

Leadership Development

LEARNING FROM THE PAST: DOES HISTORY REPEAT ITSELF?

Session Length: 50 Minutes

Learning objectives:

- Understand how to constructively evaluate past successes and failures.
- Learn how to avoid previous blunders from recurring.
- Know how to use past leaders as a resource.
- Learn how to apply evaluation to future plans

Required Materials:

- Flipcharts
- Power Point presentation file
- 3' of clear tape



TRAINER PREPARATION

Introduction

5-7 Minutes

The purpose of this session is for all participants to understand that past experiences, whether they be personal or historical, can be used as learning tools. On a personal level, if everyone were to attempt to remember when they learned to ride a bike. Each day you tried riding; did you do the same things as the previous day? Did you evaluate what you did the day prior and figure out your mistakes and successes? Were you able to improve each day because you evaluated what you did the day prior? Even at an early age, people use their previous experiences to learn and become better.

Trainer Tip: It is very important for the trainer to think of many occurrences within their lives to which they have used history, whether it be personal or a historical event, to alter their paths. The trainer should have numerous examples from their personal lives, Scouting/OA activities and historical events to use as examples throughout the session. The session provides a few small case studies for discussion to see how people have learned from the past.

As we look into the past, history does repeat itself; some good instances and some not so good instances. It's what we do as Arrowman that decides if history repeats itself.



SESSION NARRATIVE

Understanding of Past Successes and Failures:

5-7 Minutes

A. Discussion of the US Revolutionary War

As the war began, the colonies were attempting to fight the British using normal military tactics. Soldiers would line up in long lines and march towards the enemy. At a certain distance, both groups of soldiers would

Leadership Development - Learning from the Past: Does History Repeat Itself?

stop marching and the battle would begin. First, one group would load their weapons and fire upon the other group; then the other group would return fire. The lines (ranks) would hold as each group fired till one army was declared the winner. For the US armies, this was a very difficult form of fighting. The US' soldiers were not highly trained and as motivated as the British, resulting in many losses from the ranks failing and soldiers retreating prior to the conclusion of the battle. Seeing this, the US armies made adjustments in their style of fighting: switching to non-conventional, guerilla tactics. These tactics allowed the US not to match up and fight the British straight forward, but rather battle them in ways unusual to the British. These slight changes in the US fighting style eventually gave the US an edge on the battlefield.

Trainer Tip: "The Patriot," starring Mel Gibson talks about this exact historical precedence. Possibly using a clip from the movie would further enforce the point that we must learn from our past successes and failures.

B. How to Evaluate the past

The easiest and most common evaluation is the SWOT analysis. The evaluation process is broken down into four categories: strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. During the evaluation process, each category should be listed and discussed. The SWOT analysis will provide the users the perfect feedback to learn from their past and see how to change for the future.

C. The Art of Moving Forward

To move forward, one must put what they learned into action. The SWOT analysis should be used to make changes to your plan of action so that success can be insured. It should also be noted that the analysis and change coming from the analysis is an ever revolving process. Just as we make changes and implement them, the changes should be analyzed once again to see if they were successful.

Avoid Previous Blunders from Recurring

5-7 Minutes

A. Discussion of the Detroit Lions

For six years, Matt Millen was the general manager of the Detroit Lions National Football League franchise. In those six years during the 2000's, the Lions were the laughing stock of the NFL, becoming the only franchise in history to have a winless season, going 0-16! During Millen's tenure as GM, he drafted 4 first round receivers, believing that if the QB had a quality pass catcher, the team could turn its offense around. Finally, after his sixth consecutive last place finish in the division, the Lions' owner fired Millen and brought in a new GM. When the draft was approaching in 2009, many football pundits were wondering what would the Lions do with their first round pick. In 2009, the Lions ended up selecting Matthew Stafford from Georgia, a quarterback, with their first round pick. The following year, Stafford started from the start of the season. Even though the team had another losing season, the team won more games in 2009 than they did in the previous six. If Millen wasn't let go, would the Lions have drafted another receiver and allowed history to repeat itself?

