robert Ringer said about “The Leap Frog Theory” in his book WINNING THROUGH INTIMIDATION literally changed my life. That’s when I first got *the message*.

Let me now try and summarize the message.

Waiting around to be discovered, to be recognized, to be noticed, to be appointed, to be promoted guarantees one thing and one thing only: old age. Focusing on doing whatever it is that you do better than anybody else and trusting that alone is enough (and arguing tirelessly that it *should* be enough) guarantees one thing and one thing only: a long life of labor in oblivion.

If Jesus had hung around his hometown working as a carpenter, giving his talks at the local Kiwanis Club meeting, writing books that never got published, waiting to be discovered, we might all be Zen Buddhists today. He was a pretty bold, bombastic promoter. Turned wet bread into fish. Healed the blind. Pitched a fit about the merchants hanging around the temple. Well, you know the story. I don't have to tell you about it. You know the story because Jesus was such a great promoter.