

A LEADERPerfect Resource

Winning Moves

Success at Every Stage of the Game



**An Interview with
Dr. Mike Armour**

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About Dr. Mike Armour . . .

Dr. Mike is the founder and managing principal of Strategic Leadership Development International in Dallas. He has proven himself in far-ranging leadership responsibilities, including service as a Navy captain, a college president, the CIO of a national intelligence community, and the CEO of an international humanitarian organization operating in 18 nations.



He has also managed political campaigns, chaired numerous multimillion dollar fund-raising drives, founded a private school, and led several faith-based institutions.

Today Dr. Mike brings this experience together in his work as a leadership coach, management trainer, and consultant for organizations of every size, including Fortune 100 companies. He is also a podcaster, keynote speaker, and an author. Having written or co-authored eleven books, six in the field of leadership, he has been published in over two-dozen languages.

Learn more about Dr. Mike and his services at

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Winning Moves: Success at Every Stage of the Game

An Interview with Dr. Mike Armour

This interview originally appeared as a chapter in Bushido Business: The Fine Art of the Modern Professional, an anthology of in-depth conversations with top leadership experts published in 2010 by Insight Publishing.

Interviewer

Dr. Armour, as a leadership coach, what strikes you about truly successful people?

Armour

More than anything else, I'm impressed with how much they enjoy what they do. They have a passion for it. They relish it. Their measure of success is not merely the final outcome of the game. For them success is equally the joy of the game itself.

Wherever you find truly successful people, you also find this joy of the game, whether in business, in sports, in the military, in non-profits, in research, in volunteer work – in any human endeavor. It's a universal reality.

Unfortunately, I personally overlooked this reality for many years. I failed to recognize how truly important it is. As a result, I viewed success as simply a matter of setting goals and achieving them.

Today I put a different frame around success. I still talk about goals and plans and achievement, to be sure. But I also invite my clients to think of success as a game that they are playing. Then I help them tap into the joy of the game. If they can't discover joy in what they are doing, then they are probably in the wrong game.

Interviewer

Why is the joy of the game so important?

Armour

Let me answer by relating a story that I first read 40 years ago. The story took place in the mid-1950s, at an international conference of socialist writers in Eastern Europe. They met to explore ways to use their craft to advance Marxism.

For several days the conference extolled the virtues of ordinary people who gave their lives for communism. Speakers repeatedly urged the writers to celebrate such stories in their novels and drama, since (in the judgment of the speakers) only a life given for the world revolution was truly heroic.

Finally, near the end of the conference, Andre Malraux from France took the podium. Instead of a lengthy address, he simply asked a question and sat down. He said, "But comrades, what shall I say to the widow whose husband was just run over by a trolley car?"

At first glance, the significance of his question might be missed. But what he was really asking was this: Is there any value to the life of someone who dies ingloriously and for something less than a noble cause?

Now, let's take that question out of context and apply it to the topic of success. Is someone unsuccessful simply because they die short of achieving their dream? Has success eluded someone who is left paralyzed from a car wreck well before they reach the pinnacle of their professional ambition?

No, not if they enjoyed the game. The joy of the game is itself success. So long as we think of success as "out there in the fu-

ture,” achieved only when we reach our desired outcome, anything short of that outcome becomes failure. When we expand our understanding of success to include the joy of the game, we empower ourselves to enjoy a sense of success today, even if we never achieve our ultimate goal.

For some, indeed, the joy of the game will inevitably be their primary experience of success. Think of the countless people who give their lives to dreams or causes that cannot be attained in their lifetime. They will never experience their desired outcome firsthand. Yet, when we see the fulfillment and satisfaction that they derive from their effort, it’s hard to call them unsuccessful.

Interviewer

So, the joy of the game offers fulfillment and satisfaction. What else does it provide?

Armour

The joy of the game adds energy and motivation. It optimizes our creative imagination. It serves to inspire others who become caught up in our enthusiasm and passion. This energy, motivation, creativity, and inspiration then feed back into the process and serve as a catalyst for even greater achievement.

The joy of the game is especially important for leaders. They shape the emotional tone of the culture around them. When they are excited about the game, their excitement becomes contagious.

I’m not talking about “rah-rah excitement” necessarily. Many leaders are not cut out for that style of communication. But if leaders truly enjoy the game, the joy will show through in their manner, their actions, their dedication, and their words. And when joy shows through, quiet enthusiasm can be just as contagious as the more extroverted variety.

