

Stephen Hardy – “Skills of Effective Administrators: Reflections on UMass and Sport Management,” presented to UMass faculty and graduate students during the 40th anniversary celebrations of the Sport Management program, October 2011.

Exactly forty years ago I was in my second year of teaching and coaching at Vermont Academy. I was looking for graduate programs in history when an old family friend – Ted Schmitt -- told me about a new UMass master’s degree in sport administration. I had gone to a liberal arts college. I could hardly believe that you could get credit, let alone a degree, in such a field. So naturally, I signed up. My wife Donna and I moved to Amherst in June of 1972, assuming a one-year stay, and then who knows where. That plan dissolved when I started my coursework. I had known many experts at Bowdoin College, but none in my mind surpassed the command of material that Guy Lewis and John Loy projected in their courses on the history and sociology of sport. It was an intellectual alchemy that transformed play and games into real scholarship.

For instance, reading about the Negro Leagues, I learned that Branch Rickey was not the saint my Intro Sociology text at Bowdoin made him out to be. And the extraordinarily sophisticated women’s basketball leagues of the 1920s opened my eyes to the dangers of collective amnesia. There were important stories beyond box scores and batting averages. That fall, UMass granted final approval for a new PhD program in Sport Studies. I was among the first group (along with Bob Goodhue, Susan Birrell, Peter Donnelly, and Dave Rose).

Today’s students come of age in a world filled with academic programs, journals, and fairly clear career paths into the sport industry. It was very different in 1972. Beyond my brothers Pete and Erl, my family had no idea what I was up to. When Donna and I visited my dear aunt in Kennebunkport Maine, she introduced me to an old family friend – “this is my nephew, who is getting his PhD in sports.” The Mainer looked and said: “Ayah, sounds like a good one.”

SOME THINGS HAVE CHANGED Since 1972

- There was only one other sport administration program in the country – at Ohio University. Both were limited to a Master’s degree. There are now some three hundred programs at all levels. High schools included.

- In 1972, a UMass Parking sticker cost around \$30 and it pretty much guaranteed a space across the street from Isenberg.
- The department was located in the very old Curry Hicks building. It would be generous to call it venerable
- In 1972, the sport administration curriculum had NO courses in sport administration. Let me repeat. The sport administration curriculum had no courses in sport administration. Absolutely none. We took half our courses in the business school discussing widgets and mainstream consumer products like instant coffee and the other half in pure sport studies – history, sociology, philosophy.

SOME THINGS HAVE NOT CHANGED

- In 1972, the Whitmore Administration building looked like Hitler's bunker.
- In 1972, UMass football was on the verge of going big time.
- In 1973 the new library opened. The elevators soon malfunctioned.
- In the field of sport management, the one constant has been the centrality of UMass. Its faculty, staff, students, and alums have played a major role in building the field over forty years.

So how to assess the history of this program? My framework is an article the *Harvard Business Review* first published in 1955, written by an assistant professor named Robert Katz. The article, entitled "Skills of an Effective Administrator," was republished in 1974 as an HBR Classic. Despite its woefully gendered language, the article has remained one of *HBR's* most reprinted. Its basic scheme is about as timeless as can be found in our throwaway age.

Katz wrote in reaction to a business trend of using personality tests and profiles to hire and promote managers – something that later became a practice in drafting professional athletes. In contrast, Katz's approach was based, in his word: "not on ... innate traits and characteristics, but rather on ...the kinds of skills which [executives] exhibit in carrying out their jobs effectively." For Katz, a skill

implied “an ability which can be developed, not necessarily inborn, and which is manifested in performance, not merely in potential.”

Katz outlined three skill sets – Technical, Human, and Conceptual. His scheme is helpful both in planning for individual growth and in reflecting on the history and future of the UMass program, especially in the wake of its momentous partnership with the McCormack Collection.

