

2021 – VOLUME 8 COMPLETE EDITION



Victim or Victor Checkpoint 4: RIP JRS 1.12.36 - 12.28.20 Lessons Learned from Dad

1/1/2021



My father John Roy Sanders was diagnosed with Pancreatic Cancer in June of 2020 and succumbed to the disease 7 months later.

Along with so many changes that came with 2020 our family has been navigating the pending and alarmingly immediate loss of a happy and kind patriarch.

In keeping with our V2 theme I would like to share a few lessons learned from my father as we leap into 2021 with the hope of Covid free world but the experience to know that more storms lurk.

John Sanders (Oil man by day, builder and family man by night)

- Riverdale High School, North Dakota
- Iowa State Class of 1959 Electrical Engineer
- Chevron Corporation 1959-1995
- Married to Carolyn Smith Sanders 1959-2020

A Sanders - "Can Do Anything"

- Work the problem, and trust the process

- If the pandemic has shown us anything it is that we need to be able to use the constraints of having things taken away from us as a way to develop our abilities and skills.
- Being ready to adapt and not have all the pieces of a puzzle is a mindset and I received weekly training for this in the backyard as we tackled whatever project that was next.
- It wasn't arrogance that a Sanders could do anything, **it was a commitment to stay with a problem and where a process was known to stay with that process and see it through.**
- CURIOSITY and PERSISTENCE were hand in glove
- We imagine that for most of you 2020 provided countless situations where you applied these skills and are preparing for 2021 to not be as smooth as everyone seems to think it will be.

School is a means to an end

- Skills vs Habits
- When struggling with a class in school my father would repeat the phrase, "School is a means to an end"
- It was lost on me what that meant for a long time, but I got the point, he cared about more than my grades and **a work ethic with a good attitude were at the top of the list.**
- What he knew was that in life it didn't matter if you had skills in all areas but that you had the habits to build upon the areas that you had strengths.
- What we have noticed as well is that desire and drive are sometimes developed out of struggles and mistakes and lower grades than one hopes.
- Sir Ken Robinson's book "[The Element](#)" with the accompanying [Ted Talk](#) (70 Million Views and Counting) really nails what my dad was driving at.
- Observe where a person loses track of time, build around that a series of constraints to develop your abilities and then get your hands bloody in the pursuit and practice of improvement.

Show up to workdays and enjoy the work

- Piedmont Community Church had a workday in 1978 and as an 8-year-old I tagged along with my dad and we were given the task of weeding a hillside and trimming some ivy.
- We were new to town having moved from Alaska the year prior, but yard work was nothing new for us.
- The people we worked alongside became friends for all of us and the shared experience of giving back to our community was unique.
- Fast forward to 2020 my son Ryan has been helping me in the yard for years and was looking to earn some gas money now that he was 16.
- I told him to make a flier and knock on 30 doors in the surrounding area offering to mow lawns and do general yard work and he would be just fine.
- How will this work? He asked.

- "Because you have been working next to me for years and we know how to work and when you take that same level of energy to their yard, word will spread".
- 8 months later he has a nice business going and his confidence is soaring.
- 2021 is going to ask all of us to pitch in to help the community again and again and **most of the tools we will bring will be either John Sanders tools or the tools John Sanders gave us.**

Looking forward we imagine that you are chomping at the bit to get going in 2021, these first 105 days appear primed for great activity especially since the lock downs happened in Q1 last year.

Our aim is to work our plans hard but to also have another Plan B and Plan C in the drawer for when the next curve ball comes our way and when it does, we will be emulating John Roy Sanders often.

Victim or Victor Checkpoint 5: How a tip that George Schultz picked up from Ronald Reagan could help you keep your team on track in 2021

2/13/2021



The first 45 days of 2021 have started to show us that the vaccination roll out and reopening of our full economy will last the entire year.

The word Hybrid is being used a lot and that fits our narrative going back to last July when we started focusing leaders on January 1, 2022 as a good heading to work towards with their teams.

Our current focus is how to connect with the members of the team who are not doing well, the bottom half of the K recovery.

This leadership challenge is well documented by Simon Sinek's "Leaders Eat Last" book, or the notion that the captain is the last one off the ship.

We came across a great insight for **connecting with those you lead** by former Secretary of State George Schultz in his recent 13 page white paper "Life and Learning after 100 Years".

Schultz noticed how Ronald Reagan would approve the content of a speech and then in his final preparation would mark spots in the speech to insert a story.

