

## Chapter Thirty-Seven: A Gutsy Phone Call

While I appreciated the opportunity to work for the Chiefs Scouting Department, I needed a more permanent opportunity so every day I sent letters and resumes all over the country. Every NFL team received a letter and resume. Every Major League Baseball team received a letter and resume. Every NBA team received a letter and resume. Approximately half of the NHL teams received a letter and resume. (I didn't understand hockey at the time so I stuck with those teams located in the United States.) Sports agencies large and small received letters and resumes. The USOC and its affiliate members received letters and resumes. The NCAA, NCAA Conferences and a number of universities all received cover letters and resumes.

I sent 250 letters and resumes all over the country as I continued my career search in late 1995. Unfortunately, the responses were virtually the same: "Thank you for your interest in (insert organization name), but we don't have any current opportunities." Or: "While your credentials are exceptional, we don't have any opportunities available at this time."

Every day I reviewed my mail and every day I would receive multiple rejection letters. My frustration increased daily. I knew I had the right skill set to make an impact with an organization, yet no one would give me an opportunity. Of course, this happens all the time to

people, but I got more and more discouraged as the process continued. After several months of rejection letters, I reached my limit. I just had a particularly challenging day at the Chiefs after losing several hours' worth of work when the computer crashed. I had bills stacking up, and I didn't want to reach out to my parents for help again. After all, I received my Master's Degree so I could make myself more marketable to employers. I didn't want to disappoint my parents by telling them I remained unemployed despite my academic credentials.

I employed a variation of an old adage: "If you don't like the direction in which your ship is sailing, you have to adjust your sails because you cannot adjust the wind." This is exactly what I did—I adjusted my sails. During my drive home from the office I promised myself if I received another rejection letter that day, I would pick up the phone and call the team, organization, or entity to convince them *why* they needed me. I wasn't going to sit idle any longer. I needed to do something different because I couldn't change the wind.

As fate would have it, I arrived home and found one single letter in my mailbox. It was from the San Diego Padres and contained the same standard rejection text. It so happens earlier that day, I had just read an article in a sports-related publication about the Padres' lack of ticket sales and how the team struggled to eclipse one million tickets sold in 1995. The Padres actually sold just over one million seats that year but ranked 13<sup>th</sup> out of 14 National League teams in attendance that season. In 1993 and 1994, they ranked dead last in the National League in terms of attendance. I saw an opportunity to engage in a conversation with Don Johnson, the Padres Vice President of Marketing.

*Behind in the Count*

That night, I picked up the phone and called the San Diego Padres. Having already been rejected by them, I saw nothing to lose. I was tired of waiting for my ship to come in, so I decided to row out to meet it.

The phone rang and the Padres' operator answered. "Thank you for calling the San Diego Padres. How may I direct your call?"