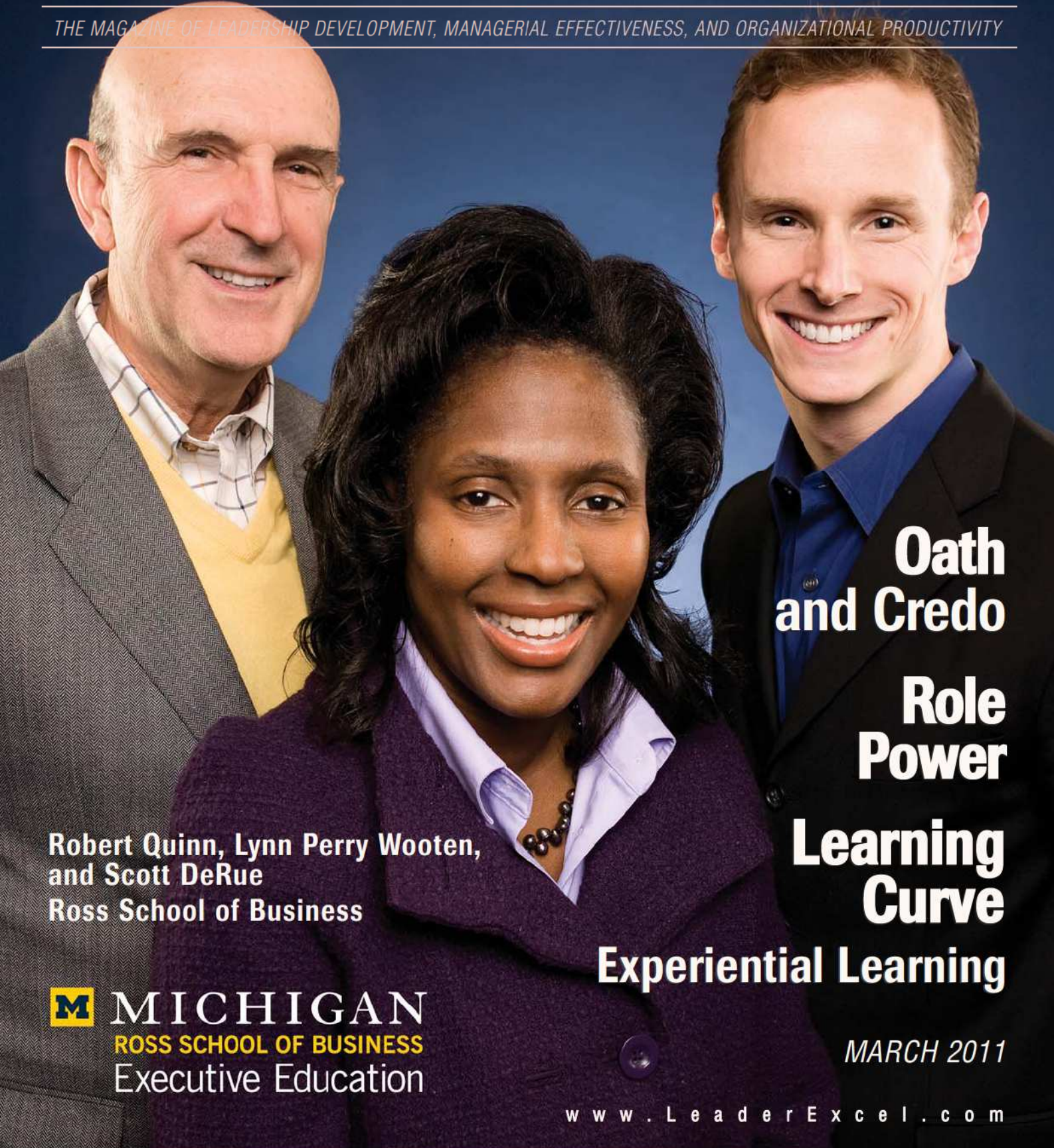


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The Chess Match

Many leaders today are powerful queens who have their own castles and followers; kings compensate with tall thrones. In style, they are either heroic—great ones who turn companies around—or engaging, bringing out the energy in people and enabling them to act heroically.

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Team Building

Learn from a great coach.



by David Parmenter

HOW MANY COACHES have coached a team that won two world championships in a row in a sport where major powers compete? Don Tricker, former coach of the New Zealand *Black Sox* softball team, is a gifted leader. His methods would take any team to glory. Here are *nine of Tricker's tips* on building a team to win:

Tip 1: Strategy. In Tricker's world, *strategy* means four things: 1. *What do we want*—what is the performance goal? 2. *Which athletes will deliver the performance goal*—what are our critical success factors? 3. *What will the athletes need to deliver the performance goal*—what do we need to do to constantly perform well? 4. *What could mess it all up*—what are the obstacles or constraints to realizing the performance goal? We can apply this simple view to the business model to make strategy clearer.

