

## 9 KEY LESSONS FROM RAISE YOUR GAME

In addition to the countless stories, lessons and principles learned from basketball's top players and coaches, here are 9 quick hitters from the world's top businesses with insight into elite leadership, teamwork and culture:

*\*Alan discovered these stories while researching. These companies are in no way formally involved with this book*



On a Tuesday afternoon in 2008, Starbucks CEO Howard Schultz, closed every single one of its stores in the United States. That's over 7,000 stores. What did that cost him lost revenue? \$23M. Why did he do it? The espresso just wasn't good anymore. One of their top selling products no longer met their standard of excellence. Elite leaders know that standards are everything.



Arthur Blank, co-founder of Home Depot and owner of the Atlanta Falcons, claimed he built his business on finding holes he needed to fill. And he continued that mindset as he worked his way up. "When I first started running Home Depot," he said, "I'd camp out in the parking lot on a Saturday morning and politely stop the customers who walked out of our stores with nothing. I had to know why. Those were the people who taught us the most." Elite leaders know the value of listening.



Domino's owned the pizza delivery market for many years. But at some point along the way, they got complacent and eventually got downright sloppy. Once competitors started cutting into their market share, they asked for customer feedback. The overwhelming theme of the responses? "Your pizza sucks!" CEO J. Patrick Doyle took this feedback to heart and actually ran an advertising campaign owning it. He didn't make excuses. He didn't deflect. He took responsibility. He listened. And then he took aggressive steps to make their pizzas healthier and tastier. Since then sales have improved dramatically, surpassing their competitors again for the first time in years. Elite teams are open to feedback and make adjustments.



In the early 1980s, the rock band Metallica was on the verge of becoming huge when they kicked out their first guitarist. They held auditions and hired an unknown kid, Kirk Hammett, to become their new guitarist. The first thing Hammett did after getting the job of lead guitarist for what was about to be the biggest band in the world? He hired a guitar teacher. Elite performers never stop trying to get better. They are coachable and always looking for ways to improve.



There is a Julliard class that is exclusively about mental preparation. Julliard students—the best young musicians in the world—have a full semester class that doesn't teach music at all. The class's sole purpose is to get the students psychologically ready for the stage and the pressures of performing in front of an audience. Professors in this class even make students do calisthenics and ask them to perform pieces immediately afterwards so that they can get used to that adrenaline flowing through their bodies as they play. Elite performers and high achievers – in sports or business – know how vital purposeful preparation is to success.



Besides motivating employees to go big and think different, there's an admirable flatness to Google's structure. Senior executives at the company receive the same benefits and resources as the newly hired. The top men and women don't get their own parking spots or executive bathrooms or dining rooms. "As a leader," Bock wrote, "giving up status symbols is the most powerful message you can send that you care about what your teams have to say." If your company doles out privileges for senior management, think about why that is. What message does it send? Is it supposed to be a motivator? A status symbol? Why do certain titles merit their own bathroom and parking space and others don't? Elite cultures understand that respect, accountability and culture need to be horizontal as well as vertical.



An integral part of servanthood is empathy and understanding. A true leader needs to get out there and get a sense of his employees' and his customers' experience. David Neeleman, co-founder of JetBlue, used to fly on his airline once a week and sit in the back row. He wanted to make sure he saw what his customers saw and felt what his customers felt. Elite leaders know that you can't lead from an ivory tower... you have to lead from the trenches.



Jeff Bezos of Amazon famously coined something called the two-pizza rule: no team meeting should be bigger than two pizzas can feed. The reason? To improve communication and efficiency. Think about how large meetings can be such a time suck. How much time is spent off-topic? How many side-conversations inevitably get going? How effective can a large group actually be? Is anything ever really decided? Elite leaders know that small, intimate circles get more stuff done... quickly.