TECHNICAL SKILLS

Katz described technical skills as “methods, processes, procedures, or techniques” that are specific to particular businesses or industries. Technical skills are often the key to job offers. They are much more pronounced and crucial at basic operating levels of an organization. In college athletics, technical skills might include:

- NCAA compliance reporting
- Elements of event management
- Group sales
- Elements of fundraising

Katz recognized that “in smaller companies, where technical expertise is not as pervasive and seasoned staff assistance is not as available, ... the chief executive has a much greater need for personal experience in the industry”....not only to know “the right questions to ask”, but also “to know how to evaluate the answers.” Since most of the sport industry is small business networks, Katz’s point is an important (and often overlooked) caution against bringing in CEOs who have no significant industry background. This has been a problem in college athletics. Bankers and television personalities have not fared so well.

UMASS has been a world leader in making the case that:

- There is something unique about sport as a phenomenon, a product, and an industry.
- There is a difference between marketing donuts and marketing basketball.
- Faculty members can produce knowledge about technical skills.

How does this influence the kind of knowledge that UMass should be generating? I was at a conference recently and the well-known director of a rival program complained that UMass was not doing enough to build the research base of sport management. I told him that I was not sure how he defined research or how he measured a person's or a program's contribution, but to me the key marker should be the influence on the industry, and in my opinion more industry leaders responded to a single one of Bill Sutton's columns in the *Sports Business Journal* than they did to any four issues of the *Journal of Sport Management*. I will return to this issue in more detail, but for now let me outline some of UMass contributions to knowledge, which at an institutional level I would call its technical contribution. This is just a sample, and I don't mean to shortchange anyone's work:

In 1972 UMass grad student Tom Peters conducted a fan survey for the Boston Braves of the American Hockey League – one of the first serious data collection-analysis research projects ever done in the sport industry. It helped Tom get a job with the Boston Garden. He is now senior associate AD at Boston College.

In 1979, UMass founded and hosted SMARTSS -- The Sport Management Arts and Sciences Society -- the first attempt to engage both scholars and industry executives in building a body of knowledge for mutual purpose.

UMass has been a leader in the development of sport law, first hiring Glenn Wong, then Lisa Masteralexis, then Steve McKelvey. Nothing juices executives like the law. Among other reasons, they sweat nightmares about being deposed. I recall one of the first mega sport/recreation business conventions in Las Vegas in 1986 -- industry people and academics giving papers on best practices, case studies, etc. The biggest single audience was for Glenn Wong's update on sport law

It has been the same with sport marketing. Two UMass professors -- my coauthors Bernie Mullin and Bill Sutton -- have done more than anyone to build the discipline and even the professional field. While he taught here at UMass, Bernie wrote the very first manuscript on sport marketing. In 1986, there were a dozen professors around the country using it in Xerox form as a text. Bernie's escalator theory transformed sport marketing practice.

Bill Sutton, who also taught here for over a decade, has been building a body of knowledge about sales. In professional sports, the most compelling technical skills are in sales, for obvious reasons.

Todd Crosset is internationally known for his research on socially responsible practices.

Mark McDonald is a leader in expanding knowledge about experiential pedagogy -- how to teach in ways that combine theory and practice.

Neil Longley is demonstrating the elegance and cogency of econometric analysis.

I could go on, so how could this rival scholar claim that UMass was not doing enough? In fact, I believe he meant that UMass faculty were not publishing enough in a particular scholarly journal favored by academics who run one association of scholars. In an environment of program cuts, especially at the PhD level, a "circle the wagons" argument is understandable. It is also dismissible. At the same time, it opens a larger issue. What kind of knowledge should be valued and promoted in a field like sport management? How much should be dense, scholarly analysis of attitudes among that oh-so-standard "large introductory class at a Midwestern state university," wherein a set of 20 simple questions about branding is subjected to a host of statistical routines, especially factor analysis, after which the authors offer conclusions such as "sport managers must develop and promote coherent brands." How much should be something more like the opinion pieces that Bill Sutton writes in SBJ and executives respond to? Or the kinds of books that Mark McCormack wrote so well -- e.g. *What they Don't Teach You at Harvard Business School*. There is no easy answer to this. A person's position and life stage will dictate much, and in the end we need a range of research types. But I hope that Mark McCormack's life and legacy drive more discussion about knowledge in the field.

