

EVERYTHING I LEARNED ABOUT TEAM BUILDING, I LEARNED FROM "THE LAST DANCE"

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Who the Heck is John Kimball?

- Proud graduate of the **State University of New York – College at Oswego – Class of 1987** (Al Roker!, Steve Levy!) but seriously Doug Lea! (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Doug_Lea)
- I've been in IT for 32 years now.
- My first 10 years in IT were spent as a UNIX SysAdmin (Microport, SCO, SUN OS, Solaris, AIX, IRIX). Oh but I LOVE Linux. 😊
- The “middle” 20 years in IT have been spent as a Web Systems Administrator, Engineer, Architect.
- The last 2 years I've been specializing in implementing DevOps principles in the areas of Integration and Security.
- I've been at an American major grocery chain for 19 years and since 2002.

Why was **The Last Dance** your inspiration?

- **The Last Dance** is the greatest 10 hour sports documentary ever made chronicling Michael Jordan's years with the Chicago Bulls of the NBA.
- The documentary is about a team that won the NBA championship 6 times in the 11 years Michael Jordan actively played on the team. This is astounding and has been matched rarely in the history of sports.
- Given this, insights as to how this team was formed and flourished over a decade can prove beneficial.
- Also, there are many life and work lessons that can be learned from this documentary.

The NBA and IT – Not as different as you think.

- Both fields feature young, fresh out of college talent.
- The young talent is either nurtured to become a valuable professional within the organization that drafted/hired him/her or it leaves their first team for another team (in another city, in another part of the world).
- An average NBA team has 12 members. An average IT team has 8 members.
- An average NBA and IT team feature members that differ considerably in age and experience.
- Both fields have a single supervisor and assistant supervisors (coaches in the NBA 😊).
- Both fields want team members heavily committed to the business.

So how is the rest of this presentation going to go?

- I will be presenting team building lessons I learned from **The Last Dance** and compare them to an IT setting.
- The purpose is to identify characteristics of a good or bad team and to see how this may apply to your companies and work environments.

When is it time to realize your team isn't good and needs to change?

- In **The Last Dance**, Michael Jordan was drafted by a team that wasn't very good (this is normal in the NBA).
- Not only were they not good, but it appears some of them were drug addicts!
- In the NBA, the easiest metric to measure how good your team is, is by the number of wins during a season. In Michael Jordan's rookie year, the Bulls won 38 games which is less than half and not good.
- By Michael Jordan's 4th year (the year the Bulls won 50 games and lost 32), there was only one other player that was still with the Bulls from Michael Jordan's rookie year and they were on their 3rd new coach.
- See, sometimes change is good.

When is it time to realize your team isn't good and needs to change?

- If you have team members who are resistant to change and are in love with the “way things are going” currently (which is bad). The set in their ways crowd.
- Some metrics that can be used to measure the value of your team include support ticket reduction, reduction in security vulnerabilities, the number of projects completed successfully on time, lead time and SLAs to name a few. If these numbers aren't improving or getting worse, it's probably time for a change.
- I realize that accomplishing this in the workforce is a lot more difficult than in the NBA where players are released, traded and cut with relative ease.
- NetFlix from 1998 – 2012 changed and expanded their team drastically during this era and by the end of it, their stock price had tripled and had a customer base of 29 million. NetFlix in their culture statement stated – “We're a team, not a family”.
- The Bulls and NetFlix were after the same thing – excellence.

The power of effective drafting

- Jerry Krause did a very good job recruiting and obtaining top notch talented players for the Chicago Bulls following Michael Jordan's rookie year.
- A few examples include:
 - Scottie Pippen – One of the 50 greatest players in NBA history and a member of the Pro Basketball Hall of Fame. He was on all (6) of the Bulls championship teams.
 - Horace Grant – A keystone player who played on (3) Bulls championship teams.
 - Toni Kukoc – Thinking outside the box, Krause drafted a player who had never played in America! Kukoc turned into a dependable solid player who played on (3) Bulls championship teams.

