

Lessons from the Gridiron for the Green Industry

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Adam DeLamielleure- Troy Clogg Landscape Associates

Thank you for attending the 2023 GLTE and choosing to spend a little time with me. My sincere hope is that you and your Team can benefit from some of the lessons I will be sharing. Lessons I learned over the years while pursuing my passions. I believe that these lessons can be implemented by anyone. I believe they will be a welcome addition to your “playbook”.

And thank you for allowing me to do this work. When I work through the process of preparing, I am reminded of the things that I need to continue to work on. Love the work. AD

YOU ARE A RUNNING BACK

POSITION	DEPARTMENT	COMPANY
SKILLS AND RESPONSIBILITIES	SKILLS AND RESPONSIBILITIES	SKILLS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

“You are a South Lyon Running Back. This is an important position and those who have been privileged to go before you have set the bar high. Don’t be intimidated to be here because we will only ask you to do a few things. Don’t think it will be easy. We will demand that you work hard to hone your craft. We will do these few things every day. You will do these few things properly.

First, you will run everywhere you go. It’s in the job description. Running back. Next you will do four things. Hold onto the football. Have good footwork and run hard. Block. Catch the ball out of the backfield. That’s it.

When we meet for an individual period, we will work on those four things, in that order. You need to be able to do your job... in that order. That order is the order of importance. If we have five minutes, we will work through that progression... ball security...footwork... blocking...catching... for five minutes. If we have fifteen minutes, we will work through that progression, adding more drills to fill up the time. Over time, we will be able to combine elements of each focus during our time together. When we move to group and team period, we will continue to focus on those skills. Focus on these things and you will be successful. Now, let’s get to work.”

This is the first conversation I have with my running backs. It is repeated a few times leading up to season and referred to often. I believe it sets the tone for what is expected and what we do. Although it took the better half of a decade to develop, it has worked well, and I have often shared it, on and off the field.

Over the years I have realized that although there is a definite need for training on our Teams and in our organizations, few people know how to develop a training program and even fewer are good trainers. What results is unorganized or ineffective training or in the worst scenario, no training at all.

The conversation outlined above is great foundation to a simple and effective training plan. It lays out a format that helps a Team Member know what to expect, gives a coach a great tool to create a practice plan, regardless of time restraints, and is transferable to others when the leader or coach is not present. Let's look at the parts.

It starts by giving your people an identity to be proud of. Let them know that they are special, and they should be proud. And with that pride comes responsibility.

That leads directly into core expectations for the group. The starting point of any conversation or day. "Because you are X, you are expected to do Y." Simple and straightforward.

Next comes the actual training. The essential fundamentals of a Team or organization must be defined and the reason why these things are important must be empathized through time and effort. If safety is most important thing for your organization, then it should be talked about first and it should be talked about every time. If a particular software is essential, then it must be demonstrated as such and trained on repeatedly. Pick 3- 5 fundamentals that are core to your Team's or organization's success and focus on those things.

Over time, the goal should be to combine these core fundamentals in your training when possible. This requires creativity as to how to do this. When this occurs, your training become increasingly more effective because you are building skills upon skills. It is also a great way to reduce the risk of boredom or drudgery in training. However, it is important to always circle back to the basics to make sure that the fundamentals remain sound.

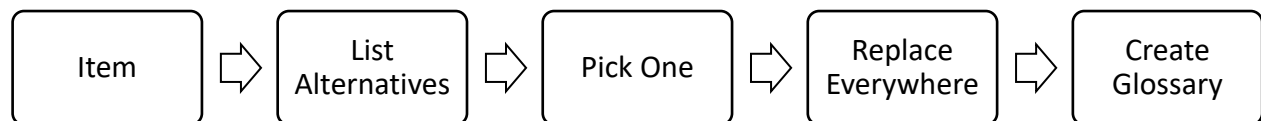
This is a great starting point for anyone looking to start or develop a training program. It will require understanding to decide what the core fundamentals for your Team or organization. After you build a system for developing great fundamentals, then you can move on to other forms and methods of training that make your people more well-rounded and effective.

Training doesn't have to be complicated; it just needs to be planned and executed. Simple plans executed well often lead to great success. Start small. Win Big.

A few extra yards...

So, this was written as a training piece but as I reflect on it, it's a life piece. What if we each looked at our lives and determined what the most important things are and made sure we did something with those things every day? How much better would we be in those areas? How much better would our lives be? Search your life and find the few things to focus on. Practice them daily in the proper order. Then figure out ways to combine them. Build skills on skills. Master your craft. Love the work!

