

# Excellence or Success

by Jon Gordon

*Success* is often measured by comparison to others. *Excellence*, on the other hand, is all about being the best we can be and maximizing our gifts, talents and abilities to perform at our highest potential.

We live in a world that loves to focus on success and loves to compare. We are all guilty of doing this. However, I believe that to be our best we must focus more on excellence and less on success. We must focus on being the best we can be and realize that our greatest competition is not someone else but ourselves.

For example, coaching legend John Wooden often wouldn't tell his players who they were playing each game. He felt that knowing the competition was irrelevant. He believed that if his team played to the best of their ability they would be happy with the outcome. In fact, John Wooden never focused on winning. He had his team focus on teamwork, mastering the fundamentals, daily improvement and the process that excellence requires. As a result he and his teams won A LOT.

A focus on excellence was also the key for golfing legend Jack Nicklaus. His secret was to play the course not the competition. He simply focused on playing the best he could play against the course he was playing. While others were competing against Jack, he was competing against the course and himself.

The same can be said for Apple's approach with the iPod, iPhone and iPad. When they created these products they didn't focus on the competition. Instead they focused on creating the best product they could create. As a result, rather than measuring themselves against others they have become the measuring stick.

We have a choice as individuals, organizations and teams. We can focus on success and spend our life looking around to see how our competition is doing, or we can look straight ahead towards the vision of greatness we have for ourselves and our teams. We can look at competition as the standard or as an indicator of our progress towards our own standards. We can chase success or we can embark on a quest for excellence and focus 100% of our energy to become our best... and let success find us.

Ironically, when our goal is excellence the outcome and byproduct is often success.