



COLLABORATIVE LEADERSHIP LESSONS

2023 WOMEN'S SOCCER WORLD CUP

Winsor Jenkins is the author of *The Collaborator: Discover Soccer as a Metaphor for Global Business Leadership* (Winner 2009 AXIOM Business Book Award – International Business – Bronze Medal), *Game of Teams: Discover How to Become a Collaborative Leader*, and contributing author, *Focus on Them* (Ch. 3 – Collaboration). His books are available on AMAZON in both e-book and hard copy formats.

This series (six articles) was initially posted on LinkedIn during the 2023 Women's Soccer World Cup. The purpose for writing this series was to provide added awareness of the benefits of soccer to the topic of collaborative leadership development. The articles are listed below in chronological order.

The Beautiful Game

Beyond Lost Causes

Metaphor to Mindset

Transformative Power of Soccer

Mindset Rules

Relationships Matter

THE BEAUTIFUL GAME

During the upcoming Women's World Cup played in Australia/New Zealand, I plan to post a series of short articles to help people/organizations better understand how soccer, often described as the "beautiful game," serves as a framework for developing a collaborative mind set and skill set to effectively collaborate in our global world. These articles can be found on my blog:

<https://www.winsorjenkins.com/blog>.

I mentioned in my first book, *The Collaborator: Discover Soccer as a Metaphor for Global Business Leadership*, that today's global business world looks more and more like the game of soccer. Just as in soccer, people on work teams must be able to adapt to changing conditions, assimilate new information quickly, apply multiple skills, change roles, take risks, make quick decisions, and more – all in real time – to effectively collaborate.

Team success on the business field requires people to apply a collaborative mindset, functioning interdependently, to harness the power of connections across the team's network. The key is learning and applying a series of Operating Principles described in my book that mirror a soccer team's collaborative behaviors and actions. These are listed below.

OPERATING PRINCIPLES (for developing a Collaborative Mindset):

Focus on Team – Not Position: Addresses the need to focus on results produced when all positions effectively interact on the business field.

Understand That Everyone Can Play: Recognizes that technology is the great enabler allowing people everywhere – to play...to collaborate....in business.

Embrace Diversity: Represents the prerequisite for partnering in global business...and serves as a springboard for establishing trust... Diversity brings strength to teams.

Rely On Each Other: Reinforces the team orientation...minimizes the silo mindset...recognizing a "mutual" dependency between people...promoting genuine collaboration.

Promote Both Individual & Team Values: Deals with managing both values in a never-ending cycle to help ensure that the process for producing team results is working.

Seek Out Skillful, Adaptable Players: Promotes the need for flexibility for managing change...requires people and teams who can quickly assimilate and use new skills, information and the like...and recognizes that multiple skills are needed to play the game of business.

Charge the Team to Perform the Work: Recognizes the self-directed nature of the team charged with performing the work; recognizes the team's performance during the game (business) is left up to the team.

Empower Players to Win: Speaks to the commitment to develop all employees, to provide continuous feedback - all to help position people to make better decisions.

Coach Teams to Respond to Changing Conditions on Their Own: Reinforces the application of a real team, self-directed, operating on a real-time basis...responding to changing conditions.

Develop Partners on The Field: Recognizes that all players on the business field are viewed as leaders...views every opportunity as a leadership development step.

Achieve Cross-Cultural Agility: Calls for leveraging relationships in business to achieve results...transcending technique in dealing with people across cultures.

It's important to mention that these principles must be learned! Why? Most people cannot flip mindsets like hitting a switch and effectively function using team-based values (versus individual values). Because it's not in our DNA due mostly to cultural factors that promote individual values over team values, it takes a commitment to development.

BEYOND LOST CAUSES

If you have read any of my previous articles/posts or books, you know that I am very enthusiastic about soccer *and* leadership development. I have continued to find ways to marry these two passions in ways that make sense and help people/organizations understand collaborative leadership and effective team collaboration. I admit that it has been an uphill battle to convince others to “think outside the box” as we all like to say when it comes to using “another” sports metaphor to help give meaning to a challenging application like collaboration. Granted, my pitch for leveraging soccer’s platform is not rooted in science and driven by data. Yet, soccer does have a global appeal (and record) few sports, if any, can match that can be used to understand team collaboration played at its highest level!

Where do we go from here? Soccer is not considered mainstream in the United States, but it continues to grow. The value of sport to leverage peoples’ thinking and actions is real as well. Nelson Mandela saw the value of sport to change a nation, replacing apartheid with democracy in South Africa. There is hope for continuing to fight this “lost cause” because it is crucial to supporting a global world desperate for help. Globalization cannot exist without collaboration!