A COMMON LANGUAGE



- If you have two languages, notate it.

- Gather information from your vendors and add to glossary

PREFERENCE vs PRINCIPLE

Preference- a greater liking for one alternative over another or others.

Principle- fundamental truth or proposition that serves as the foundation for a system of belief or behavior or for a chain of reasoning.

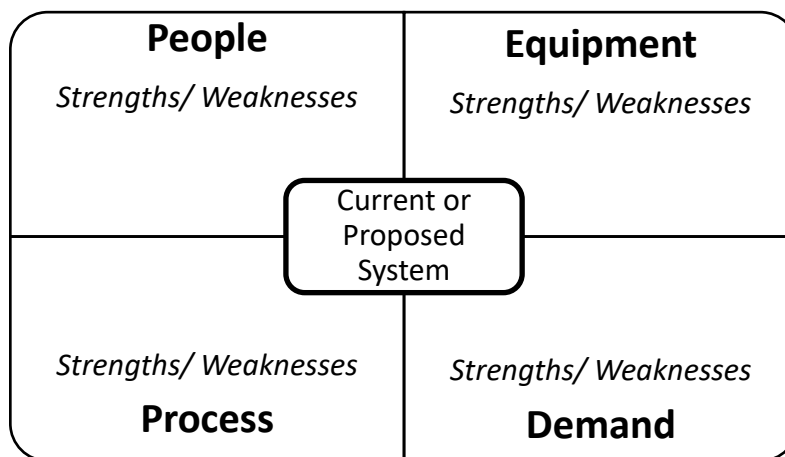
Activity/ Behavior	Preference or Principle?	Response

A few extra yards: “Between stimulus and response there is a space. In that space is our power to choose our response. In our response lies our growth and our freedom.” Viktor Frankl

$$E+R=O$$

Event + Response = Outcome

WHAT SYSTEM ARE YOU GOING TO RUN?



- What will it cost to implement the resources? What is the payoff?
- How will we pay for the addition/change?
- How long will it take?

- Who will champion it?

DO ONE GOOD THING



What is one thing right in front of me that I can do?

DO IT!

What's next?

It was midway through the second quarter as he glided into the endzone. With the ensuing extra point, it was 21-0. It had happened fast- real fast. And as the coach turned to the sidelines, the team was in stocked silence. Their season was over.

The coach had to do something. Football is often called a game of momentum and at this point, the opposition had the momentum, and it was getting stronger.

What could he do? What could they do? The answer...one good thing.

The coach quickly called the return team together. He said "Calm down. You can't score a 21-point touchdown. Breath. They have the momentum. YES. And it stops right here. On this return. Because you know how you stop momentum? With one good thing. One good play. Then another. Focus on this play...this return. One good thing. Stop the momentum".

The ball sailed high through the air, end over end. The returner fielded it cleanly and started up field. He followed his blockers as they completed their assignments. The returner made a good move and found some daylight. The sideline and crowd started to cheer. The returner had one more person to beat...but he was tackled. He didn't take it back, but he did one good thing.

The coached yelled from the sideline, "That's it. That's one good thing. Now another."

The team gained four yards.

"Now another"

The team got a first down.

"That's it. Another."

The team drove down the field- chunk by chunk. And right before half they scored and celebrated. When the first half ended, the Team sprinted to the locker-room. Although they were down 21-6, they knew they were going to win, and this game was going to be a great memory.

We need to carry the lesson of that cool Friday Night into everyday of our lives. Because like football, life can be a game of momentum. There are times when things are going great and everything we touch pays off. And there are times when everything we do seems to fail, we fall behind, and feel defeated. The secret to momentum, either good or bad, is the same, do one good thing. Then another.

When things are good, keep doing the next one good thing. Keep the momentum rolling. And as soon as you have a setback, calm down and focus on what's next. Do one good thing. Then another. The goal to when you have the momentum in your favor is to simply to keep it going.

It's much harder when it feels like the momentum is working against you. When this happens, you see yourself falling behind, losing the game. It's easy to say it's over; there's no hope. Calm down and breath. Do one good thing. Then another.

Recently, the momentum in my life seemed to be working against me. I had forgotten that Friday night lesson and was just battling to hold my ground. There wasn't a coach standing in a huddle telling me to calm down and focus on doing one thing. I felt I was losing and there was no way to come back.