The joy of the game also helps leaders maintain resilience, the ability to bounce back quickly, whatever the setback. When things go awry, when the unthinkable occurs, people aren’t always sure how to react. They look to their leader for cues. They

watch how the leader copes with this demoralizing development. If the leader acknowledges disappointment, but rapidly puts it aside and presses on with determination, the group typically follows suit.

How, then, do leaders tap into such depth of resilience, especially at pivotal moments when survival is in the balance? From my observation, they do so most readily when they possess a deep and abiding joy of the game. The joy of the game keeps them going while they fashion new strategies to achieve their ultimate goal.

Interviewer

Through our entire conversation you've been drawing on the metaphor of success as a game. Why this metaphor?

Armour

Metaphors provide a simple structure for understanding a subject. They let us see things in a new light. In this regard, the metaphor of "success as a game" is particularly productive, whether our comparison is to an athletic game, a card game, or a game of Monopoly.

To begin with, pursuing success has all the elements of a game. It's competitive. It plays out within a framework of rules, ethics, and etiquette. It has specific measures of achievement. And like a game, it ought to be fun.

Second, pursuing success makes the same demands on you personally that a game requires. You must hone your skills constantly. You must deliver peak performance at "show time." You must approach the game with a strategy, a game plan. And you must be adaptable, ready to adjust adroitly to any unexpected turn.

Now, if we are going to think of success as a game, we need to think of it as a serious game. The pitfall in my metaphor is that it might seem to treat success frivolously. After all, in the grander scheme of things we don't take games – even professional athletics or Olympic competition – all that seriously. We may get

“worked up” about them from time to time. But life is filled with far more important things than mere games.

Still, some games are far more serious than others. For professional athletes, the game is serious business. For the Pentagon, war games are serious business. Likewise, success, even when viewed as a game, is serious business.

Because no metaphor is perfect, I’m willing to live with flaws in this one, because the game metaphor is really quite useful. Since games are so familiar to all of us, we have a sixth sense of what it takes to master a game and excel at it. As it turns out, the same elements that go into championship mastery of a game can serve as a template for creating professional success.

Interviewer

How do you define success?

Armour

To me success means achieving or exceeding desired outcomes while remaining true to core values and while finding joy in the game. If we violate core values, we may achieve the desired outcome, but the result is only achievement, not true success. Why? Because achievement at the expense of core values leaves us feeling empty. It feels like something less than genuine success. To experience the full, rich reward of success, both performance and integrity are necessary.

Similarly, when there is no joy in the game, attaining our goal brings celebration, but not necessarily fulfillment. The celebration may momentarily mask our lack of fulfillment. But celebration is no substitute for joy. Once the celebration wears off, the absence of joy creates a gnawing sense that something vital was missing from the endeavor.

Interviewer

So, what should someone do who is playing the game well, but without much joy?

Armour

That's a very common situation. Just this morning I sat with a man who is at the top of his game professionally speaking, routinely earning a seven-digit income. But he talked endlessly about the drudgery of going to work. He clearly is in the wrong game.

Before we change games, however, we should first look for ways to experience joy in the game we are already playing. I begin this process with clients by asking whether they have had joy in the game in the past. In other words, has the joy of the game simply been lost? Or has it never existed at all?

Where joy was once present, we perform a contrast analysis. How are things different now from the days when joy was present? Has the environment changed? Has the depth of challenge changed? Do current patterns of responsibility provide inadequate opportunity for the activities that once brought joy? What is different? After we thoroughly explore this line of inquiry, we then ask whether it's possible to reincorporate any of these joy-giving qualities into the game at present. Often it is.

The strategy, I should add, is not necessarily a mere return to the activities that once brought joy. Instead, it may mean finding new activities that afford a benefit – emotionally, psychologically, or motivationally – that is similar to the benefit that the former activities produced. Let me illustrate.

One executive lamented that he was too senior now to do the things that once brought him joy. "Give me an example," I asked. He related how he had found great joy in his early career by making presentations and delivering trainings to up-and-coming employees. But neither his current responsibilities nor his schedule allowed such pursuits anymore.

However, after we plumbed deeper into his past experience, we discovered that it was not presentations and trainings per se that had brought him joy. Rather, it was the "aha moment" when lights turned on in the minds of his audience. So, we started looking for ways in which he could provide "aha moments" to people in his current role. He found it by creating a mentoring group that meets twice a month over a brown-bag lunch, a

time-slot that lets him slipstream this new commitment into a hectic schedule.

Interviewer

Do you find some people who have never had joy in the game?