One last comment on technical skills -- they keep changing. My youngest son Nate was a Navy SEAL, killed in action in 2008 during an assault on an al-Qaeda suicide bomb cell. Since then, I have spent a lot of time with Navy SEALs at all levels. They recognize a great paradox in having so many seasoned veterans from a decade of war. While this represents a massive amount of experience to be shared with new recruits, this same experience might be a problem, reinforcing a tendency to fight what is called the "last war." Many brave and patriotic young Americans have died because their commanding officers were fighting the last war.

Now sports and academics are not wars, but they contain the same paradox. What are the next sets of technical skills that will drive the sport industry? Two months ago, Marc Andreessen – the founder of Netscape – wrote a *Wall Street Journal* piece on how specialized software and apps were altering and disrupting whole industries. Finance, publishing, photography, automobiles. Old leaders like Kodak have failed to keep up, and thereby have met their doom. Andreessen predicted that health care and education were next up for "fundamental software-based transformation." He might have added sports. And what will that mean for sport management education? I will look for UMass faculty like Bryan Bracey to find some answers. For a leader like UMass, the challenge will be how to stay in front of knowledge about emerging technical skills in the industry AND how best to deliver that knowledge beyond the traditional classroom settings and scholarly journals that we have long valued.

KATZ'S SECOND CATEGORY -- HUMAN SKILLS

Katz wrote that people with strong human skills 1) can recognize the feelings and sentiments which they bring to a situation; (2) can re-evaluate and learn from their experiences; (3) can understand what others are trying to communicate to them; and (4) can successfully communicate their ideas and attitudes to others.

As the comic strip Dilbert reminds us daily, it often seems that the higher up the organizational hierarchy, the lower the level of human skills. This reflects a communication problem that plagues many settings, most notably sports teams. If the Boston media are correct, the inability to interact with and motivate SOME KEY players was Tito's Francona's undoing. This is ironic since he is known as a player's coach. Katz's human skills really come down to mutuality in listening, reflecting,

communicating, and acting. In many ways this boils down to what we might call “good faith reciprocity”, about which Todd Crosset has written so well.

In the fall of 1973, Hal VanderZwaag exercised these skills and in so doing changed the program’s course. As department head, he listened to the third cohort of grad students, including Chet Gladchuk (now the AD at Navy), who were not satisfied with the “split” curriculum – pure business and pure sport studies -- and wanted something in between. Hal secured an Athletics staff member to teach the very first course that tried to collect and apply literature dealing with the management of sport. The body of knowledge was so thin that they brought me in to discuss budgeting, since I had just written an article on the subject.

We have come a long way. But the future, especially if we are to avoid fighting the last war, lies in taking Hal’s skill – Katz’s human skills -- to a programmatic level of collaborative research. In higher education lingo, this is now called engagement – defined as: a mutually beneficial collaboration between a university and external partners for the purpose of generating and applying relevant knowledge to directly benefit the public. The difference between engagement and most research or service is that engagement requires MUTUALITY at the front end -- in establishing the problems, the questions, the research design, and so forth. The vast majority of research in sport management emanates from the interests of faculty members who generate questions from the established literature, sample their large introductory classes, and publish research that is great for promotion and tenure but of little interest or value to the industry.

UMass faculty have been leaders in engagement activities – the Key Players Project and the Mount Snow-Winter Dew Tour project are examples. So is Tracy Schoenadel’s work with the Center for Spectator Sport Research. At the same time, while recognizing the problems of proprietary data, I wonder if there is a way for UMass to more regularly aggregate and publish for PUBLIC consumption knowledge that is drawn from the results of these partnerships. I will return to this prospect.

So how to build the human skills? While every day of human interaction presents opportunities, the obvious formal setting is the group assignment or group project. For students, these group projects can be among the most important experiences in a curriculum. But group work builds human skills only if group members ACTIVELY seek to share AND negotiate ideas and work load. It is a faculty responsibility to be more aggressive in monitoring and mentoring this process. My experience is that students are desperate for better oversight on group work. Fortunately, there is abundant knowledge available on how to build team cohesion and accountability. The Navy SEALs are famous for this. And how to deal with slackers? Several years ago, I learned from a Middlebury College friend a new component to classes with group projects. If a slacker emerges, the group can first come to me for remediation. If this fails the group can vote the slacker OFF THE ISLAND, which means either course withdrawal or redoing all work as an individual. It is the nuclear bomb, and I have used it.

