

You are either green and growing or ripe and rotting!

This is a quote that I have always tried to remember. When I am not learning I feel complacent. When I am not learning I have less energy. Whenever I have a moment of thinking I know all I need to know, I give my head a shake. I also find it concerning when I hear managers say we have no budget for training. It concerns me because at a time when clubs have the challenge to do more with less, it is no time to have a staff of people who are even rotting a little.

You may have an impact with the education and development of a whole staff of people but it begins with you. Are you learning, developing, growing - and are you an example of that for the people that are watching you?

One thing I have learned is that there is learning available wherever you are. It shows up in conversations, in music, in movies, in classrooms, at work, at home, from professors, from children, well it is available everywhere.

Shelley MacDougall and I get to coach, speak and lead a leadership program. One of the amazing lessons for us is that we get to talk to the leaders of the industry, students, people who are starting their careers and veterans. I can tell you that we all could learn from all of them if we were open to it, or if we thought we needed it. In our leadership program we have interviewed amazing leaders from inside and outside of the industry. We recently had the chance to interview a young leader who had been a student and had interned at a few of the greatest clubs in the country. We interviewed him on the first day of his first official management job in the club industry. If you questioned what you could learn from someone on their first day you might miss the wisdom that someone like this could give you.

This young man's name is Kyle Ruch. Kyle may be known as a leader in this industry in years to come. He might be known as a leader in some other industry but we have no doubt that he is and will continue to be a leader. Part of Kyle's leadership story is that he did two tours of duty with the U.S. Marine Corps. He learned under some great club managers. He learned in College and he continues to learn in the Extraordinary Leader Program and other venues.

Here are a few of the lessons we learned from Kyle Ruch.

Complacency Kills!

Kyle showed us a picture of a sign that said "Complacency Kills!" It was a sign that was at the gate of his camp in Iraq. He said that the camp was near one of the most recognized hot spots in the war. He was there after most of the conflict had happened. Instead of being in a place that could expect engagement every day, they might have gone 5 days or two weeks without experiencing it. He said he learned that it was human nature to let your guard down after experiencing days with no incidents. When people start to become

complacent they don't pay the same attention; they may listen less or observe less. When this happened people could get hurt or killed.

Kyle talked about bringing that lesson home. He sees complacency and mediocrity as the enemy. He talked about consciously intending to make sure he does not become complacent in his career, in relationships, in conversations or in life.

A decision to be green and growing is an example of not being complacent.

Don't leave important things unsaid!

Kyle told us that his friends bug him about the fact that he might end a conversation by saying I love you or letting them know something he wants them to know. One of the lessons he learned on his tours of duty was that when you assume that you will have many opportunities to say what you mean to say to someone, you may find out that you were wrong. "You stop taking things for granted!"

The act of having important conversations, even difficult ones, is an example of being green and growing.

You can learn from what people say and how they say it!

Kyle values the conversations he had with soldiers, students, parents, coaches, industry leaders, and the President of the United States. He talked about learning from what they said but also learning from the way they communicate. He notices tone and body language and sincerity. He is very aware that you constantly have to work on communication, both as a receiver and a transmitter.

We learned many things from what Kyle said to us but we also learned a lot by watching how he behaves. We see a young man that has, in his words, learned to be disciplined. He has standards of behavior that may not be typical for someone his age. He looks for ways to make things happen. He is constantly expressing gratitude and giving credit where he believes credit is due. One of our participants observed that the people Kyle has in his life are some of the most influential people in the industry. He understands the power of building a solid team. He is a voracious learner and a person that is incredibly willing to reach out to help someone who needs it.

Shelley and I get to work with some amazing students from CMAA Student Chapters. They are like sponges wanting to absorb anything they can learn. We could all learn a lot from these green and growing young people. Kyle is great example of one that has a lot to teach.

Our challenge to you is to stay green and growing and encourage the same for the people you are privileged to lead.

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