Armour

Oh, absolutely. I can think of people who chose an unfulfilling career path because of parental or peer pressure. Or perhaps they embarked on their career, only to discover that it is not at all what they originally imagined. Then there are people who chose the right career for themselves, but ended up in a company with a dysfunctional culture. There can be many reasons why people have never found joy in the game.

Does that mean that they should change games? Not necessarily. First, they should determine whether joy is possible in the present game. And if so, is the joy sufficiently deep to motivate them to stay in the game.

Interviewer

How would you help them find joy in the game?

Armour

There are two paths that I explore with people seeking joy in the game. Both paths are helpful, whether the quest is to recover lost joy or to discover joy for the first time.

We embark on the first path with this question:

*Looking back over your life, when have you felt most alive?
What were you doing? What were you experiencing?*

We consider that question at length, then follow with a second one:

What do you enjoy so much that, when engaged in it, you lose all track of time?

The answers to these questions help people identify activities and experiences that evoke genuine joy for them. We then look for ways to incorporate such moments into their game. We restructure their daily routine to allow more time for joy-evoking experiences.

A second path to finding joy is to integrate daily activities and responsibilities into a higher, more invigorating purpose. Let me offer an example. A former client is a mortgage banker, one of the best in the industry. He excels at making loans. What ultimately motivates him, however, is not setting new benchmarks for the number of loans he closes. Instead, he is motivated by a dream of making his community healthy and wholesome. In his view healthy communities require strong families. And strong families need affordable places to live.

Consequently, he sees himself not so much as writing loans, but as building a healthy community. How? By helping families have homes in which to thrive. With each loan his joy is renewed, because another family now has an affordable place to live. Thus, he has just made the community stronger.

To stay true to these same values, he shuns risky loans. Putting families in risky loans would violate his commitment to promote thriving families and a strong community. As a result, his balance sheet is never burdened with risky loans. When the mortgage industry collapsed in 2008 and 2009, he escaped largely unscathed. In fact, his company continued to flourish through the entire downturn because he had so few losses on his books.

Now, nothing is more seemingly mundane and materialistic than making a mortgage loan. But he has found a way to recast the mundane into a higher purpose. Serving this higher purpose then brings joy to his game. The key to this approach is tying the daily routine to a higher purpose that indeed evokes joy. If my friend did not have such a passionate desire to build a stronger community, loan-making would trigger little if any joy.

And while we are on this topic of higher purpose, let me make a side-comment. There is a special case of lost joy that is common among people at mid-career and beyond. For many of them,

joy will not be recaptured by merely re-engaging the things that once gave them joy.

The reason is simple. What brought them joy in the past may no longer have the power to do so, at least not to the extent that it did previously. As we grow older, the very essence of what gives us satisfaction and joy is subject to wholesale change. Bob Buford, the founder of Leadership Network, has detailed this life-transition in his book *Game Plan*.

We begin our career, he says, wanting to make our mark, to make an impact that brings us recognition and reward. But over time, making a mark loses its grip on many of us. It quits being a compelling motivational force. What drives us now is making a difference, making a significant contribution to the world around us, in a word, leaving a legacy. This move from making a mark to making a difference reflects sweeping change in our view of our higher purpose.

For people in this situation, it's unlikely that joy is to be recovered by simply turning again to what once made for joy. To borrow from Bob's title, they have to develop an entirely new game plan. His book and his follow-on volume *Half-Time* are excellent step-by-step guides for making this type of transition to a new game.

Interviewer

I take it, then, that you do not hesitate to recommend that people change games?

Armour

For some people changing games is the appropriate thing to do. But I never draw this conclusion hurriedly. I only move to it after we have exhausted the possibilities for discovering or recovering joy in their present game. Still, in the final analysis many people are simply in the wrong game. Whatever success they may have in the game will never be as fulfilling as they desire.

Fortunately, there has never been a time when it has been as easy to change games as it is today. It's one of the great blessings of the modern world. Changing games is rarely easy. But

changing from the wrong game to the right game is extremely rewarding.

Interviewer

Before we leave this topic, could we revisit your example of the mortgage banker? His story seems to highlight something you spoke of earlier, namely, maintaining integrity and staying true to core values as vital elements of success. Would you elaborate on this further?

Armour

Well, let's start with the title of this book this interview is to appear in: *Bushido Business*. These words themselves underscore the importance of core values. *Bushido* was the code of conduct for Japan's samurai warriors. It built on seven key virtues, identified by most authors as moral uprightness, courage, benevolence, respect, honesty, honor, and chivalry. We think of the samurai as fierce, relentless warriors. But behind their training was this sense of values that determined whether their achievements equated with true success.

