

Living the 21 Laws of Leadership

The Law of Victory Leaders find a Way for the Team to Win

*“Champions are a rare breed.
They trust God while others ask for answers.
They step forward while others pray for volunteers.
They see beyond the dangers, the risks, the obstacles, the hardships.”*

— Unknown

Application Guide

Herb Kelleher knows how to win. Kelleher is the president and CEO of Southwest Airlines, and this is the story of their ongoing victory. It is a great example of the *Law of Victory*.

Today Southwest looks like a powerhouse that has everything going for it. In the routes where it flies, it dominates the market. The company is on a steady growth curve and its stock performs extremely well. In fact, it is the only U.S. airline that has earned a profit every year since 1973. Employees love working there. Turnover is extremely low, and the company is considered to have the most productive work force in the industry. It is extremely popular with the customers, too. Southwest gets consistently great customer service ratings.

If you looked at Southwest today, you would not suspect that its start up was anything but smooth. In fact, it is a testament to the *Law of Victory* that the company even exists today. The airline was started in 1967 by Rollin King, owner of a small commuter air service in Texas; John Parker, a banker; and Herb Kelleher, an attorney. It took them years to get the first plane off the ground.

As soon as the company incorporated, Braniff, Trans Texas, and Continental Airlines all tried to put them out of business. They almost succeeded. One court battle followed another, but one man, more than any other, made the fight his own: Herb Kelleher. When their start-up capital was gone, and it looked like they were defeated, the board wanted to give up. Kelleher said, "let us go one more round with them. I will continue to represent the company in court, and I will postpone any legal fees and pay every cent of the court costs out of my own pocket." Finally when their case made it to the Texas Supreme Court, they won, and they were at last able to put their planes in the air.

One of the first things Southwest did once it got going was hire experienced airline leader Lamar Muse as the company's new CEO. He, in turn, hired the best executives available. As other airlines kept trying to put them out of business, Kelleher and Muse kept fighting — in court and in the marketplace. When they had trouble filling their planes going to and from Houston, Southwest began flying into Houston's Hobby airport which was more accessible to commuters because of its proximity to downtown. When all the major carriers moved to the newly created Dallas-Ft. Worth Airport, Southwest kept flying into the convenient Love Field. When the airline had to sell one of their four planes to survive, they figured out a way for their planes to remain on the ground not longer than an amazingly short 10 minutes between flights. That way they could maintain their routes and schedules. When they could not figure out any other way to fill their planes, they pioneered peak and off-peak pricing, giving leisure travelers a huge break in the cost of fares.

Through it all, Kelleher kept fighting and helping keep Southwest alive. In 1978, seven years after he helped put the company's first small fleet of planes into the air, he became chairman of the company. In 1982, he was made president and CEO. Today he continues to fight and find ways for the company to win. The big carriers better be watching under their wings!!

I. Assessment

The following questions will give you insight as to how well you are living the *Law of Victory*.

- A. Is your current track record successful and showing growth?
- B. Have you "assembled" the best team possible?
- C. Do you function well under pressure?
- D. After a setback, do you recover quickly and concentrate on victory?
- E. Do you share the credit and rewards with others?
- F. Do you have a written plan to achieve your objectives?
- G. Do all your key personnel know, agree upon, and take ownership of the primary objectives of your organization?
- H. What, if anything, is preventing you from achieving the next level?
- I. In your planning time, are you aggressive for growth, or protective of what you have?

II. Application

No victory is accidental. Whether you are part of a sports team, business, church or any personal endeavor, victory only comes by dedicated and strategic effort. My desire is to outline for you a "game plan for victory" that you can apply to your field of endeavor.

- A. Set your eyes and heart on nothing but _____.

I loved watching my son Joel Porter play football in High School. The coaches taught the teens at a young age to think of nothing but victory. Joel loved to watch the score, but the coaches taught him to pay attention to the game and the score would take care of itself. If you watch the score, you have already entertained the possibility of defeat.