Here are Schultz's words:

*I remember the day when, as secretary of state, I brought a draft foreign policy speech to the Oval Office for President Reagan to review. Reagan read through the speech and said, "That's fine." Then he picked it up again and began marking it up in places. **At one spot, he wrote "story" in the margin. I asked what he meant, and he said, "That's the most important point. Your speech is good, but to engage your listeners, it always helps to tell a relevant story they can relate to. That way, you'll appeal not only to their minds but to their emotions."** Reagan understood that you could make a point, or you could tell a story. Always tell a story to make your point whenever you can. It penetrates in a way no abstract point can—and it therefore forges an emotional bond, and emotional bonds build trust.*

We view this as both timeless and timely advice for any leader and hope that as you are communicating to your teams and audiences that you work to add stories of hope and caring around the facts and objectives. The stories "activate" the message and that activation is the force multiplier inside your human system for spreading the right message to the very fringes of an organization.

It is in the connecting through significant shared experiences that trust is built and with trust in the air, magic can happen across cultures.

The subtitle of the Schultz document is "**Trust is the Coin of the Realm**" and we need our leaders to be building trust with their constituents in this hybrid year. .

If you know of any leaders who could be empowered by this idea from Schultz and Reagan, please forward this to them, the people they lead need hope.

Thank you for your friendship and readership,

Drew & Sara

P.S. Wanted to thank the many of you who responded to our last email about "[Lessons Learned from Dad](#)" it has made for a multitude of great conversations and warm warm feelings.

Victim or Victor Checkpoint 6: Hard on the idea...Kind towards each other...Why it is so hard to get conflict right

4/13/2021



April of 2021 has us noticing that not only has spring, sprung, but that many have an extra spring in their step.

Could it be the vaccine, the year of isolation, the passing of loved ones or just the beauty of life reborn, but the flowers are full of color and even our oak leaves are vibrant in their adolescent state.

We find that this time of year is one bursting with action and so will keep this email short and hopefully impactful for where you are as a leader right now.

In almost any setting, **adding the right amount of conflict** can be a challenge and yet in many situations, just like the right spice, it can activate other elements and "**make the soup.**"

As leaders of ourselves and others we are given the responsibility to create an atmosphere that optimizes getting the job done.

What we have noticed recently is that much of the conflict tied to the pandemic is relationally based, as in, these people are bad, wrong, or stupid because of X.

This is the type of conflict that kills cultures at work, on teams, and inside of families and if anyone were to observe an elementary school playground we appear to acquire the ability to have relational conflict early in life.

Where conflict can be accretive is when we create constraints or games to work with the tension that is conflicts byproduct to hone what we discussed **last time which is trust.**

Sport when positioned correctly allows the ball to be under duress, not the people who handle the ball, building a fence in the backyard can put the project under stress, not the people who are building it.

We coined this process "**being hard on the ball and kind to each other.**"

You probably are doing something like this intuitively already, but we wanted to share a few insights on what we are noticing right now and based on some mistakes we have made while adapting to the distance the pandemic has put between so many of us.

The first is that once you have set up your tension or conflict points inside your system, make sure to **listen for remarks or comments that would signify that your team is struggling with the pressure.**

Under pressure your adults will turn to children quickly and your conflict will lose its impact, take a page from John Wooden's book and correct these lapses quickly and with the language that focuses the conflict on the task.

The second is that when taking your "tension" process on the road and into new environments **make sure the room is safe first** or your words may be misinterpreted and your firmness on the ball might be perceived to be an attack on a person.

People who feel attacked seldom recover fully.

Our formula for creating the right environment to add conflict his is **SE = C = T = Success**

- SE = Shared Experience
- C = Window into another's Character which can be quite permanent and highly portable
- T = Trust which can be little or big based upon the significance of the shared experience

Conflict and tension are in abundance currently, and much of it is below the line and relationally destructive, we hope our observations will allow you and your team to move the tension above the line and focus on the tasks that are most important to accomplish your stated goals within the frameworks of your teams principles.

Your team needs your leadership more now than ever as we all collectively navigate this pandemic period.

Thank you for your readership and friendship,

Drew and Sara

Three Antidotes (conversations) needed to counteract the potential poisons that come with having a Talented Team

8/15/2021

The Tokyo Olympic Games were a treat to watch, the athletes commitment and energy was contagious as were the emotions pre and post competition.

We came out of the games with a question.



Why is it that the most talented team doesn't always win, and if you are in charge of a heavily favored or talented team how can you make sure you deliver on the premise of all that talent?

It appears that talented teams face their own special challenges and it's often because they don't want to focus on the fundamentals, just outcomes. Other issues get in the way as well like style and ego.

The point of many games is to get the other team to yield or quit. This starts in their mind, moves to their face, and ends up quickly in their shoulders and feet. This makes many of these contests about not just talent but about effort and grit and persistence.

Adding to the challenge the talented team will face lower competition that will not be able to compete at the same level. The accompanying win creates a false sense of security that can lead to large let downs later in the season when other talented teams who have better practice habits show up. Suddenly and predictably your team's talent is not enough.

