



How You Win Says A Lot

by William E. Conway, Chairman & CEO, Conway Management Company

Not too long ago, the New England Patriots received their third Super Bowl ring in four years. (And shared one ring with Russian President, Vladimir Putin!)

Most people would acknowledge that repeated success in the National Football League (NFL) is difficult to achieve. Whether or not you are a sports fan, a brief review of some of the key characteristics of the Patriots' organization may provide some insights into how they **play and win** that we can translate to other teams and other organizations.

First of all, as a father of 5 and a grandfather of 13, I like the way the team plays. They display all of the characteristics that as parents and coaches, we try to teach our kids. Their behavior is what we would like all teams (sports, academic, management, kids' Little League, R&D, sales and marketing, improvement, new product development. etc.) to emulate and follow.

- **The Patriots win with teamwork.** Three years ago, the Patriots set a new tone in the Super Bowl by refusing to be

introduced individually in the starting line ups. They came out as a team. Now everyone does it that way.

- **In almost every game, every player who is dressed for the game plays.** In any given game 40 players actually play! Is that an anomaly in the NFL? Indeed!
- **The success of the team is what is most important.** After injuries hammered their defense, the Patriots asked Troy Brown, a wide receiver (an offensive position), to switch to play a defensive back and safety. Did he do it? Yes. Did he struggle? Yes. Did he have less time in the limelight? Yes. So what? The team won. And after they won, the team discussed with Troy that they needed to renegotiate his contract. After the season ended, the team put him on waivers. He wanted to play for the Patriots, he didn't sign with another team. Later, the Patriots announced that they had renegotiated the contract (at a reduced salary) and that Troy Brown would be back.

- **They win and maybe, just maybe, they don't have the best athletes.** By most every account, Tom Brady is not the best passer in the NFL. Leave that honor to Peyton Manning or others. Do they have the best running backs? No. The best offensive and defensive lines? No and No. But they win.
- **They prepare.** They recognize that the better prepared they are, the more knowledgeable they are about the opposing team's defense and offense, the more it will look familiar during the game. The coaches and players **study, change and improve their work** so that they know where the opposing quarterback is going to throw the ball! They don't get ruffled; they know they are ready and they play. They win.
- **They look ahead to the next challenge and don't expect past glories to carry them through.** You may have read that when the Patriots are together as a team, no one wears the Super Bowl rings. It just isn't done. That was last year.
- **No prima donnas.** Everyone rides the bus.

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We spent some time with Bill at his beach house in Maine discussing improvement, business and excellence. We followed him with a camera crew and encouraged him to be honest and passionate, and maybe even a little bit controversial. The result is a frank, sometimes blunt, and always candid video. After more than 50 years in business, Bill has seen enough to know what it REALLY takes to be world class.

*The Waves of Change
Reflections on Improvement
Bill Conway on CD*

Getting to the Root Cause of Success

by John Petrie, Director, Conway Management Canada

Most of us have used fishbone charts and the “5 Whys” to help figure out the root cause for a particular problem, such as shorted orders, too much inventory or equipment downtime.

Have you thought of using the same tools to understand what causes a good thing to happen, so that you can identify the root cause and take action to get more of what you want? Here are two examples:

What causes sales?

- In the consumer products sector, one of the possible causes is good retail distribution.
- *Why...what causes that?* Products that are profitable for the retailer to sell.
- *Why...what causes that?* Innovative products.
- *Why...what causes that?* A new product development process with fast cycle time.
- *Why...what causes that?* A respected process owner and the right people involved.
- *Why...what causes that?* The right structure and resources provided by senior management.

What causes employee satisfaction?

- Apart from compensation, involvement in things that affect them is among the most important causes.
- *Why...what causes that?* Clear and frequent communications.
- *Why...what causes that?* Managers who believe that this is a good thing.
- *Why...what causes that?* Expectations created and rewards and recognition provided by top leaders.

At your next leadership team meeting, think about trying out this concept. Here are possible steps:

- Pick something that benefits the business and that you would like more of.
- Draw a fishbone chart to develop possible causes of the good outcome.
- For the causes that you consider to be the most important, ask “Why” 5 times — drill down to get the root cause.
- When you have the root cause, consider whether or not you are doing enough to get the results you want. If not, decide what else needs to be done, by whom, by when and for what result. ■

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- **They use variation and innovation** to outwit their opponents. Mike Vrabel, the offensive tackle, caught a winning pass in the end zone. Adam Vinateri, the place kicker, threw a game winning pass to the end zone.

Who knows what will happen in the next few seasons? The offensive and defensive coaches have been hired away to other coaching jobs. That will make things more difficult, but with the way the Patriots **study, change and improve work**, and the winning and innovative culture of the organization, I'm sure that they will find ways to succeed. ■