

The coach never tells us the score

Written by Julie Desmond
Friday, 11 June 2010 14:47



By Julie Desmond
julie@insightnews.com

Anyone as deep into softball (or baseball, soccer, lacrosse, basketball) as my family is knows that kid sporting competitions rarely involve a scoreboard. The point is to let the kids learn the game and not get hung up on the score. This is a good system, but once a kid becomes accomplished in a sport, he or she knows almost intuitively that the deeper point of sports is, yes, to win.

Career planning is no different. Starting out, someone might be willing to work hard for little reward, accepting the fact that he's learning a skill. But once he becomes skilled in a profession, he needs something more to keep the enthusiasm going. Kids figure out pretty quickly how to track their runs and three-pointers. I'm a big fan of putting the same ideas to work in the workplace. If you have a manager who never gives you feedback (or raises), you are going to have to devise ways to measure your own progress.

In about an hour, you can start creating a scoreboard that will keep you moving toward your next success utilizing just three resources: job descriptions, client feedback and feedback from colleagues.

Look at the job description for the job you have now, and then a description for the next position you're aiming for. Check off those qualifications you can perform proficiently - in your sleep, even. What's left? These are the skills you need to hone. Make a list and check these off as you master each one.

Client feedback is something you have to go after. Unless someone has a complaint, he or she is unlikely to offer comments unless you ask. It is perfectly acceptable to occasionally check in with a customer, asking, How am I doing? You risk hearing an honest answer, but really, you need to know the score. Discovering that late deliveries make you, a salesperson, look bad, will motivate you to help your client. Win win. Keep a file or notebook that includes any client comments and track your results in other ways, too, including improved sales or whatever drives your business forward. When you see areas needing improvement, add these to your checklist.

Colleagues are an excellent resource for measuring personal progress. Are you keeping up with co-workers on education, participating on projects or generating new business? Privately compare yourself to others at your level and above. How do you measure up? Where can you improve? Add to your checklist any areas where you can improve.

The coach never tells us the score

Written by Julie Desmond
Friday, 11 June 2010 14:47

Now your checklist becomes your scoreboard. When you accomplish an item, you've scored. And when you reach the career goals you've set for yourself, you win. You might not receive a ring when you triumph in your personal World Series, but your prizes will be just as valuable.

Julie Desmond leads Job Search and Career Planning workshops in Minneapolis, St Paul and Edina, MN. Write to Julie@insightnews.com.