

Advice for Achieving Success from a Future Hall of Fame Coach

by Jeffrey Leventry

(September 8, 2021)



In early August, the Pro Football Hall of Fame inducted its classes of 2020 and 2021 in Canton, Ohio. During his induction speech, Harold Carmichael (one of the all-time great receivers for the Philadelphia Eagles) thanked those who supported his football career, thereby helping him achieve greatness. Chief among them was his football coach Dick Vermeil who gave him an “invaluable piece of advice” that Carmichael has used in both football and life. Coach Vermeil said “Do your job better than anyone else and surround yourself with good people.” Carmichael believes he employed that advice throughout his career to attain the ultimate honor for a pro football player.

Throughout my career, I have received similar advice from Managers and Mentors who invested in my personal success as a professional. But, in a practical sense, what does this really mean and how can we apply it to achieve our goals in business, and in life?

What is meant by “do your job better than anyone else”?

Without definition and concrete action steps, this advice is often relegated to the “hollow words” category. Therefore, what does it really mean to perform your role better than any other employee in the organization?

This is how I define this sage advice:

- Understand your role or position and the expectations your boss has for you on a weekly, monthly and annual basis. What are the performance objectives that you and your Manager have agreed to for the year and how will you monitor your progress in achieving them?
- Find an approach that supports your ability to stay focused on the tasks at hand, and eliminate distractions that stand in the way of your goals. Organize your work and develop a plan of action that fosters discipline and execution of your plan.
- Forge strong working relationships with colleagues and collaborate with them regularly to develop synergy while also enhancing your productivity. Building your own coalition with trusted partners improves your work product and gets you noticed by your Manager and other decision makers in the organization.
- Finish what you start and seek feedback along the way. In business, it is not how well you start but how well you finish, and whether you attain the bottom line results that your Manager expects from you.

- Constantly seek opportunities to improve your skillset and enhance your personal development. Avail yourself of learning programs that deepen existing skills and create new skills that are relevant to performing your role in the firm. Arrive early or stay late to ensure that you have time to devote to your professional development.

Although this is not meant to be an exhaustive list, this advice has proven to be critical to the success of many employees whom I have personally mentored and professionally developed over the course of many years.

What is meant by “surround yourself with good people”?

In my experience, the people you associate with have an enormous impact on your success in business, as in life. In fact, American entrepreneur and motivational speaker Jim Rohn asserts that, “You are the average of the five people you spend the most time with.” Therefore, we all need to choose our social network wisely, taking into consideration the traits we value most.

With this in mind, this is what I mean by “surrounding yourself with good people”:

- Those who demonstrate integrity and honesty in all situations
- Those you can trust in difficult or sticky circumstances when the stakes are high
- Those who exemplify a superior work ethic and who are willing to go the “extra mile” to accomplish the task at hand
- Those who possess a positive outlook and an optimistic attitude that motivates you to succeed
- Those who are productive and successful in their role, and who will challenge you to perform at the highest level
- Those who have your best interests in mind
- Those who provide you with candid feedback and perspective so you can make optimal decisions that impact your career

How can you apply this advice to achieve your own success?

There is no simple answer or roadmap that explains how to apply the above advice to your advantage. In fact, it takes hard work and a deliberate investment of your time on a regular basis. Experts agree that success does not normally happen overnight.

However, making time on a weekly basis to improve your performance in your role typically pays dividends in the long run. Having a plan of action and monitoring your progress as you execute your plan is the first step to doing your job better than anyone else.

Likewise, carefully selecting members of your social network who meet your standards takes time and effort. Because it’s important to surround yourself with good people, I suggest that you take your time and diligently evaluate your network utilizing the traits referenced above. You should also use actual business experiences with those in your network to test your selection process, as well as your final network decisions. Those who do not pass your test should be removed from your network, which may afford you opportunities to add new members who will support your quest for success.

In light of the above, what steps will you take today to do your job better than anyone else and surround yourself with good people who will fuel your ultimate success?