The power of effective recruiting

- Many companies, throughout the last decade, have been truly great at recruiting IT talent.
- Some examples include: Google, Amazon, Microsoft, Apple and Salesforce
- All these companies conduct rigorous interviews and have high qualifications set in place for all applicants.
- These companies are arguably some of the best companies in America and some of the best ones to work for. They truly value their associates (players).

Nice guys usually finish last

- Michael Jordan – not nice. Phil Jackson – Nice.
- If you had a choice, who would you be? There's no right answer.
- Sometimes your most valuable players aren't nice. I'd still want them on my team. You need a few, maybe a bunch.

Nice guys usually finish last

- Steve Jobs – not nice. Bill Gates – Nice
- If you had a choice, who would you be? There's no right answer.
- Sometimes your most valuable players aren't nice. I'd still want them on my team. You need a few, maybe a bunch.

Passion and Devotion are Good!

- It would be hard to exceed the amount of passion, devotion and commitment to excellence that Michael Jordan had in his years with the Bulls. It was all these traits that led to excellence.
- He also made the players around him better with his drive and determination.
- Some called Michael Jordan demanding and a tyrant. Oook, he just wanted the best out of you and every day.
- Jordan in practice challenged Scott Burrell mercilessly but his motivation was that I'm going to need him in battle.

Passion and Devotion are Good!

- You really want to have associates who have passion, devotion and a commitment to excellence.
- Devotion is seen in employees who have a thirst for curiosity and who are continuously learning.
- Positive passion is good, the desire to fulfill your role to the best of your abilities.
- Examples of passionate leaders include Jeff Bezos and Bill Gates.

You sometimes need a calm force to manage the team

- Phil Jackson was able to manage all these diverse personalities with relative calm. To him it was all about breathing, centering and focus.
- According to Wikipedia he has “a holistic approach to coaching that was influenced by Eastern philosophy.”
- The Dennis Rodman affair – Phil v. Michael – An example of different styles.
- The results – He coached (11) teams to the championship – the most in NBA history and coached all (6) Michael Jordan led Chicago Bulls championship teams.

You sometimes need a calm force to manage the team

- Throughout my career, I've found the best managers I've had are calm under pressure (especially during outage bridges!). Have you?
- Sundar Pichai, CEO of Alphabet, has been described as a calming force who avoids confrontation while embracing cooperation. He has also been noted for bringing the best out of others.

Healthy Conflict is good

- The Michael Jordan/Steve Kerr fight.
- The outcome:
 - They both came out with a tremendous amount of respect for one another.
 - They came away with a lot of trust in one another.
 - They went on to a 72-10 record, at the time the best ever!
 - They went on to win the championship that year.
 - Steve Kerr ended up being a phenomenal coach (leader) after his playing days coaching the Golden St. Warriors to (3) NBA championships.

Healthy Conflict is good

- At Amazon, healthy conflict is a way of life.
- In a Forbes article it was stated that at Amazon “There’s an incredible amount of challenging the other person.”
- In a Business New Daily article, it states:
 - “A healthy amount of workplace conflict can be valuable to the growth of an organization”
 - Debates, competition and industry disruption are all examples of conflict that can lead to fresh perspectives and growth for a business”

In Conclusion ...

- As you can see, there's a lot you can learn from **The Last Dance**.
 - Healthy conflict is good
 - You sometimes need a calm force to manage a team
 - Passion and Devotion are Good.
 - When is it time to realize your team isn't good and to change
 - The power of effective recruiting/drafting
 - Nice guys usually finish last
- It was all of these characteristics, that produced a team that won (6) championships.
- The Last Dance is a truly incredible documentary and you don't have to be a sports fan to enjoy it.
- E-mail me if you want my slides and a guide to the clips in the Last Dance I reference in this presentation.

References (Couldn't have done this without them 😊)

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ANY
QUESTIONS
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THANK YOU!!!