B. History Repeats Itself if no Changes are Made.

The outcome of a situation will always be the same if the status quo is never changed. If you hit a golf ball exactly the same way every time with the same club, the shot (outcome) will be the same. However, by changing the slightest of things, including grip, club, stance, strength, the shot can change dramatically. Without change, expect the same results!

Past Leaders are a Resource

5-7 Minutes

A. Coaching Football: Using Past Coaches to Learn

In football, coaches seem to just pass the torch of information from one generation to the next. Bill Walsh was the creator of the West Coast offense: an offense designed for the quarterback to throw the ball to the receiver quickly after the snap, relying on the receiver to gain yardage after the catch. When Walsh previewed his West Coast offense in the early 1980's, it was contradictory to all things passing football in the NFL. Prior to Walsh, quarterbacks would throw the ball with little reliance on receivers gaining yardage after the catch. However, Walsh began to have his quarterback throw the football to his receivers shortly after snapping the ball. Walsh's West Coast offense revolutionized the passing game in the 1980's. Walsh's quarterbacks tended to lead the league in completion percentage, fewest interceptions and highest passer rating. While coaching, Walsh taught all of his assistants his philosophy being the West Coast offense. Through the years, Walsh's West Coast offense has been taught to new offensive coaches and passed down. The result is that about 50% of the current NFL teams still run a form of the West Coast offense, the most famous being the 2000 Super Bowl Champion St. Louis Rams "the Greatest Show on Turf" starring Kurt Warner, Marshall Faulk and Tory Holt, coached by Mike Martz. This is just one a few examples of football coaches learning from prior coaches. Think about how many coaches have used Vince Lombardi or Bear Bryant as a learning tool for motivation and success.

B. What to take from your predecessor?

Even though the example we just provided focuses on the positive side of learning from your predecessor, you learn more than that from them. Think about a friend who you have seen in a bad situation, did you take anything from that? Did you learn what not to do? When learning from your predecessor, look at what they do that's successful and what not. You can take positives and negatives from an event that will help you change for the positive.

C. What to change and why?

So now that you have learned from your predecessor and seen what they do, how do you decide what to change? Well, the things that should be changed are the things that will make the most positive impact on you. You want to change the things that are going to have the widest impact because as a leader/Arrowman/person, you want to do the most good!

D. Evaluation is Key

Evaluating past leaders is the biggest key to changing for the positive. You should learn from your predecessors through evaluation as to what you want to change. If you see something that works, don't change. However, if you evaluate your predecessor and see that he does things great, get as much information from them as possible.

Applying Evaluation to Future Plans

5-7 Minutes

A. Sports, a perfect example

For anyone that has played sports in the past, you understand that evaluation is key to future success. Whether you play football, soccer or any sport, after playing a game, teams usually sit down and review the tape. Now, why would a team to do that? Entertainment? Laughs? Probably not, I would suggest that teams evaluate prior performances to see how they can improve for the future. Evaluating prior games for teams allows them to see what went right and went wrong.

Leadership Development - Learning from the Past: Does History Repeat Itself?

B. The Evaluation Process

When evaluating something, be sure to not miss any aspect of what you are trying to evaluate. Everything should be evaluated, from the smallest detail to the largest and most obvious part. Evaluating every aspect of the past is key to seeing what specifically needs to be different in the future.

Remember, there is always a need for evaluation. Nothing, from planning a conclave to writing a syllabus, is ever perfect; there is always something to improve on.

C. Putting the “Value” in eVALUation

After the evaluation of the past has taken place, be sure to figure out a way for the evaluation to be useful. If you know what needs to be changed because of your evaluation, figure out a way to implement the right changes. The purpose of the evaluation is to make things better!

Evaluation and implementing changes is the only way to ensure success!

Conclusion:

5-7 Minutes

The past is the biggest learning tool for leaders. By looking at the past, you can learn a lot and figure out what needs to be done differently for future success. Are you happy with the way your last lodge event went? Did the way you studied for your last school exam prove to be successful? Are you happy with the way the past has turned out in every aspect of your life? If the answer is no, then by simply evaluating where things went off kilter, you have the power to change and learn from the past. Remember, history only repeats itself if you do nothing!