

Insights And Inspiration From the World Of Sports

Whose on the field *playing* the game and whose in the stands *watching*?

by Rhea Blanken, Results Technology, Bethesda MD

Associations are in a unique position to learn lessons from the many diverse entities and enterprises they represent. With thousands of associations serving the efforts and endeavors of professional, philanthropic, trade, humanitarian, academic, and geographical interests plus all other manner of human effort—they offer everyday lessons for altering the status quo.

Last month, the similarities between restaurants and associations were highlighted, “*Is your association providing four-star dining or serving fast-food?*” This month it’s the wide world of sports! How are associations similar to sports? The comparisons are many. Learning their lessons and become world-class champions is easier than one may think.

Sports at the highest level are designed to offer opportunities for:

- Having certainty on what the goals are and how their achievement will be recognized;
 - Making use of multiple skills and abilities within a specific timeframe;
 - Defining clearly the fields of play and responsibility perimeters for each player;
 - Using the equipment masterfully for excellent rather than mediocre performance;
 - Stellar performances by individuals and as teams;
 - Winning strategies to be formulated by coaches and executed by practiced players;
 - Flexible implementation of the game plan with tactical modifications as needed;
- and
- Public demonstrations of confidence by raving fans and objections from critics.

Every sport and each game played has unique circumstances. Each has a start, actions taken over time and an ending when the game is over. The level of play is clear to the sport’s aficionados. Interactions, even seemingly trivial ones, are clearly noted for their impact on the game’s outcome. But in life or in your association, it may not be as clear. Why? Perhaps it’s the lack of collaboration between staff and Board, missed signals on desired actions to be taken or even separate scoreboards recording achievement. Then again, maybe it’s the discipline of practicing together as a team that is missing. The team objective—having the mission and vision of the organization *practiced* in every communication, event, and program by every member, volunteer leader and staff.

Whether you are a local, state, national or international *team*, intentionally executing actions to win rather than losing the game by default matters. Every volunteer leader and professional staffer playing the game and every member watching from the stands wants to be a part of a world-class championship team. What constitutes *that* may be the biggest unanswered question. Keep in mind—*Who* is actually on the *field of play* at any given time or *in the stands* does alter the how the game is viewed, played, and appreciated. What needs to be fine-tuned at your next team practice?

“Anytime you want to, you can go out and pad your numbers, but to win, you have to have everybody around you playing great.”

Bill Walton

Details: rheaz@resultstech.com.

Blanken is speaker, strategic facilitator, workshop creator and author of "Facing the Future & Embracing the Future," environmental scans for ASAE