As you start to watch the Women’s World Cup, you will see how passionate people are about their soccer teams. Passion can produce change if harnessed the right way. Again, Mandela used sport to inspire people and change a nation! So, what say you about thinking outside the box and applying soccer’s value-adding leadership lessons to help people/organizations better understand effective team collaboration? And can soccer be used to help link up with our global partners?

At the end of the day, the leadership required in a global world demanding interdependence is far beyond the scope of a single leader and/or a command-and-control mindset. The opportunity to extend soccer’s influence to create understanding is real. After all, soccer is a great example of a sport that produces a high level of interdependence – or collaboration – for optimizing team performance!

Give it some thought. Please let me know if you have any ideas.

METAPHOR to MINDSET

Metaphors are everywhere and it is very hard to change metaphors we live by. When introduced, they have the power to create a new reality once people start to comprehend their experience in terms of the metaphor in question. It then becomes a deeper reality when people begin to act on it. This transition's success requires that people develop a mindset (aligned with the metaphor in question) to support their behaviors and actions.

So, what's a new metaphor that can be used by people and organizations to help them generate meaning and understanding – and support their actions in today's global workplace? It must be one that conveys the need for more agility on the part of individuals and collaboration on the part of teams. Why? The realities are twofold: the pace of change continues to accelerate – and more and more work is done by teams in our global workplace.

As I wrote in my book, *The Collaborator: Discover Soccer as a Metaphor for Global Business Leadership*, soccer's metaphor can be leveraged in our global workplace for improving team performance. **When one looks at our highly competitive global business world it looks like the game of soccer!** Like players on the soccer field who operate with a collaborative mindset to succeed, people operating in today's global workplace must be highly competent in adapting to changing conditions, assimilating new information on the run, and applying multiple skills across their team's network to achieve results. Here, technology enables employees to make better decisions, take risks, and manage continuous change – all in real time! But technology by itself will not get the job done.

Indeed, we should all recognize that a collaborative mindset is no longer a nice-to-have, but a “need-to-have” quality when it comes to performing in our global workplace. In *The Collaborator*, 11 principles are introduced for people to learn for developing a collaborative mindset. These principles mirror a soccer team's actions on the field. Once learned, they become habits for people to apply and effectively collaborative.

But people can't be expected to simply learn a collaborative mindset out of thin air. It requires training and development (more on that later...). For now, here are the principles described in my book. See if you can see any of these “play out” on the soccer field as you watch the Women's World Cup games on TV.

OPERATING PRINCIPLES (for developing a Collaborative Mindset):

Focus on Team – Not Position: Addresses the need to focus on results produced when all positions effectively interact on the business field.

Understand That Everyone Can Play: Recognizes that technology is the great enabler allowing people everywhere – to play...to collaborate....in business.

Embrace Diversity: Represents the prerequisite for partnering in global business...and serves as a springboard for establishing trust... Diversity brings strength to teams.

Rely On Each Other: Reinforces the team orientation...minimizes the silo mindset...recognizing a “mutual” dependency between people...promoting genuine collaboration.

Promote Both Individual & Team Values: Deals with managing both values in a never-ending cycle to help ensure that the process for producing team results is working.

Seek Out Skillful, Adaptable Players: Promotes the need for flexibility for managing change...requires people and teams who can quickly assimilate and use new skills, information and the like...and recognizes that multiple skills are needed to play the game of business.

Charge the Team to Perform the Work: Recognizes the self-directed nature of the team charged with performing the work; recognizes the team's performance during the game (business) is left up to the team.

Empower Players to Win: Speaks to the commitment to develop all employees, to provide continuous feedback - all to help position people to make better decisions.

Coach Teams to Respond to Changing Conditions on Their Own: Reinforces the application of a real team, self-directed, operating on a real-time basis...responding to changing conditions.

Develop Partners on The Field: Recognizes that all players on the business field are viewed as leaders...views every opportunity as a leadership development step.

Achieve Cross-Cultural Agility: Calls for leveraging relationships in business to achieve results...transcending technique in dealing with people across cultures.

TRANSFORMATIVE POWER OF SOCCER

There is no question that soccer is the most popular game played throughout the world. Publications like *Natural Geographic* and *Sport Illustrated*, for example, are two leading magazines that wrote about the “beautiful game” and what it means to the world. Although there are a variety of reasons for soccer’s popularity that these and other publications have shared with the world, my focus in this series of articles is on the transformative power of soccer to help people develop a collaborative mindset. Indeed, a collaborative mindset is a need-to- have quality to perform in our global workplace where teams and team-based applications continue to grow.