CONCEPTUAL SKILLS

Katz described conceptual skills as “the ability to see the enterprise as a whole; ... recognizing how the various functions of the organization depend on one another...how changes in any one part affect all the others... visualizing the relationship of the individual business to the industry, the community, and the political, social, and economic forces of the nation as a whole.”

On reflection, Katz suggested that people either had this skill by adolescence or they didn't. In fact, recent studies suggest that early dual language immersion boosts conceptual skills. Apple's Steve Jobs seemed to have them. A computer designer recently recalled Jobs at meetings of fellow PC builders in 1975: “What I remember is how intense he looked....He was everywhere, and he seemed to be trying to hear everything people had to say.” “Great products, Jobs later said, were a triumph of taste, of “trying to expose yourself to the best things humans have done and then trying to bring those things into what you are doing.” That is conceptual skill.

UMass has demonstrated institutional levels of conceptual skill, which has allowed it to stay ahead of competitors. For instance, in the late 1960s, faculty from two departments -- Men's PE and Women's PE – with a long history of mutual suspicion – negotiated a merger and reorganization that created the sport studies and then the sport management programs. Repositioning out of physical education and eventually into the business school has continued this crucial strategic process.

UMass has been blessed with many faculty of high conceptual skill. For me anyway, Guy Lewis will always sit at the top of the ladder. The department suite in the Isenberg building includes an office with Guy's name on it. Bill Sutton shares my desire to emphasize that Guy was and is more than a name on a plaque. Along with John Loy, he outlined the department's first PhD program. And they alone had the scholarly gravitas to insure its approval. I was Guy's first PhD student. He is one of the brightest people I have ever known. He is a mystic and a visionary, and it was never easy to keep up with the pace of his thinking.

I know he would be most pleased by the latest exciting manifestation of the program's conceptual skill – the affiliation with the McCormack Collection and the McCormack Family. This marriage will offer fundamentally new opportunities for the program and the field. Guy would be pleased because

he was first and foremost a historian. He was the first person to explain the historical coincidence that drives America's unique lunacy to spend huge amounts of money and time on college athletics. He was the first person to seriously examine Theodore Roosevelt's role in the 1905 football controversy. His American sport history course changed my life. He taught me about the extraordinary experience of discovery that exists only in archival research.

Credit Lisa Masteralexis and colleagues for jumping on the McCormack Family RFP. The McCormack Collection represents a turn toward history which I believe will reap great rewards for UMass and the field. And here is why. One of the problems in sport management/sport studies scholarship has been *too much* focus on forces and factors that drive the world around us. It is one thing to recognize and understand the power of global capitalism, racism, sexism or any other ism. They obviously matter.

But it is also important to recognize that people in action create the world and all the factors or forces within it. Capitalism's great theorist, Joseph Schumpeter, argued some six decades ago that forces alone cannot explain economic development. In his words, "practically all the economists of the nineteenth century and many of the twentieth have believed uncritically that all that is needed to explain a given historical development is to indicate conditioning or causal factors, such as an increase in population or the supply of capital. But this is sufficient only in the rarest of cases...."

Schumpeter understood the importance of quantitative analysis. But he also recognized the central role of individual entrepreneurs who were the keys to the dynamism of capitalism, the innovators whose decisions and actions triggered what he called the "creative destruction" of existing modes of production, finance, and marketing. It would be difficult to name a more important entrepreneur than Mark McCormack. It is no hyperbole to say that (along with Marvin Miller) he blew up the sport industry of the 1950s, where old "properties" (teams, leagues, governing bodies) ruled, giving us instead the sportsworld we know today – with much greater intersection of sponsors, media, and agencies.

The McCormack Collection will allow close inspection of a genius developing and exhibiting technical, human, and conceptual skills, even on the occasions when he failed. But I hope that work in the collection will also convey to the industry the need to ground decision-making in particular contexts,

and that these contexts always vary. As a McKinsey consultant argued in a discussion about “Why History Matters to Managers,” a vast amount of management knowledge may enhance ways of thinking about a problem, but it does NOT provide solutions, because each case and each problem takes place “in a different historical and cultural context, in a different environment.” This juggling of continuity and difference is a hallmark of sound historical thinking. The Collection will allow UMass to lead the field in a historical turn like the one Schumpeter championed six decades ago – the study of entrepreneurs *in* their context of decision-making.