My writer Charlie Wetzel tells a great story about his sky-diving experience. Charlie jumped from over 10,000 feet and free fell for over 5,000 feet before pulling the rip cord — his literal life-line. When Charlie left the plane, he knew there was no plan "B." The chute would either open or it would not, there was no getting back into the plane!! Charlie learned well the true meaning of the *Law of Victory* . . . when the stakes were high. That is often when

the *Law of Victory* has the greatest meaning, when the stakes are high. Southwest is fortunate to have a Herb Kelleher up to bat when their stakes are high. If it was not for his warrior instinct to take nothing less than a victory, Southwest may not have been here today.

Setting your sights on victory does not mean you are not in touch with reality. If you think it through, I believe you will agree there is no value in considering the possibility of failing. That is exactly how the late great tight-rope artist Karl Wallenda lost his life. His wife said he was concentrating on "not falling" all week. This thinking cost him his life. He normally focused on walking all the way across, and that had always brought him success.

If you are starting or growing a church, launching a business, or coaching a team, keep your heart and mind focused solely on what it takes to win. This requires knowing what a win looks like! Make sure you and your key personnel know and agree upon what the best possible victory looks like. In sports, that is easy and clear to everyone. In many profit and non-profit organizations, it is not nearly as clear. Make the picture of victory clear, and get it on paper.

B. Stand firm under _____.

Can you imagine the pressure of Southwest Airlines, as a startup company, must have endured when Braniff, Trans Texas, and Continental went after them. That is like three hawks attacking a parakeet. They did not know how much "chirp" that little bird had! Herb Kelleher and crew stood tough while facing legal battles, financial battles, and business battles, not to mention trying to fly some aircraft on time! If you cave under pressure, you forfeit the *Law of Victory*.

Sometimes, when the pressure is great, you need a relief valve, but that is different than surrender. A relief valve, may look like a "stall tactic" to buy some time. Another possibility is adjusting your strategy or re-aligning your infrastructure. Never, never take your eyes and heart off the goal — victory. The relief valve is nothing more than a temporary detour and then you are right back on track. As one good southern friend said, "Sometimes its a might easier to go around a brick wall — than through it!"

C. Be willing to make _____.

I have long lived by the principle that says pay now and play later. This applies to the *Law of Victory*. This principle is so important I have devoted an entire chapter to it called *The Law of Sacrifice*. It is still important to deal with sacrifice in this context briefly.

We, at INJOY, have been in our new office complex for just a little over a year and we are already out of room. We moved shipping and receiving off site and there still is not enough

room. Everyone's office is up for grabs in hopes of a creative re-design to create more space for our growing company. Dick Peterson is the president of INJOY, and rightfully has a wonderful and spacious office. In one of the meetings on space allocation, he volunteered to give it up if that is what it took to provide the space needed to keep growing. That makes me want to protect his office for him all the more! Dick understands the need to be willing to sacrifice if necessary. Executives who hold on to all the perks and goodies for themselves, when the company needs the resources to be distributed elsewhere, seldom realize the *Law of Victory* over the long haul.

We all know stories of executives giving up salaries, pastors living off of minimal support they raise on their own, and entrepreneurs investing all profits back into start-up businesses. They understand that you must sacrifice whatever is necessary to gain the victory.

There is nothing wrong with enjoying the "fruit of your labor," but make sure everyone else, and the organization as a whole, has what they need - first.

D. Bring the best _____ together that is possible.

Character and competency, among other qualities are obvious things you must have within your team, but they are more commonly understood and I refer to them in other laws. In this chapter I want to give you the "uncommon" short list of the kind of people to go after to create a winning team.

1. People who possess a "_____."

I know I am a generation or two older than some of the "young bucks" coming into the workforce, but it seems to me that many of them just do not want to work, let alone have a fighting spirit. They are interested in benefits, vacation and salary packages instead of what they can contribute to the organization. Do not get me wrong, there are some outstanding young people in the work force, we have several on our INJOY team. They have a passion to make a difference and work long hours to get the job done. These are the ones you are looking for! The people with a competitive edge who *like* to win, and in fact expect to win. These kinds of people, regardless of their age are never satisfied, they always have the next mountain peak in their sights. They take risks as second nature, invest their whole self, and insist on winning — but do so with integrity. They are people you can count on, and you *want* on your team!