Interestingly, these same virtues are celebrated universally. With the possible exception of chivalry, these core values are held up as ideals in developed cultures around the globe. And this is true as far back as written records exist. It's almost as though the human race is wired to define achievement as true success only if we play within these rules.

In addition, many societies (including the samurai) have called these qualities virtues, not values. This is a subtle, but vital distinction. If I ask you to describe your values, you will tell me what you believe in. But if someone describes your virtues, they will tell me how you behave.

Put simply, we espouse values, but we embody virtues. We can think of virtues as values held dearly enough that we translate them into habitual action. As one friend puts it, "virtues are values with legs."

That's a great description, given the root meaning of "virtue." The word comes from *virtus*, the Latin word for "strength." Vir-

tus, in turn, derives from vir, meaning “a man.” To the Romans, virtue was what made a man a man. In their judgment a man without virtue was a man without strength.

Today virtues are a rare topic in management and leadership literature. And that’s unfortunate. If nature has indeed wired us to pursue bushido-like virtues as our calling, then we can see why success, attained at the expense of core values, leaves us feeling unfulfilled and hollow.

Interviewer

Does the bushido code omit virtues that are vital for professional success?

Armour

I think so. For one thing, it doesn’t include self-discipline. In the days of the samurai, discipline was imposed on you by the very nature of a top-down feudal hierarchy. Someone was always there to tell you what to do. Today, with our modern individualism, self-discipline and self-management are essential to enduring success.

Another missing concept is humility. The omission is not surprising. Humility has rarely been respected as a virtue, with the possible exception of cultures influenced by Christianity. But even there, humility has received more lip service than genuine commitment.

In fact, cultures have generally held humility in disdain. Take the Greeks and Romans, for example. In the ancient world no one wrote more extensively about virtue and ethics than they did. Yet, nowhere do their writings even mention humility as worthy of praise. That’s because the Greeks and Romans thought of “a real man” as someone who settled scores on his own terms, as someone who took revenge on his enemies in the manner of Ulysses in *The Odyssey*. In their worldview, there was not much room for humility.

More recently, however, Jim Collins has identified humility as one of the most telling hallmarks of those highly successful CEOs whose work he chronicled in his book *Good to Great*. Be-

cause of his influence, humility is currently part of the management conversation. But thus far there seems to be much more talk about humility than genuine commitment to it as a virtue.

Interviewer

Historically, you've noted, cultures have not generally embraced humility as a virtue to be pursued. If that's the case, why do you consider it so important?

Armour

Because we live in a very complex world in which lasting success depends on our ability to build trust on a broad scale. And nothing makes it easier for people to trust us than to be known for integrity and humility.

Or to put it another way, we don't tend to trust arrogant people any more than we trust dishonest ones. Nor do we trust people who are self-centered or self-serving. Humility serves as an antidote to poisonous attitudes that unduly elevate preoccupation with self.

I deal with this at length in my book *Leadership and the Power of Trust*. There I point out that today, more so than ever, sustained success depends on continuous learning. In our fast-paced, ever more intricate marketplace, humility reminds us daily that we need to be perpetual learners. Humility never lets us assume that we know it all. Or that we are even close to knowing it all.

In addition, humility allows us to empower strong teams, because we are not threatened when others get credit for what was accomplished. And humility allows us to treat every individual as a person of genuine worth. Humility also allows us to heal wounded relationships and make amends by acknowledging our mistakes and working to rectify them. By building strong teams, treating people honorably, and keeping friendships in good repair, we maximize the number of healthy relationships which we are there to support us as we pursue success.

This is not to say that arrogant, self-serving people never succeed. They do, all the time (at least according to popular defini-

tions of success). The same is true of people who abandon their principles in pursuit of success. But as I define the word, these are examples of achievement, not genuine success.

Interviewer

Since being trusted is so important for professional success, could you say something more about that subject?

Armour

I think of trust – especially trust shown toward us as leaders or professionals – as resting on a three-legged stool. The three legs are character, competence, and concrete results. To word it more fully, people trust us professionally or in leadership capacities only to the degree that they see us demonstrate character, act with competence, and achieve concrete results. All three are essential. If any of the three legs is weak, the stool will wobble.