Then one day it happened. That lesson boiled up from somewhere and I was able to do one good thing. Then I focused on another. The negative momentum stopped and slowly things started to move in the opposite direction. The ball is moving forward, and I have to keep it going.

Now I say the lesson boiled up from somewhere. That is not completely true. It was not my power alone. It took prayer and processing. It took conversations and conflict. It took God and the people in my life to calm down, breath, and to have the strength and courage to one good thing. Then another.

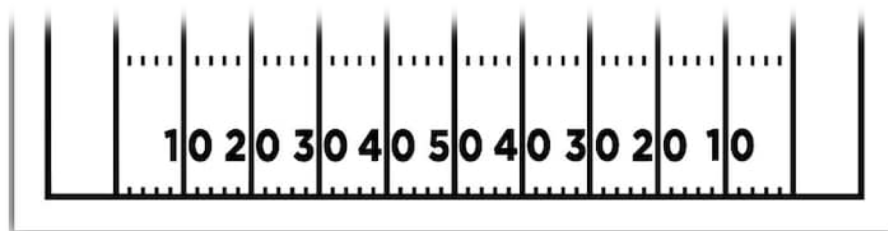
If things are going great...that's awesome. Keep on rolling. Remember things will get tough again. When they do, recognize it fast and remember- do one thing. Then another.

If things are not going great...calm down. Breath. Do one good thing. Then another.

And always have your head up watching those you love. Be willing to keep their momentum going. And even more importantly, be willing to step in and help them do one good thing. Then another.

Oh yeah, the game. We won. It took going for a two-point conversion with less than two minutes left in the game to do it. It was a great night. It was a great lesson. It is a great memory. And it started with one good thing. Then another.

2.6 (2.7)



The coach pulled the offense together before practice and the Team quieted to listen to the pre practice instructions. The coach was silent as he looked around. Then quietly, he said “2.6.” The Team looked back at him and wondered what it meant. He waited. Then he said, “2.6. That’s all we need. If we get just 2.6 yards, every time we snap the ball and we can’t be stopped. 2.6. Every time. It doesn’t take much to be unstoppable, but we must do it every time. And we’re going to have to have guts and trust ourselves because we’re going to have to go for it on fourth down. 2.6. That’s what we’re going to focus on today. Just get better, little by little, till we can’t be stopped”.

I had never heard that before, but I have used it countless times since. I’m not as brave so I changed it 2.7. Let’s call this the 2.7 Principle. If you look around my office, you will see yellow sticky notes with 2.7 written on them. It is a reminder to me (and anyone else who notices and asks its meaning) that we only have to get a little better today to become unstoppable. But we MUST get better today.

We all look for the big change that will bring success. We decide to eat keto. We decide on the new software. We decide on the new whatever, knowing that once we adopt and master it, we will be unstoppable. Our lives and our businesses will be transformed. But when we are honest with ourselves, how many of the new “whatever’s” have become the last disappointments?

The fact is all we need to change and evolve. We need to grow. If you aren’t growing, you are dying- even if it is an unperceivable, gradual death. The choice to not grow, not change is still a choice. And one that we make every day.

Most of us will reflect on our day...our week...this quarter...this year and know that we need to change. But many don’t know where to start. We think that dramatically changing our schedule, our diet, our mindset is what is needed. In some cases that dramatic change is right and only solution. However, more times than not, little changes are what are needed and will get you to where you want to go.

So, the question isn’t where to start, but when. TODAY. Make the commitment that today you will get better in some way. Some small way. The goal is to gain 2.7 yards. And then come back and gain 2.7 tomorrow.

It works. You’ll rack up “first downs” and sooner or later, you’ll score. But like that old coach said, you’re going to have to have guts and trust that it will work because it will take time. There will be plenty of days that 2.7 was so hard to fight for, you will wonder if it is worth it. Trust yourself and know that it is!

This works but there are two thing you need to know. If you are going to play this type of long game, you are going to be chewing up the clock. Time will pass quickly. So, if you fall too far behind, don’t act fast enough, the small progress might not allow you to catch up. You need to commit and start today. Do one thing.

Next, this is not always the most popular philosophy. In the instant gratification world we live in today, grinding it out leaves a lot of people wanting more. There will be some who think slow progress is no progress. You have to constantly remind people that we’re moving forward, and the fight is worth it. And you must be strong enough to be press forward and be who you decide you will be.