Some coaches use their force of personality and power to counteract the talent malaise. They seek to take charge. We have noticed some more subtle choices and outline the three conversations with three types of players that you may consider in your future leadership roles.

Your Effort Leaders

Who shows up early and stays late on your team? In his deep dive into the **New Zealand All Blacks Rugby team** author James Kerr identified that the leaders swept the sheds after every practice and game. These players are often not your high scorers, but they set a tone of action and pride that becomes contagious inside the locker room. This culture keeper can be a coach's best friend in out flanking the dreaded "**lazy middle**" that can exist early in the season when conditioning and pushing the boundaries of fitness matter so much. These effort leaders are some of your most courageous people, because they want to stand for something that may go unseen by the fans or outsiders. **Make sure you take these players aside and praise them for their honor and effort, they often don't need a lot of public praise, but they will really want to know that you see it.**

Your Communication Leader

It is so hard to not just talk about Draymond Green when writing about this type of player. However it is not just the loud communicators that you need to cultivate when working to hone in on your talented team's best efforts. Finding a player who has the courage and the capacity to effectively communicate and not over communicate is difficult, but as a coach you can nurture and grow people into this role if the right player isn't on your team. We have watched Steve Kerr work magic with Steph Curry and Klay Thompson and would lay odds that in certain rooms, they are communicating important messages to the team and Draymond is listening. **Early in the season grab the players you are going to need to carry some of the communication duties and outline how and when you are looking for their help.**

Your Performance Leader

Everyone knows who can ball, play, deal and close. This is part of the problem. The player knows it, can get drunk on it, and then not have the focus to perform at their highest level late in the season when other great performers are on the opposite team. Jimmy Chitwood hits the game winner at the end of the 1986 movie "**Hoosiers**", yet early in the season the coach let's him know that the ball is the only special thing on the team. How you surround your performance leaders from the very beginning of the season can define how far the team will go at the end of the year. You will be communicating with this player or players constantly as they will be running the plays you design yet **having a cadence of communication about their role beyond just impacting the game is also crucial.**

What if I have a Michael Jordan on my hands?

Weaving these conversations together with the different players should allow you to create some bonds that can become quite strong. The ESPN documentary "**The Last Dance**" showed that in some cases, a lone figure will come along like Michael Jordan who may seek to take on all three roles, and yet players like Steve Kerr and Bill Cartwright were proven to be instrumental in building the culture that coach Phil Jackson sought to create and maintain.

Aren't These Just Captains?

These conversations, the antidotes might seem like obvious communication with what most people would call a captain. However, we didn't want to give them the label of authority on our own, your labels and roles are what matter in your cultures. Sam Walker wrote a great book by the name of *The Captain Class* where he outlines that the key to the best teams is to have great captains. On the other hand, Jack Clark gives an **excellent talk** about building culture for the Cal Rugby Team and goes to great lengths to identify that authority and leadership in a group can be different. Clark articulates that authority is tied to process and protocol, but leadership is tied to values that are honored by all on the team. Every member of that tribe should be called to lead themselves to embody those values regardless of performance in the competition.

Whether you are running a fall team or are setting up a team for next year we are curious how your conversations will go with your team as you create another unique tapestry that is this season.

Please share with us your insights and perspectives and thank you for your readership and friendship.

Avoiding a Few "Traps" in Your 2022 Plans - Four Ideas for Getting it Right

10/17/2021



The fall of 2021 has been moving quickly relative to how slowly some of the past 18 months have seemed to crawl.

Several CEO's shared with us that 2021 has had some unique outcomes on what we are calling "the normal amount of corporate change."

In short, because the organizations that you are running have been forced to make

changes tied to the pandemic, **the normal amount of opt-in changes has dropped off considerably.**

As one of them said to us: "if the roof is on fire, you don't spend much time worrying about who is cleaning the pool."

We find this observation valuable to share because it is at this time of year that leaders are gathering to set the goals for 2022 and quite often the past is used as prologue.

This could be a recipe for disaster, and we are suggesting a few ideas on how to not fall into that trap.

Step 1 – Look at the previous rate of change prior to the pandemic.

Two years ago, as you were outlining your growth strategies and allocating budgets for the coming year there was a normal rate of change in your forecast that we will call X. There could be several different categories that could help your team get to X which included customer growth, margin enhancement through cost cutting, and new customer acquisitions.

Step 2 – Look at how the Pandemic has augmented the rate of change in each category.

We have viewed the pandemic like a large landslide that has blown through a village,

destroying some of the village, isolating the two halves that remain and noticing that one part of the village is benefiting and the other is suffering. We have been involved with companies in all three parts of that village and if you are still in business this is a good time to realize that 2022 just might be very similar to 2021 and to plan accordingly.