In *Leadership and the Power of Trust*, I define trust as “complete confidence that a person or an organization will consistently do what is right in every situation.” The phrase “do what is right” is purposefully ambiguous. It can mean doing the right thing ethically and morally (a measure of character). Or it can mean making the decisions and taking the actions that lead to proper outcomes (a measure of competence and concrete results).

Trust-building in business, professional, and leadership circles is different from trust-building in daily relationships. In purely interpersonal relationships, people are likely to trust us almost exclusively on the basis of our demonstrated character. But once we move into business or professional arenas, character must be supplemented by competence and concrete results. As professionals and business leaders, therefore, we must build all three legs of the stool with care and intentionality. Otherwise, success will be limited by inadequate depth of trust.

It’s also important to note that trust, contrary to our common expression, is not something that we earn. Trust is something that others bestow on us. Trust, like beauty, is in the eyes of the beholder. In the final analysis, I can’t make anyone trust me. What I can do, however, is to exhibit such character and effec-

tiveness that I make it easy for others to invest their trust in me.

Nor is trust fully transferable from one context to another. Whenever we make career transitions, the process of trust-building begins afresh. However competent and effective we might have been in prior roles, we must now demonstrate character and effectiveness in the new role. In effect, we have to rebuild the stool. Otherwise, the trust which we have long enjoyed easily evaporates.

As professional and executive careers move upward, from one role to next, we cross certain transition points that put character and effectiveness (not to mention trust) under severe strains. These demanding transitions stretch us so much that they magnify opportunities for performance to fail. And with that threat, they put character to the test.

I see this challenge daily as I coach men and women at these very transition points in their careers. They know that failure in these pivotal moments of transition can completely derail their advancement. In careers, as in sports, the game is often won in transition.

Interviewer

So, we are back to the metaphor of a game again. Can you elaborate on what it means to “win in transition”?

Armour

Gladly. But first let me say that the game is not won ONLY in transition. The game must be played effectively elsewhere, too. Still, experience as a leadership coach convinces me that success is most likely to flounder at vital moments of career transition. This is where the comparison to sports becomes relevant.

In athletic competition, the outcome of the game turns frequently on how well players manage certain transitions. In football it's the play of special teams or the responsiveness with which players react to an intercepted pass. In basketball and hockey, it's the transition from offense to defense. In tennis it's “going to the net” to limit the opponent's options.

Careers come to equivalent moments of transition when they cross certain thresholds of responsibility that call for expanded skills and capabilities, broader networks, or new work habits. Just as athletic teams are particularly vulnerable in moments of transitions, careers rise or fall based on effectiveness in transition.

Interviewer

What are some critical transitions in terms of leadership or professional success?

Armour

To choose an obvious example, one of the first critical transitions is the move from being a contributor to being a manager. A bit later there is a related, but greater transition from being a manager to being a manager of managers.

Staggering failure rates occur at both of these points. That's why smart companies never skimp on quality training, coaching, and developmental energy for promising employees who are navigating these two transitions. You don't want to lose solid players because they failed in the transition game.

The most critical moments of transition typically result from demands that accompany higher and higher levels of responsibility. As your scope of responsibility expands, four pivotal changes occur, each of them brimming with potential to make or break a career.

- First, as you move up the ladder of responsibility, the time-horizon for planning moves from short-term to long-term. Early in your career you contribute primarily by making decisions which impact the next 30 days or the next three months or perhaps the next year. But eventually your greatest contribution will be in terms of decisions that look out three, four, five years, or even a decade. Learning to think multi-year rather than multi-month is thus a critical transition.

- Second, because the time-horizon for planning becomes longer, there is a parallel increase in the ambiguity of the data on which you must base decisions. In detail-oriented professions, (such as accounting and engineering) or detail-focused roles (such as operations management), the early stages of a career center on decisions for which abundant data is readily available. In this setting, decisions are easily defended by appealing to the data. As the ambiguity in the critical data increases, the challenge for the aspiring leader is two-fold. First, you must learn how to make timely decisions in spite of the ambiguity. And second, you must learn to feel comfortable both with the decision itself and with defending it when the underlying data is somewhat imprecise.
- Third, related to these first two changes is the transition from being a tactical thought leader to being a strategic thought leader. I define strategic decisions as those that create sustainable strength, success, and survivability for the long run. At lower levels of management long-term strength and survivability are rarely a primary preoccupation. Thinking is more tactical than strategic. Contrast this to higher levels of leadership, where long-term survivability is always a key issue.
- Fourth, as you ascend the corporate ladder, the collateral impact of your decisions affects increasingly remote parts of the organization. During career stops on lower rungs of the ladder, your decisions rarely affect people outside of your immediate purview. By the time you become a manager of managers, however, you must learn to think through the implications of your decisions for elements of the enterprise well beyond your oversight. This reality puts a premium on developing the political savvy and political skills to bring widely divergent groups together in support of your proposals and initiatives.