And there’s a beautiful byproduct of the 2.7 Principle. It builds momentum. These little wins build confidence and lead to more wins. Sooner or later, you will start to rip off big gains. The principle says you need to get 2.7. It doesn’t say you can’t get more than 2.7. Just don’t lose ground, move forward, and you will become unstoppable.

IF YOU THINK YOU’RE THERE, TAKE ONE MORE STEP



My brother was one of my first football heroes. He is four years older, so he was always able to share “football wisdom” with me as I progressed through my career. He had lived it and his words carried weight as he passed along tips and tricks. And as I started to become more of a contributor, he would sometimes even compliment my performance. Being recognized by one of your heroes is powerful.

One of the greatest compliments he ever paid me was about my ability to hit and tackle. After a game, he told me, “You can hit. You have that extra step. That step can’t be coached but you have it.” I have never forgotten that comment and long after my playing days, it is still making an impact.

Football is a dangerous sport. That is one of the things that makes it special. Players choose to put on a helmet and run into other human beings in the name of fun. For many, liking the contact the game requires is unnatural. In addition, as the dangers of football have become wide known, many kids are starting their careers with more fear and apprehension than before.

As a coach, it’s common to see that apprehension, especially in younger players. The irony of this is that it can result in a player putting themselves in a more dangerous position. The fear of contact causes players to neglect form or coaching points, designed to build safety into the physical aspects of the game, thus putting them in positions that are more apt to result in injury.

As a coach, you wince at this. You recognize the danger and try to coach through it. You stop and demonstrate good form, slow down the drill, and break it down to its fundamentals. And then get passionate (*read yell at*) with your players because you do not want them to get hurt.

One summer day, I was in this familiar spot. Coaching tackling and not satisfied with the results. Nervous might be a better word. After explaining and correcting several players, I heard my brother’s voice, “That step can’t be coached, but you have it.”

I stopped the drill and said, “Great tacklers have something unique. They have the ability to take an extra step right before they make contact. It’s called...” I paused and thought quickly and then continued, “It’s called the impact step. It’s the step that brings with it power. Now, many say you’re either born with it or not. Some say it can’t be coached. Maybe. But I want you think about it this way; if you think you’re there, take on more step. It puts you in better position. It’s safer. It’s powerful. It’s impactful. If you think you’re there, take on more step.”

It happened in a moment, and I have been using it since. I’d like to think it’s helped and occasionally you see an average tackler make great hit. And when you watch the hit, you see that one extra step.

If you think you’re there, take one more step.

I've been using that line for years. And since my football life bubbles into my real life, I've used it often off the field. I've shared it with friends and colleagues.

Like a young kid learning to tackle, we are all called to do things that don't seem natural or comfortable. Some things even cause fear. Does that mean you should just never do it? No. These things might be things you have to, or you might want to. You can do it. You need the courage to start, the humility to receive coaching and to fail, and the persistence to press on. You may not be born for it, but you can do it.

When you find yourself doing that thing...when you think you're there, take one more step. Make one more call. Do a little more research. Take a few extra minutes. Do a little bit more. It's powerful. It's impactful.

WHAT'S NEXT (LOVE THE WORK)

I was in the weight room for an off-season workout. One of the senior leaders had just finish a set and after taking a deep, labored breath said, "Man coach, this is hard work."

I was ready with a pithy response, but it didn't come out quite right.

"The work is what makes you stronger. You got to love the work."

I had meant to say "love to work" but it didn't come out right. As I drove home, I thought to myself that I liked that turn of phrase and have been using it ever since. I wasn't looking for a manta that day, but I found one. There's a very good chance that if you see me wearing a hat that is a little tired and worn, you will see those three little words scribbled inside.

Love the work.

What does it mean?

From an early age, we all are trained to look forward to big days, big events, or the days when we can do what we want to do. Birthdays, Christmas, that trip to wherever, the weekend... the list goes on and on. We look forward and dream about that day and all it has in store for us. And although looking forward is good, often it causes us to miss a bunch of little things along the way.

What we miss is the work.

For many, work is a four-letter word. Work is something to be avoided. Work is something you have to do, not something that you get to do. Work is something that causes dread not joy. This attitude results in many lives that are spent waiting for a moment instead of living in the moment.

Love the work.

Face it...each of us spends most of our lives working. We trade our time for our labor. Why would we not choose to love our work? Why would we not see value in the grind and the struggle that we live each day? Are those big days' worth it?

