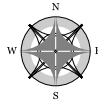


Introduction

The What and Why of Excellence: An “Uneven Playing Field”



The term “excellence,” as we know it today, assumes a state of excelling or superiority as defined by the norm and standard of the environment in which we live, whether it is in the home, at school, or in the workplace. It can also assume a product, idea, project, or initiative is outstanding and of exceptional merit. These assumptions inform our understanding about what it means to be excellent and how we think about excellence. More often than not, our appreciation of this concept is influenced by social, personal, political, and cultural standards. Therefore, what is perceived as exceptional to one party may be viewed as average, mediocre, or inferior to another. In other words, excellence as a global concept is somewhat subjective and is perceived through the eyes of the beholder.

In order to establish a working definition of “excellence,” it is important to note that there really is no one-size-fits-all definition. In fact, the concept of excellence and its ambiguity from both a theoretical and practical perspective is played out continuously on an uneven playing field.

In light of this ambiguity and wide range of standards, the concept of thinking “excellence” will therefore be defined

(in the following chapters) as promoting, encouraging, and thinking in a manner which challenges us to reach our fullest potential. This indistinctness therefore begs the question: How do we define “fullest capacity for potential”? By whose standard? And, once defined, how do we know that our potential is actually being realized to the fullest extent possible? Simply put, what is our capacity or potential? How does this impact on our ability to excel? What is the process through which to achieve this maximum capacity or potential?

Each and every one of us, irrespective of occupation, disposition, or particular circumstance, has the potential to reach *pinnacle moments* which inspire, encourage, and support “excellence.” I use the word “potential” because it assumes that for most of us, our abilities, motivation, and understanding (irrespective of passion) remain relatively untapped or dormant until they are challenged, stimulated, ignited, and eventually unleashed.

In order to illustrate how *Think Excellence* informs the decisions and choices we make (or don’t make) and how we possess the power to reach the highest potential possible, the following chapters present nine *power principles* which were developed for this purpose.

These nine power principles for achieving excellence are not linear in nature, nor are they presented in consecutive or chronological order. Rather, they have a cumulative effect on the manner in which we either attain or aspire to attain high levels of performance, achievement, and accomplishment. Therefore, each principle that is employed can be viewed as a link in a chain of guiding values—an essential ingredient for achieving excellence. The more prin-

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principles that are applied to reaching your goal, the more they increase the probability or likelihood for reaching your full potential or *performance apex*. In other words, each principle can be viewed alone and freestanding or can be grouped together as a group of guiding principles.