

Good morning, everybody, Dennis Engelbrecht, Digging Deeper.

Today, I want to talk about something a little different. It's thinking about construction as a team event. What do I mean by that? Well, this last basketball season here in Durham, North Carolina or Raleigh, North Carolina, we had the ultimate with both North Carolina and Duke basketball making the Final Four. The kind of fervor that we as fans have for that around here is hard to explain. Some call it the greatest rivalry in sports. When we finally met in the Final Four for the first time, it just captured folks. I know my son ran down in New Orleans to see it and a lot of other folks I know went to see it that normally wouldn't.

What is it about sports and sports fandom that creates this fervor among people? Why does it work with sports, and could it work with construction? When I think about sports, and I just had this question that I had to answer this morning for story worth is where are your sports loyalties and why are they there?

When I think about the why, there's a connection to the school, maybe a connection to the region. I grew up in Manitowoc, Wisconsin, 30 minutes from Green Bay so reasonably I'm a Packers fan. Sometimes it's just the players or the coaches. What's interesting is your identity gets intertwined with the team in some way or not.

When the Packers were great back in the seventies, Green Bay was known as Tiletown and we all strutted around acting like we're champions, even though we didn't play any of the football. As fans, we do get that and there's a pride we have for our team and our team's success.

One interesting story that happened to me this year. I was wearing a mask for COVID and it was a Green Bay Packers mask. I was in the grocery store and a security guard in the grocery store engaged me because of my Packers mask. It's all about fandom. He said his father grew up as an avid Bears fan, wasn't even a Packers fan, and by the time I got to the checkout, he came up and insisted on buying my groceries because I was a Packers fan. Now, just think about that. That's kind of crazy, right?

Let's bring this back around to construction. Why, if it works in sports, might it not work in construction? Maybe we haven't thought about it enough as a team event.

When you think about construction, we all have common goals or a set of goals when we approach a project. Everybody involved in that project wants to see it on time, in budget, with quality, safety, profitable for our companies, a great experience for everybody involved, great outcomes for the end customer, the end user, they see it as an ad to the community. Hopefully the construction stands the test of time, and we hope for a high sense of pride and accomplishment for the team of workers that did it.

Now, if you just think of all of these good that everybody that's on that job from the owner, the end user, the architect, the pounding and insurance companies, down to the general contractor to the subcontractors and all the workers and all the team members on that job. Everybody wants all of those things. Why can't we act more like a team or create that whole team feeling and fervor that we have around our sports teams?

Well, I think we can. If we all work together, there's certainly a chance of success for all on the job if we all work together. As a leader, those of you out there, maybe an important part of your job is to create that team environment and to foster that team environment for everybody's success.

Now, few tips on how to do that. First, I think it begins at the start. Bringing everybody together at the start to get the buy in around those goals. Again, in construction, I just read them off, but everybody's for those things. Everybody can be committed to those things but bringing everybody together and to be thinking about the goals that we share versus perhaps what goes in your pocket, what goes in my pocket, who's in whose way, those sorts of things. To bring that focus around the shared goal and get everybody working together and helping each other.

Number two is a leader. Part of your job is to eliminate the distractions from that goal or the detractors to that goal. What do I mean by detractors? Well, oftentimes there's somebody out there with a bad attitude or who's not holding up their end and that detracts from everybody. Your job is hopefully to manage through that, get that person turned and get them working back with the group. Sort of as the ringleader, you've got to take care of the distractions and the detractors.

Third thing I'd suggest is, as we do in sports, keep score. Share the results. Make sure everybody knows how we're doing. It's kind of a crazy thought, but in a lean process or something, what if everybody shared their goals for productivity throughout the room and then each meeting, they updated how they're doing with their productivity.

Just think of the number of suggestions that might generate from the other trades around the room. Well, why don't you try this or maybe, oh, you're having a problem with egress? Well, I've got an extra ladder, or we've got this or that. We've got a tool that does that better or, well, we can back off for a little while so you can get in there and then we can come in behind you. All of those sort of cooperative things, but if you learn that somebody was having issues with productivity and you had everybody again trying to help each other become successful, what a huge tool something like that could be. Again, keeping score and sharing results could be important.

Keep the primary goals in front of people. Your language, how you talk about things has a huge impact on everybody else. When you're out there talking, make sure you're bringing back to what you're trying to accomplish. Don't get caught in petty arguments, that sort of thing. If you do always find win-win solutions to the problems, that's the next item. You got to have that foremost in mind. If everybody's going to work on this together and win together, you got to find win-win solutions to problems. Win-lose, simply doesn't work, it'll drag down the morale and obviously win-lose would indicate that there's a loser and we want all winners.

Another thought is the common enemy. One thing we have, like in the ACC here in basketball, Duke could be the common enemy for a lot of folks. Of course, for the other side it might be Carolina, or it might be NC State is the common enemy but think about this. Sometimes a common enemy helps people come together and helps that fervor and picks up that passion.

Who could be the common enemy? It's not any members of your team, so put that out of your mind. The common enemy might be failure. In today's world, it could be inflation, supply chain, manpower constraints, probably inflation supply chain and manpower constraints are everyone's common enemy and we can all agree and coalesce around that to make sure that we don't let those things drag us down or those things drag us apart. That we all rise, and we all join forces to overcome those obstacles that are there.

Anyway, you may or may not have thought about this much but think about construction as a team event and what your role sort of as the coach of moving that team forward can be and I think you might find a lot more success and enjoyment. Again, Dennis Engelbrecht, Digging Deeper.