Going back to some of our earliest writings when the pandemic broke, the key actions and habits of persistence highlighted by Admiral James Stockdale could serve you well when working with your teams. If the impact of the pandemic is going to be felt for the next 7 years, then managing the expectations of your employees and shareholders matters as we head into year three.

When you do look at the categories that get you to your X we think you might notice that some of your customers might be out of business, some of your pricing power may have increased, and importantly the total addressable market of customers looking to make a voluntary change in the next calendar year may have dropped off a cliff.

This last point is really important, you will burn through your sales team if you ask them to win more games than are being played in a given year, and unlike professional sports the number of games played in a season changes in business. If the top 10 buyers of your service aren't going out to bid next year, you need to adjust your forecast.

Step 3 – Customize your 2022 plan to keep both your upstream and downstream publics aligned.

Inside of a vacuum shareholders want an infinite return for limited investment, customers want maximum value for the minimal cost, and employees seek stability and compensation for limited effort. In the marketplace all these self-interests smash together. The planning meetings you are in right now are unique and if you are being pressured by shareholders for breakout growth make sure your data supports it in these conditions.

Step 4 – Use the context of the pandemic to enable nailing team chemistry.

The pandemic is a huge catalyst which can be used as a galvanizing force to bring people together. The best leaders are working on team chemistry now which will be the foundation for their success beyond 2022. We are just digging into how the best leaders foster environments of great chemistry and will be sharing our findings in future publications.

A former player of Bill Walsh's recently shared a quote from the famous coach. **“You can have a winning team without chemistry, but championship teams always have it, and it's never the same twice.”**

2020 & 2021 forced us all to change and looking ahead it seems we might all be alchemists at the bench mixing the right atoms to create the winning chemical bonds for 2022.

Thank you for your friendship and readership,

Drew & Sara

p.s. Not sure if this person is a chemist...but haven't we had all felt this way at some point in recent months...



Does Your Organization Have Covid Toe?

11/27/2021

It seems like Aaron Rodgers is just the gift that keeps on giving when it comes to personally motivated antics that are wrapped up inside what is supposed to be a team sport. His latest dance with ambiguity is whether he has a broken toe or Covid Toe. You can read all about the story in the **Wall Street Journal**.



We think the Covid Toe story of Aaron Rodgers is similar to a tell in a poker game. As a leader of others, do you have an equivalent tell you can listen for like Covid Toe?

Covid Toe is the body's extremely painful reaction to fighting the virus. It comes from your body making excess interferon which can turn toes reddish or even purple. It gets worse in cold climates and the best way to avoid getting Covid Toe....is wait for it....to get VACCINATED.

Yes, the irony is thick for this apparently very intelligent quarterback who continues to look more like Scrooge as he ages, especially in comparison to Tom Brady who has seven titles to Rodgers one. What type of signs or tells can you be on the lookout for in your organization? What are the signs that someone is leading an individualistic countermovement inside your team?

It takes a special type of listening and observing to notice the signs but unlocking the hidden productivity inside your people comes from creating the right situations and moments where those with low power are empowered to communicate what they see and how they feel.

Michael Useem of the Wharton School of Business wrote a book called "**The Leadership Moment**" about nine different leadership moments from recent history that make for great case studies. Himalayan explorer, **Arlene Blum**'s historic all female ascent of **Annapurna** is potentially relevant as she faced a great deal of silence from her highly competent team in the first third of their expedition. Silence did not equal compliance in that setting, and as is often the case there isn't always enough time to obtain consensus. The apparent opposing forces of command and control and consensus are a leader's challenge. Constructive and frequent dialogue are key tools to

unlock the contributions from the entire team that are needed. Blum's story is well told by Useem and the tragic loss of two of the team who sought personal glory highlights the consequences of what would be an extreme case of Covid Toe.

Collective human systems can fluctuate between group and team behaviors quickly based upon the positive benefits of being together. The parity of talent in the NFL makes the difference between winning and losing a game of inches and split seconds. Hiking the tallest mountains in the world presents life and death perils.

Thankfully most of us aren't operating in either of these situations, yet our competitive advantages may not have large **moats**, our margins may be shrinking and our employees need their jobs. You can't afford any Covid Toe moments that will disrupt your team chemistry. Managing the expectations of your base and keeping their roles dynamic increases your chances of staying in the team state where accountability to each other is paramount. Groups run slowly on norms, while teams move at the speed of trust that is collectively felt by the unit.

Are the Packers still a team that can move with the pace that is needed to succeed?

Thank you for your readership and friendship and have a great thanksgiving weekend and joyful Christmas season!

Drew & Sara