We should celebrate the big moments. We should enjoy the big days. They should be the icing on the cake, the reward for your time and your talents. We need to celebrate! Because we know those days will come and go and then we will be back to the work.

Love the work.

Love is a choice. Often it is a difficult one. When you love someone and something, you make sacrifices and efforts that you would not make if you simply liked it. You are willing to do more and go further because that love carries you forward. It allows you, sometimes forces you, to take another step, even though you don't know how or if you can. Love is the most powerful force in the world.

Love will carry you along the journey. Love will help you recognize the beauty along the journey. That beauty is sometimes hard to see because it is disguised in the work. That beauty is hard to see because we grow weary. Keep moving forward, regardless of how weary you become and choose to love the journey. Choose to love the work. When you do, the journey, the work, becomes the place where relationships are made. Where lessons are learned. Where you grow. Where memories are made. The journey, the work, is where life is lived.

Love the work.

HOW DO YOU DEFINE WINNING (SUCCESS)?

- Define what WINNING (or SUCCESS) means to you?
- Understand and expect the consequences of how you define it.

Find your thing

- Where does my PASSION intersect with my PURPOSE?

What are you becoming?

The team was undefeated and was preparing for a favorable matchup against a winless team on Friday night. To say they were confident was an understatement. They believed all they had to do was show up and they would win.

The coach looked on with disgust. Confidence was good but overconfidence is dangerous. The team was sloppy and unfocused. This lack luster practice was not the expectation.

Finally, the coach had had enough. He blew the whistle and called the team together. As they trotted toward the center of the field, they continued their silliness. They could sense that their coach was irritated and expected to be yelled at. But they were undefeated- they could beat the team they were playing this week easily. He was overreacting.

As they surrounded the coach, he said nothing. Nothing. Soon the silence became uncomfortable. The team started to look at each other and then back to the coach. Silence.

The coach simply looked at the team. He locked eyes with several players one by one. They felt his cold stare and shifted uneasily and looked away. Silence.

Finally, he spoke.

"I want to ask you a question. It is a question you need to answer today and be honest with your answer. Completely honest! I want to ask you this today and I hope it is a question you ask yourself many times in your life. Do you like who you are becoming?"

He paused. Then he asked again.

"Do you like who you are becoming?"

"Each day, you have the choice to get better or not. Each day you are becoming something. Do you like who you're becoming?"

"Be honest. Do you like who you're becoming...today? Do you like your attitude...your effort...your enthusiasm...today? Do you like what you're doing right now and what it will become on Friday night?"

"You should win Friday. They are not as good as you. You still need to play the game and things can happen. You should win and a few garage practices won't really affect that. But what about when you play a team that you shouldn't beat. Does a garbage practice now impact who will have become then? Yes, it will."

"I want you to ask yourself that now. And I want you to learn to ask yourself that question often. You are always becoming something. And the more you ask yourself that question, the more likely you will be to stay on the right path or correct yourself when you're off course."

"Most people and Teams just let themselves "become". They think that the world and their circumstances define who they become. There is a bit of truth in that...things happen...but all of the little choices shape that "becoming" as much or more than outside things. There are things that you can control, that aid in that "becoming". Do the little things well. They matter. Be wise in your choices."

"There will be times in your life where you will forget to ask that question. You will let life shape you. You will become a certain type of student. A certain type of worker. You will become a certain type of husband. A certain type of father. You will become a certain type of man. And if you never question if that becoming is good or bad, if it is who you want to be or not, you will simply become who you have become. But if you ask yourself that question, you can either keep doing what is working or make changes that need to be made. If you ask yourself that question and be willing to act based on your honest answer, you will be able to have more control on who you are becoming."

"Do you like who you are becoming? If the answer is yes...keep doing it and double down on it. Don't be complacent. Work harder. Work smarter. Take advantage of the tailwind and put some distance between you and average."

"If the answer is no...then pause... look around... regroup and go. Change or be the change. Know that you have a choice. You can do something. You can almost always do something. Do it."

"Create the habit of asking your if you like who you're becoming, you're more apt to become who you want to be. Guys- start today. Do you like who you're becoming? Choose wisely."

He stopped. He stood in silence and then slowly walked away. He wanted to see who they would become.

I'd love to connect:

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Troy Clogg Landscape Associates

<https://www.troyclogg.com/>



@troyclogglandscapeassociates



@troyclogg



@troyclogglandscapeassociates

Adam DeLamielleure

Adam.DeLam@troyclogg.com



@pavercoach



@adamdelam