Historical study yields another important insight for managers. Ambiguity rules. There are few sure decisions. Just ask Theo Epstein. Gordon Wood, America’s most prominent historian of our early republic, put it this way: “To be able to see the participants of the past...in the context of their own time, to describe their blindness and folly with sympathy, to recognize the extent to which they were caught up in changing circumstances over which they had little control, and to realize the degree to which they created results they never intended – to know all this about the past and to be able to relate it without anachronistic distortion to our present is what is meant by having a historical sense.”

Historical sense will remind us that management is never simple. As Schumpeter wrote: “Two kinds of people I distrust: architects who profess to build cheaply and economists who profess to give simple answers.”

I have spent the last twenty-five years trying to persuade historians to examine more closely the role of entrepreneurs in building this unique industry of sport. Now the McCormack Department of Sport Management can persuade TODAY’S industry to think historically. We have some 1.5 linear miles of archival material to work our way through. It will take generations of scholars to tell us the story of Mark McCormack, IMG, and the Wide World of Sport in the last half of the 20th century. But what an adventure that will be.

Perhaps this effort can spur us to develop the kind of knowledge outlet that many have hoped for over the last 40 years – something that aggregates and translates rigorous research into literature that sport executives can actually read, enjoy, and use; something that integrates the quantitative and the qualitative, the contemporary and the historical; something that helps sport practitioners build their skills. This would not be simply musing about the application of theory in a sport setting. This would be conveying *existing* knowledge about professional practice and consumer experience

within sport. This was at least part of the original vision of the *Journal of Sport Management* and the *Sport Marketing Quarterly*. When Tracy Schoenadel, Bill Sutton, and I worked with the SMQ in the 1990s, we began to require “so what” tables on results, explicitly targeting industry readers. Perhaps it is time for a journal like the *Harvard Business Review* – distributed over several media platforms, with articles/presentations/seminars by experts who are immersed in both research and practice and who can also write and talk with clarity, verve, and wit. There is both a need and a market for this.

I first met Lisa Masteralexis in 1992 at a Sports Careers Conference in Boston. We ran a breakout session discussing what young executives should consider if they were thinking of graduate school. One of the keynote speakers was Dave Gavitt, then President of the Celtics. His main point of advice was that a career was a marathon and not a sprint. There are stages; there is planning. Actions you take early can have a great effect on how you perform in the long run. This applies to all of us as individuals and it applies to programs like sport management at UMass. Building effective skills is a marathon. The McCormack Collection opens the next leg of this long event.

Steve Hardy (MS '75, MA '78, PhD '80) retired in 2014 as Professor of Kinesiology and Affiliate Professor of History at the University of New Hampshire. He earned his bachelor's degree at Bowdoin College and his graduate degrees at the University of Massachusetts. He worked in the sport industry over four decades, as a coach, an administrator, a board member, and an NCAA faculty athletics representative. He taught sport management and sport studies courses at University of Washington, Robert Morris University, Carnegie Mellon University, and UNH. He is a co-author of *Sport Marketing* (5E 2021) which has been translated into eight languages. His publications also include *How Boston Played* (1982, 2003), *Hockey: A Global History* (2018) and numerous articles, book chapters, and reviews in academic presses and newspapers. In 1997, he was elected a Fellow in the American Academy of Kinesiology and Physical Education. He won college and university awards for excellence in research and teaching. He was a founder of the Charles Holt Archives of American Hockey, which are located at UNH's Dimond Library. He and his wife Donna raised three wonderful sons: Josh, Ben, and Nate. Josh's death (1993) and Nate's death (2008) immersed Steve in the practical and intellectual world of grief and grief support. He runs support programs for spouses/partners, siblings, and parents, and he has written on grief and resilience at <https://stephenhardywriter.com> He is now

writing a trilogy of historical novels that trace a family's experience with corruption in sports, the wounds of war, grief, and resilience.

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