Interviewer

As you have addressed these challenges, you have spoken of leadership and management somewhat interchangeably. Do you see them as basically one and the same?

Armour

No, not at all. Indeed, one of the most challenging transitions is from being a manager – perhaps an extraordinary manager – to being a good leader.

Unfortunately, corporate culture is prone to use the word “leader” rather loosely today. Too many companies have chosen to “rechristen” many of their management positions and call people in these roles “leaders.” Carefully analyzed, however, the role calls for management acumen more than leadership. We see this when we look at the metrics used to measure effectiveness in the role. We see it again when attempts at true leadership in the role are stifled by corporate hierarchy.

Increasingly, therefore, many good managers have been conditioned to think of themselves as leaders (because they have worn the title for years), even though they may not have truly functioned as leaders. When the time comes to make the transition to genuine leadership, some handle the transition with relative ease. But for others, once wired to be good managers, the transition to leadership a bit daunting.

Interviewer

How do you distinguish between “leadership” and “management”?

Armour

That’s a good question, and one that deserves an entire book. Since we don’t have that kind of space here, let me say that most people recognize the difference between management and leadership instinctually. I often deliver keynote speeches on qualities that distinguish leaders from managers. I typically ask my audience if they can sense the difference between working

for someone who is a true leader as opposed to someone who is a good manager, even a superb manager.

Inevitably, most heads in the room immediately nod. Then I ask the group to compile a list of the qualities that distinguish a leader from a manager. Their lists are always insightful and often extensive. People know the difference.

In my judgment the most fundamental distinction between leadership and management is reflected in how we use the verbs “to lead” and “to manage.” We speak of leading people and we speak of managing people. We also speak of managing budgets or inventories. But we would never speak of “leading” a budget or “leading” an inventory. That’s because leadership is uniquely a people-centered function. Management may or may not be.

Interviewer

What, then, are the implications of this distinction between “leadership” and “management” when it comes to effective career transitions?

Armour

Well, one implication is readily apparent. Individuals who are not “people people” find the transition to leadership particularly difficult. Is it impossible for them? No, not at all. But they must climb a steeper grade than those who are people-oriented by nature.

Second, the transition to leadership requires a move from being merely reactive (which often serves you well in management roles) to being proactive, which is the province of true leadership. Leadership always revolves around three questions:

- Who are my people?
- Where am I taking them?
- How am I equipping them for the journey?

Notice that all three questions are centered on people, not projects or programs. The question, “Who are my people” calls for much more than merely recognizing faces or knowing peo-

ple by name. It involves knowing your people so well that you understand what makes them tick, both individually and collectively. "Where am I taking them?" requires vision and the ability to keep your people focused on it. "How am I equipping them for the journey?" centers on the responsibility of leadership to develop bench strength and maximize the contribution of every player.

Answering these three questions also demands a proactive mind-set. People who succeed in management primarily as problem-solvers often become conditioned in the process to be reactive in their focus. Turning loose of their reactive mode and moving to a proactive stance is thus a demanding transition.

Interviewer

Since you have coached so many people through effective transitions, what do you see as keys to winning the game in transition?

Armour

At the risk of repeating myself, I believe that humility is one of the keys. When you can freely admit that you have a lot to learn and have the humility to ask others for advice and help, you optimize your opportunities to learn – and learn quickly – in your new role.

You also want to create as many feedback loops as possible and you want to create them as quickly as possible. If you are being misunderstood or have headed down the wrong path, you want to know about it sooner rather than later. You are not going to get candid feedback, however, unless people have a high degree of trust in you. So again, at the risk of repetition, trust-building is essential from the first moments of transition.

And it goes without saying that you will traverse the rough spots in transition more easily when you find real joy in the game. When someone says, "I can't believe they pay me to do this job," you know that they have tapped deeply into joy, the joy of the game. When you can say the same thing yourself, you are indeed blessed.

Above all else, maintain your self-confidence. When transitions involve marked expansions of responsibility, it's only natural to have occasional moments of self-doubt. But don't dwell on the doubt. Assume that the people who selected you knew what they were doing in choosing you. They believe that you have what it takes to play the game superbly. Now go show the world that they were right.