

Mentorship and Man-management - as taught through Sports!

Sports is a global phenomenon, connecting fans from across the world and showcasing talent. It is not just the athlete's performance on the court, field or in the pool that makes them special, but the amount of hard work, dedication and sacrifice they put in to reach and maintain that status. But is this achieved by the athlete on his/her own? While there are several factors that aid in an athlete's development, a very important part of the athlete's journey is the 'coach'.

What is sport without coaches? Is taking the first step even possible without a coach? Studies suggest that effective coaching behaviour result in athletes reaching: personal achievements, performance goals and positive psychological outcomes.

While tactics and techniques are an important aspect of any sport, there is something that plays a more crucial role over and above this – which is mentorship and man-management. It is imperative to receive the right kind of mentorship at the right time in order to reach the pinnacle.

Take for instance, Karsan Ghavri. Known for his vicious bouncers, and ability to switch between pace and spin, Karsan was also a quality hitter. He played in an era when spinners were the backbone of the Indian Team. At 69, he was the head-coach of the 2019-20 Ranji season's title-winning team – Saurashtra, and he firmly believes that good man management brings out the best in the team and bridges generation gap. He says, "Good man-management keeps the confidence level high"

Elaborating the concept of man management, Ghavri feels, "If somebody is making mistakes, criticise them. But the criticism should be healthy and constructive. At the same time, you can't criticise the same player every day. You should rather aim to help the player improve. That's what a coach should do."

The reason I look at the sports world for inspiration in the business world is due to the presence of plenty of parallels. In management, it is about striking the right balance between the use of various resources at one's disposal. Even if all other factors and models are in place, there are high chances that the business might lose the plot – if they fail to manage the most fundamental resource – employees. It has been mentioned at a number of places that employees are the building blocks of any organisation. In the corporate world, mentorship of employees undoubtedly leads to improvement in one's skills, enhancement of an employee's performance at his/her workplace which speeds up his/her progression at the organisation and it provides valuable insights that allow the employee to bloom into a better individual – both at his/her workplace or in their personal lives. Similarly, man-management – when done in an effective manner - inspires employees to change for the better, enables employees to rise above their fears, and tackle uncertainties and challenges; and also

in the process, establishes communication transparency – which in-turn builds up trust amongst the employees and even across different levels of management. Learning from sports – coaches have the ability to help champions/championship teams form a dynasty!

Mentorship is one of the most valuable character-building experience for people from all walks of life. Therefore, effective coaching and man-management complete the loop of strong mentorship. As Bobby Knight (former American basketball coach) puts it, "To be as good as it can be, a team has to buy into what you as a coach are doing. They have to feel you're a part of them and they're a part of you!"