The Power of a Leader's Words

"Time-out! Time-out!"

Those words caromed off the white-washed walls of the Bogdanovich Recreation Center as I attempted to call a time-out.

I wanted a TIME-OUT.

But all I got were puzzled looks from the players, the referees, and most of all, the opposing coach. You didn't have to be a mind reader to know what they were thinking: "That coach is crazy! His team has a big lead. There's only a few minutes remaining in the game. What's up?!"

Well, ultimately I was granted my time-out and enjoyed a very memorable moment. Let me explain.

For about 10 years, I coached my two sons' community basketball teams. In the earlier years, the teams were co-ed. For two years, a tall, lanky girl by the name of Jelena was on our team. Jelena worked hard. Showed up for every practice. Did the drills. Always on time for games. But she never scored a basket. For two long years.

Until that day!

So as you can imagine, this out-of-the-blue time-out was simply to savor this much-longed-for milestone.

It was a priceless moment. As Jelena jogged to the sideline for our team huddle, her teammates were slapping high fives. The parents in the stands stood to their feet in applause and more importantly, in delight. But what came next was 'nothing but net.' The celebration peaked as a shy and usually expressionless eight-year-old girl showcased the most amazing smile—a smile that to this day lives strong in my mental scrapbook.

Celebration and praise for a job well done are powerful realities. **And it should come as no surprise that the most effective leaders are the ones who are constantly on the lookout for these opportunities—both the extraordinary ones, but perhaps, more importantly, the everyday ones.** Opportunities to thank. To encourage. To build up.

New Testament writer Paul logs these words of wisdom for perpetuity into the leader's playbook: *So encourage each other and build each other up.*

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It can happen in the intimacy of a private conversation, or it can happen in the spotlight of the public square.

Who in your circle of influence is on deck for some words of affirmation? Who in your sphere of leadership needs to be built up by some well-chosen words of praise?

Walk down the hallway. Grab your cell. Fire off a text. Do it now.

I guess at the end of the day, what we are talking about is a bit of a dress rehearsal for the time when our Lord will say to those who have taken His call seriously, “Well done, my good and faithful servant. Let’s celebrate together!”

Chuck Olson
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