Tip 2: Leadership. Leaders who do not share power and are not open to change tend to underperform. Successful leaders want their people to say what they think. Senior players are not always leaders. Leadership needs to run through the team, and team members need to challenge the way things have been done in the past. Too often athletes are *conditioned not to think*—coaches tell them what to wear and where to be and organize their daily routines. On teams that *must function well under pressure*, members need to make daily decisions. It is thus all right to leapfrog yesterday's heroes and select young talent that has a gift for leadership.

Lesson 3: Empowerment. We need to ask: Why do we want empowerment? Surely we want a group of individuals who can coach themselves, to be the architects of what they do. This leaves the coach with the simple task of asking the right questions. A coach, therefore, is in the *self-esteem* business. A coach's tasks are to raise awareness and then transfer responsibility—with the deliverable being self-belief.

One day, his daughter came to him and said, "I suck at doing handstands. Can you teach me how to do one?" Tricker asked her to do a handstand,

and when his daughter collapsed on the floor, he said, "Okay, do another one, and tell me what part of your body feels *sucky*." After she replied, "My arms." So Tricker said, "Do another one, focusing on your arms, and tell me how *sucky* they are, with one being really *sucky* and 10 being not *sucky* at all." With his daughter concentrating on her arms, she did a much better handstand, and popped up saying her arms were "a five." "Let's do another one," said Tricker. This time, the daughter completed the handstand. "Nine and a half!" she exclaimed. Then she said, "I did it all by myself!"

It is easy as a manager/coach to refer to your own extensive knowledge and spend a lot of time talking about what you know. Instead of reverting to his days as a teenager and remembering all the techniques he used when doing a handstand, Tricker *transferred responsibility* and *raised awareness* in his daughter as to what part of her body was failing her. Using her language, he got her to concentrate on this point of weakness, with the result that she left



the room smiling with the belief that she did it herself. As a manager/leader, can you shut up enough to allow your staff to tell you what they want?

Lesson 4: Planning for a Three-Day Week. Over time, Tricker has become frustrated with coaches promising more than they can deliver. He noted that in reality you don't have five days a week to do tasks; sports is about people; and issues that emerge are typically people issues that take time to resolve. "When planning, I assume that I'll have *three days* in the week, with two days for firefighting or unplanned activity." He now plans all projects on the basis that *full-time* means *three days a week*. He finds that projects now are completed on time, and he can think more strategically.

Tip 5: Handling specialists. Celebrate specialists. Historically sports has been very good at this. Yet in business these individuals are often overloaded until they start underper-

forming and lose their credibility. Instead, with these specialists, businesses should ask, "Where are we going to get the best out of specialists—and then remove them from less important activities."

Tip 6: Integrity and honesty. Many organizations have the words *integrity* or *honesty* in their values, but these are not practiced in the culture. He asks, "When was the last time you had a challenging conversation that caused pain?"—in other words, giving a reprimand, warning, or dismissal. In high-performance sports, as in business, there are winners and losers. We thus need to be more honest with non-performers; in sports, the one thing that we cannot afford to burn is time.

Tip 7: Use critics. Tricker believes you should find your greatest critics and involve them in the planning. Critics see the world differently and may stop you from making the same mistakes you have made in the past.

Tip 8: Organize a team overnight activity at an Outdoor Adventure Center. Tricker does team-building exercises with the New Zealand Army. The military has been building teams for generations. As Tricker puts it, *there are no distractions*. "We want our players to talk to one another—to leverage off each other's knowledge and experience and to share experiences."

Tip 9: Adopt a winning coaching style. Tricker's coaching style includes these precepts: *It is not about the coach*—it is about delivering a quality service to every person; so, learn what makes your team members tick—view the world through their eyes. Keep your messages positive—emotional scarring can take a lifetime to heal. Ensure that each performance goal is owned by the team. Focus on shared leadership—be a facilitator, ensuring the right questions are asked. Team building is vital—take your team out of its comfort zone. Create a culture where no one cares who gets the credit. Be excellent at the basics—key tasks must be easy to understand and able to be performed under pressure. Clarify roles of each team member—ask them individually, "What do you want from me?" Accept mistakes and analyze the decisions that led to the mistake; both coach and player will learn something. There's no room for excuses. Have fun and make sure you celebrate success! **LE**

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ACTION: Apply these coaching tips in your team.