2. People who are willing to work as part of a _____ rather than "independent contractors."

When I played basketball in high school, we called them "glory hogs." You know, the

guys who never wanted to pass the ball, even if it meant losing the game. They would rather shoot and score more points for themselves. You do not want "glory hogs" on your team. You need people who are willing to pass the ball and share the credit. People who are happy to take an "assist" if it means victory for the whole team. We all know who the "stars" are, but the *Law of Victory* says that the stars that shine brightest are those who shine along with others.

Team players who understand the *Law of Victory* do not possess an "I do not do win-dows" mindset. They do not perform only what is on their job description, but do whatever it takes, and help others on the team as often as possible.

3. People who are creative, innovative, and _____ to win.

These are the folks who see things that others miss because they intentionally look for them and refuse to settle for anything plain and mundane. The emphasis here is creativity and innovation. Even those with fighting spirit do not always achieve success without the necessary "options" thinking. Cultivate an environment for creativity and innovation so you can experience the *Law of Victory*.

- E. Keep the team _____ in their efforts.

This is an area that is challenging for many churches and businesses to accomplish. It is not about a bad attitude, but people focused on their own agendas without keeping their eyes on the big picture. This usually results in people going in opposite directions, and often times they can unknowingly work against each other. A classic example is church leadership competing with each other for the same volunteers. Instead of strategically allocating the church's most precious resource, (people), and raising up new people, they "arm-wrestle" over the same volunteers who are used over and over again. Everyone is well meaning and working hard, but not unified in their efforts.

- F. Prepare for crisis or problems _____ they arise.

Championship football teams do not wait to design plays until game time. By game time, the plays are not only designed and practiced, but memorized by the players. The coaches memorize every possible play in every imaginable scenario, down by down throughout the entire game. There are literally hundreds of play options for every game. If the team waited to prepare until just before the game, one thing is for certain, they would not experience many victories.

In my last church I had several fire-fighters. I am fascinated by the degree of preparation they invest into all kinds of possible emergencies, problems, and fires. I learned that the

majority of calls to a fire department are not fires but medical and other emergencies such as serious traffic accidents. The fire-fighters know that it is too late to learn how to put a fire out "on the job." Their training actually consists of starting real fires in buildings designed for learning. The most amazing thing is watching them practice arriving at a fire. The coordination of multiple trucks, hose hook-ups, water pressure, and team work is incredible. Mere seconds can make the difference between your house or mine burning to the ground or being saved.

The key is to anticipate problems before they arise, so your progress toward victory is not interrupted.

G. Know your competitors and never underestimate them.

Your competitors are some of your best friends! Without them it is easy to get soft, lazy and lose the edge that helped you get where you are today. Get to know them, talk with them, share ideas! Do not be paranoid about giving away the farm — you both will do better if you learn from each other. In today's global economy, victory comes with affiliation, not isolation.

H. Do not let setbacks _____ you.

All organizations experience setbacks, but losing a battle is not the same as losing the war. Stay in the game. Learn from your mistakes, and take advantage of adversity by looking for the innovative opportunities that often come from challenging situations.

The bombing of Pearl Harbor was a devastating setback for our U.S. armed forces — particularly the Navy. It was a season in history that made us once again, the strongest Navy in the world.

The Atlanta Braves will lose a game but not let it defeat them, because they understand the *Law of Victory*. They concentrate on how to be better in the next game, keeping unwaveringly focused on winning.

How about you — what was your last setback and how did you respond?

I. Celebrate your _____.

All work and no play is dull, counter-productive, and wears on morale. So, enjoy some good times together, but then get back to work!

III. Action Assignment

Set aside a block of time this month to carefully review your track record of "wins and losses." Are you focused on victory or just treading water? Write a plan for improvement that you can implement in the next 90 days. It is OK if it is a small victory! If your organization is large, or diverse, choose one specific area to focus on. The goal is a productive victory that benefits the overall vision.