

Good morning, everybody. Dennis Engelbrecht with The Family Business Institute, Digging Deeper.

Today, I want to talk about something interesting. Read an article which sort of combined five studies. And what it was about was the positive lessons from sports participation. There was one from 2017 in Human Kinetics, one 2019 from Adolescents Magazine. One from a 2014 Journal of Leadership and Organizational Studies, and two reports, two separate studies from Ernst and Young. So, what they've basically found is high school and college sport athletes make better leaders. Very simple. So why is that and what can you do about it today? Well, let's talk about that a little bit.

So, some of the findings, first of all. Student athletes score significantly higher on transformational leadership ability. High school athletes outscore non-athletes in general leadership ability. Some really phenomenal stats from just women. 94% of C-suite women, those at the top level of organizations, played sports, and 52% of them played at the collegiate level. Pretty amazing. 94% of the women who achieved those levels played sports. 77% of women executives believe that sports make for better employees, and they look for that in their hiring. About just men and those who played sports decades ago, I guess later career folks they studied, they demonstrated higher levels of leadership and had much more robust careers than those who did not play sports when they were young.

So, what is it that this sports participation gives you that leads to this better leadership or better performance? Well, there's a lot of things that you get. First, people who participate in sports recognize the importance of teamwork and trust. They learn how to deal with adversity and conflict. They think better strategically, and they're more willing to change course as needed. They're better at managing attitudes towards self and consideration of others. They exhibit more confidence and more character in high pressure situations that they faced in the sports. They seem to be better at managing change and managing failure from having to do this on a continuous competitive basis in their sports.

They have experience influencing team members and specifically about participating in what's good for the team versus just watching out for what's good for them. They have a certain confidence that they gain from that participation. Single-mindedness. They exhibit more passion and perhaps more resilience. They have a strong grounding on what it means to be a good team member, and they generally tend to be more capable of putting together high performing teams that drive company growth. They also seem to have the ability to see projects through to completion.

So, these are all sort of some of the characteristics that you get from sports. And as somebody who participates in sports just about daily and did play college and high school team sports, you can definitely see where you get those characteristics from. And certainly, there are other organizations. I know I look back to my time in scouting with the Boy Scouts and certainly learned a lot of those things there. Brave, thrifty, clean, reverend, the 12 things in the Boy Scout model. So, there are other places where I think you also get those skills.

So as a leader, what can you do about that? Okay, so we know these folks have better skills. Certainly, in your hiring, that could be one thing that you look for. In terms of the people that you have on your team today, you certainly have a mix of some people who have participated in sports, and some haven't. You could look at sort of this list of things that you get from sports, and all of these are trainable, but for other people that don't have that experience and haven't come up with it naturally, think about training and development. There's no reason why they can't get those skills now and learn the things that they didn't have. So, you can recognize what's there, and whether it's because they participated in sports or didn't, or whether it's for some other reason. These are all trainable skills and characteristics. So, I would definitely look at your training and development as other ways.

But the other thing I think about sports is there's always a set of rules and you learn to play by the rules. They call it sportsmanship, right? You learn to play by the rules. So, in tennis, we're not at the professional level, so we call our own lines, and you've got to be fair. If you're not fair, things could go downhill pretty quickly. But you play among people my age, old guys, and you find everybody's fair. Everybody's got good sportsmanship, and it's fun. And really, it's a great

comradery you have, not just with teammates, but with opponents. And it really is terrific because I think you learn through all of this and hopefully develop your character and your performance and your skills through that.

Dennis Engelbrecht, Digging Deeper.