I like to say it is “all in the game” when it comes to describing the transformative power of soccer to create change in how team development is perceived. Because it has the power to engage the minds and hearts of people across the globe, its appeal as an alternative form for understanding genuine team collaboration in the workplace is real. For me, it is all about leveraging what feels like a “natural” opportunity to understand what it takes to function as a team!

Leveraging the game includes understanding how enthusiastic people are about soccer and using those emotions to inspire change. This is especially true when we watch World Cup Soccer. People across the globe are watching “their” team, hoping for success – sometimes against all odds. “Hope” provides them with the opportunity to see what genuine team collaboration, played at its highest level, can achieve in a highly competitive environment!

We all act on certain principles. This is especially important when it comes to team collaboration. For people attempting to collaborate, they must all be on the same page when it comes to principles, processes, and protocols. People may describe this in the form of a team charter. Otherwise, the team’s behaviors and actions look more like what I call group work...communicating, coordinating, etc.

The idea is to align team behaviors and actions with a series of novel principles described in my book, *The Collaborator: Discover Soccer as a Metaphor for Global Business Leadership*. They are embedded in soccer and mirror a team’s actions on the field. People must learn them to develop a collaborative mindset and effectively function in today’s workplace! Once learned, they help frame both individual and team decisions and harness the power of connections across the team’s network. Note in both the first and third articles in this series, the principles are described for your review (www.winsorjenkins.com/blog).

At the end of the day, I am reminded of the *Sports Illustrated* magazine cover (5/24/2010) showing young African kids playing soccer on a dirt street in their sandals. The magazine featured an article, *The Beautiful Game*, written by Grant Wahl. The visual images on the cover and in the article are very striking. Against all odds, these boys and others were leveraging the transformative power of soccer with the hope of creating a new reality for a better future.

MINDSET RULES

If you have been watching this year's Women's Soccer World Cup you see the best teams playing the game with a collaborative mindset, functioning with an elevated level of interdependence in adapting to changing conditions, assimilating information on the run, and applying multiple skills – all in real time!

Because success in soccer comes from producing an elevated level of interdependence, players must “lead with mindset” to help frame the application of both individual and team skills. When mindset and skillset are in sync, teams effectively collaborate and produce winning results!

When talking about leading with mindset and its impact on effecting change, it is interesting to note two earlier *McKinsey & Company* studies that found:

1. Failure to recognize and shift mindsets can stall the change efforts of an entire organization.
2. Organizations that identify and address pervasive mindsets at the outset are four times more likely to succeed than those who overlook this.

The same challenge holds true for people working on teams in today's highly competitive global world. Leading with mindset is a function of applying several novel principles listed in my book, *The Collaborator*. Described as an operating platform, the principles come from the game of soccer, mirroring a team's behaviors and actions. Individual and team commitment to learning and applying these principles helps frame the application of skills (i.e., competencies) leading to success.

One example of a principle in the platform is, “Charge the Team to Perform the Work.” This means that the team's performance is left up to the people on the team (as in soccer). Here, three “essential” competencies aligned with this principle are: Visioning, Results Orientation, and Customer Orientation. Again, the application of this principle and associated competencies helps support the team's application of a collaborative mindset to effectively perform.

Using a platform that creates added value is where soccer comes in. Listed below are the principles described in my book.

OPERATING PRINCIPLES (for developing a collaborative mindset):

Focus on Team – Not Position: Addresses the need to focus on results produced when all positions effectively interact on the business field.

Understand That Everyone Can Play: Recognizes that technology is the great enabler allowing people everywhere – to play...to collaborate...in business.

Embrace Diversity: Represents the prerequisite for partnering in global business...and serves as a springboard for establishing trust... Diversity brings strength to teams.

Rely On Each Other: Reinforces the team orientation...minimizes the silo mindset...recognizing a “mutual” dependency between people...promoting genuine collaboration.

Promote Both Individual & Team Values: Deals with managing both values in a never-ending cycle to help ensure that the process for producing team results is working.

Seek Out Skillful, Adaptable Players: Promotes the need for flexibility for managing change...requires people and teams who can quickly assimilate and use new skills, information and the like...and recognizes that multiple skills are needed to play the game of business.

Charge the Team to Perform the Work: Recognizes the self-directed nature of the team charged with performing the work; recognizes the team's performance during the game (business) is left up to the team.

Empower Players to Win: Speaks to the commitment to develop all employees, to provide continuous feedback - all to help position people to make better decisions.

Coach Teams to Respond to Changing Conditions on Their Own: Reinforces the application of a real team, self-directed, operating on a real-time basis...responding to changing conditions.

