

Learn a business lesson from Tiger's golf mistakes

by Connie Brubaker

I love spring: the wildflowers, the sunshine and all the greens. Golf greens, that is.



Connie's Comments

It's no surprise that about this time every year, I get the itch to get back onto the golf course again. Feeling a little rusty after my winter break, I recently attended a half-day clinic put on by the Executive Women's Golf Association to receive some tips from local lady golf professionals.

Good golfers aren't born that way. They practice hard and often. And they understand the value of coaching — which is why I went to that golf clinic.

I knew that, hard as I might work at improving my game, I could use an impartial expert to watch, evaluate and advise me. Then I could put that instruction to good use, first on the driving range and later on the golf course.

And it's not just amateurs like me that need that kind of outside help. At the beginning of the season, Tiger Woods had a much-publicized breakup with his longtime coach. Tiger said that he needed no help with his swing and that he could coach himself.

He's been going it alone since then — and it hasn't been pretty. Although Tiger is unquestionably the most talented golfer of his generation, he's 0 for 7 in the majors since the split. He keeps insisting that he's close to putting it all together, that his game is rounding into

form, that he'll be back on top again.

But close doesn't cut it in golf. Tiger finished 22nd in the recent Masters tournament.

His play was erratic, filled with bad shots and mental errors. So much for coaching himself.



Often a company's own people are simply too close to the issues to see the problems.

Many times, a company's vice president of sales will tell me that all sales training is done internally. Often the vice president of customer services will inform me that new employees are trained by osmosis: they're paired with experienced employees in order to watch, and hopefully eventually model, their behavior.

That sounds good in theory — just like Tiger saying that he was the person best qualified to evaluate his own game. But, as his example proves, it doesn't always work out in practice.

There's really no substitute for the kind of independent perspective an outside expert brings. In my case, it's

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Is 99% good enough?

How good does something have to be in order to be "good enough"? Would you buy a product that worked 99% of the time? Would you be comfortable doing business with people who did things right 99% of the time?

Before you answer, consider what 99% really means. It means you'd have to:

- Use unsafe drinking water four days each year.
- Go without telephone service for 15 minutes each day.
- Go without electricity, water and air conditioning/heat for 15 minutes each day.
- Have your heart fail to beat 32,000 times each year.

Nationally, 99% quality means:

- Every hour, 16,000 pieces of mail are lost.
- Every day, two planes make unsafe landings at Chicago's O'Hare Airport.
- Every week, 500 surgical operations are incorrectly performed.
- Every year, 20,000 drug prescriptions are incorrectly filled.
- Every year, doctors drop 19,000 newborn babies.

Suddenly, 99% doesn't sound quite as good, does it? The fact is, the only acceptable goal is to provide products and services that work right 100% of the time!

from Lipservice by Hal Becker



"I have a delivery for you: 1000 pens with the slogan 'Excellence is in the Detales' and 500 factory-second, slightly irregular coffee mugs that say 'Quality Matters'."

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Improving your sales and service swing

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that perspective that often lets me identify the slight variances that are lowering a company's sales call closing percentages, or see when a customer is being treated as a process rather than a person. Often a company's own people are simply too close to the issues to see the problems.

And even if you are correctly diagnosing your problems, chances are an outside view can bring a new authority, motivation and freshness to what you've been saying. Independent confirmation is valuable precisely because it's independent.

Just like in golf, sometimes all it takes is a series of subtle adjustments to make a dramatic improvement in your sales or customer service success. So don't wait until you're stuck in a slump and losing majors – accounts, that is. Make the decision to adjust your sales swing or customer service stance today.

QUOTE OF THE MONTH

"Excellence is an art won by training and habituation. We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence, then, is not an act but a habit."

— Aristotle

The power of visualization in action

In last month's issue, we talked about "possibility thinking," a process developed by Dr. Robert Schuller to achieve success by consciously focusing on positive outcomes instead of dwelling on the negative.

Ove Johansson knows firsthand the power of possibility thinking. As a transfer student from Sweden playing soccer for Abilene Christian University in the mid-70s, he became intrigued by American football — particularly the place kicker position.

In those days, most field goals were kicked from 35 yards or less. The curly-headed Swede figured he could do better than that. He practiced every day for months, gradually increasing the distance from the goalposts. Before each kick, he visualized approaching the ball and sending it sailing through the uprights.

After watching him practice, ACU coach Wally Bullington offered him a spot on the team. And in the 1976 homecoming game against East Texas State — only Ove's sixth

game — he kicked the longest field goal in history: a booming 69-yarder.

"That kick was not a fluke," Ove said later. "I didn't know much about American football, but I found out what the world record field goal was, and I planned to break it. I wrote down my goals. I tell people they have to do that in business. People who win and succeed, they plan it. It takes hard work, dedication and commitment."

NEED A SPEAKER? *Connie Brubaker is a certified Integrity Systems® business consultant and professional speaker who focuses on sales, customer service and leadership. Her speeches include Leadership Matters: Motivating Your Employees to Success; The Emotional Side of Selling: Discovering What's Holding You Back; The Magnolia: a Southern Woman Shares Her Struggles and Triumphs; and Turn Storytelling into Storyselling: Using Stories to Make a Connection.*