Develop Partners on The Field: Recognizes that all players on the business field are viewed as leaders...views every opportunity as a leadership development step.

Achieve Cross-Cultural Agility: Calls for leveraging relationships in business to achieve results...transcending technique in dealing with people across cultures.

RELATIONSHIPS MATTER

The 2023 Women's Soccer World Cup has provided me with an added opportunity to offer my thinking on what effective team collaboration looks like using the game of soccer. For that I am grateful.

As I wrap up this series of articles, I am reminded of a lesson I learned back in the day from the late, great leadership guru Warren Bennis. I attended Ken Blanchard's Client Conference in 2008 and Bennis was a guest speaker. Both he and Ken were having a conversation about the value of relationships in business and in life. When asked, Bennis said that leadership is first about relationships (and relationship building). He also said that if he had to give everything up except for one thing, it would not be relationships!

Throughout this series of articles, I have offered a platform to help people develop a collaborative mindset to effectively collaborate. The platform comes from the game of soccer, mirroring a successful team's collaborative behaviors and actions. It is made up of several principles and a series of essential competencies aligned with each principle. "Relationship building" is the number one competency in the platform, showing up in 5 of the 11 principles: Embrace Diversity, Rely On Each Other, Promote Both Individual & Team Values, Develop Partners on the Field, and Achieve Cross-Cultural Agility!

Below is a complete list of the principles and their associated competencies in the platform.

OPERATING PRINCIPLES and COMPETENCIES (for developing a Collaborative Mindset):

Focus on Team – Not Position: Addresses the need to focus on results produced when all positions effectively interact on the business field. **Competencies:** Adaptability, Learning Agility

Understand That Everyone Can Play: Recognizes that technology is the great enabler allowing people everywhere – to play...to collaborate....in business. **Competencies:** Drive & Energy, Initiative, Functional/Technical Expertise

Embrace Diversity: Represents the prerequisite for partnering in global business...and serves as a springboard for establishing trust... Diversity brings strength to teams. **Competencies:** Global Mindset, Relationship Building

Rely On Each Other: Reinforces the team orientation...minimizes the silo mindset...recognizing a "mutual" dependency between people...promoting genuine collaboration. **Competencies:** Relationship Building, Team Management, Team Player

Promote Both Individual & Team Values: Deals with managing both values in a never-ending cycle to help ensure that the process for producing team results is working. **Competencies:** Global Mindset, Integrity, Relationship Building

Seek Out Skillful, Adaptable Players: Promotes the need for flexibility for managing change...requires people and teams who can quickly assimilate and use new skills, information and the like...and recognizes that multiple skills are needed to play the game of business. **Competencies:** Adaptability, Learning Agility, Organizing & Planning

Charge the Team to Perform the Work: Recognizes the self-directed nature of the team charged with performing the work; recognizes the team's performance during the game (business) is left up to the team. **Competencies:** Customer Orientation, Results Orientation, Visioning

Empower Players to Win: Speaks of the commitment to develop all employees, to provide continuous feedback - all to help position people to make better decisions. **Competencies:** Problem Solving & Decision Making, Risk Taking

Coach Teams to Respond to Changing Conditions on Their Own: Reinforces the application of a real team, self-directed, operating on a real-time basis...responding to changing conditions. **Competencies:** Adaptability, Problem Solving & Decision Making, Communicativeness

Develop Partners on The Field: Recognizes that all players on the business field are viewed as leaders...views every opportunity as a leadership development step. **Competencies:** Communicativeness, Coaching, Delegation, Influence, Relationship Building

Achieve Cross-Cultural Agility: Calls for leveraging relationships in business to achieve results...transcending technique in dealing with people across cultures. **Competencies:** Global Mindset, Learning Agility, Relationship Building, Self-Objectivity

At the end of the day, we act on certain principles. For people working on teams seeking to effectively collaborate, they must be on the same page when it comes to team principles (including processes and protocols). This list of novel principles and associated competencies can be learned for developing a collaborative mindset. Once learned, they become habits to apply leading to team success.

We live in a global world that continues to change and in many ways is quite different than 2008 when I attended the Ken Blanchard Client Conference. Technology's growth, for example, continues to accelerate and makes it easier to do many things. Unfortunately, this includes making it easier for us to avoid face-to-face contact for establishing and maintaining relationships! Yet we continue to be at risk if we can't find ways to leverage relationships (and relationship building) to effectively collaborate. The fact is globalization cannot exist without collaboration and collaboration cannot exist without trust! Indeed, trust comes from building relationships.