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Dr. Nicholas Mathys: How would you sum up your leadership philosophy?

Kevin Dunn: Balance is at the center of my philosophy, and balance rests on three prongs: home, work, community. These are the three spheres in which we all operate. Our actions and effectiveness in one sphere affect our results in the others.

I believe in "people first" – getting results by treating people with respect and dignity, and creating a work environment that taps their creativity, allows them contribute and to flourish.

I also believe that leaders set the moral and ethical tone for their organizations; leaders must have character and integrity. Character implies a recognition of the principles of personal responsibility; an understanding that our actions have consequences, an acceptance of our obligations to those whose very livelihood is dependent on our decisions. Life is all about choices; our decisions have consequences. Take responsibility; be accountable.

NM: What early life experiences most influenced your leadership philosophy?

KD: It began at home, with my mother and father, and how we seven children were raised. My parents made very clear the importance of taking personal responsibility for our decisions and our actions. Make decisions carefully and accept responsibility for the choices that you make. Everything has been built on that foundation.

Clearly, at certain key points in life, you have to be open to change. If you are awake and aware of these moments, you can change how you approach your business, your leadership style, your management philosophies. There are times when we're just more open to accepting coaching, more honest with ourselves admitting that we have to change. Many

successful CEOs point to times in their careers when they needed to adapt, either by adding competencies or just facing up to the fact that some part of their leadership style would limit further growth.Â I think we all face that at some point.Â Of course, you actually have to follow through and make the necessary changes.

NM:Â As you progressed through McDonald's, one of the great worldwide brands, what people or situations affected your philosophy?

KD:Â One of the most momentous had nothing to do with business â€“ it was when my wife and I started our family.Â I believe that the real measure of a man is his children.Â Having children was as big an event as any and it really shifted my focus to something outside myself.Â I had the responsibility of providing roots â€“ and wings â€“ for them, and I wanted to lead my family with character, to establish the roles and responsibilities that weâ€™d be accountable for to each other.Â I wanted to provide my family with strong core values, as my parents had done for me.Â That meant I had to know what I believed in, what I stood for as a husband, a father, and a man.

In business, one significant time was when I advanced from a regional role to the McDonald's corporate world and took on more of a national and global position.Â My decisions now would have a much more far-reaching, broader impact than just the immediate, or just my one region.Â Some brand decisions can have a worldwide effect, often not fully seen for three, five, seven years or more.Â There was a need to be more deliberate and thoughtful about a decision and to think through all the potential consequences for the business and â€“ very importantly â€“ for peopleâ€™s lives.

Finally, my last promotion with McDonald's to Division President reminded me of the importance of humility.Â It was very humbling to realize that decisions I made would have a tremendous impact on tens of thousands of employees, suppliers, franchisees â€“ and their families â€“ not just financially, but in their personal lives.Â My parents' lessons about personal responsibility came full-circle.

Since I founded Dunn Enterprises, Iâ€™ve been fortunate to meet very dynamic leaders in a number of different fields.Â Itâ€™s been such a rich experience.Â I continue to gravitate to people who have a set of core values that they wonâ€™t compromise.Â I respect them at their foundation.

NM: What are some of the values you admire?

KD: First integrity, to really “walk the talk.” Whatever you profess, actually live the sermon. Show what you’re made of by how you act. Leaders do make mistakes, fall down, use poor judgment. But good leaders quickly admit it, get back on track, and learn from those mistakes. Along with integrity “honesty; the ability to be honest with yourself and with those around you, to seek the truth in all situations.” These two are the core of all values and character.

I also believe that teamwork is very important. It’s a collaborative world, and there are a lot of smart, innovative people out there. Why limit yourself to just your own knowledge or talents? I seek leaders who value teamwork and inclusion in how they do things.

Another is the ability to focus “to be disciplined and organized, to finish what you begin, and not take on more than you can deliver.” I believe that successful people have that. Focus on the end; don't get distracted, just get it done. It has to do with persistence, the ability to go to work, get the job done and not look for excuses why something won’t work.

NM: You talked about having balance in one’s life “work, family, community” and giving back to each of those in some way. Why is this balance important?

KD: We make choices and we all, consciously or not, maintain a balance in our lives. We make daily, weekly, monthly decisions based on the sacrifices we are willing to make, how much time we are willing to devote to each part of our lives. I’ve found that people are the most effective when they feel a sense of completeness in all the three areas of their life.

I think it’s a matter of perspective, understanding how family, community, and work together make up who you are. This goes back to our earlier comments about not letting your job define who you are. Reach outside the corporate environment and grow and develop yourself in other ways. Your career alone won’t satisfy all of your needs, your job won’t make you a complete person “and it shouldn’t.” Some of the most creative, innovative minds in any profession are those with well-developed outside interests. Your career is a means to

achieve your life's mission.

NM: You mentioned earlier how your perspective changed when you became a father, with all its responsibilities. For many, life revolves only around themselves or their jobs. What do you say to those who believe that success means getting the car, getting the promotion, that it's all about the materialistic rewards " compared with the sort of legacy that you've been talking about?

KD: First of all, one doesn't have to have a child to become a complete human being, and there are plenty of self-centered parents out there. And there's nothing wrong with ambition, wanting to climb the corporate ladder, or wanting the good things in life. What I'm saying is that you shouldn't be defined only by your possessions, only by your position. Be sure that you're giving to life as much as you're taking from life. Be awake and aware of the signals that time give back to a world that's given you so much. There are many ways that this self-actualization or awakening can occur " for me, it was the birth of my first child " and if we're awake, we see them and grasp them. It helps us develop into a complete human being. We each have the responsibility to be contributing members of our community, serving others and giving back to a world that's given us so much.

NM: You've been quite involved in the movement to bring the teaching of character building into educational institutions.

KD: Character is essential in all leadership, not just in business. Leadership's integrity has been called into question in other parts of our community " government, religious institutions, education. Where there is weakness in character in any position of power or influence, it casts a shadow over that entire segment of our community.

I believe that it's never too early to teach the fundamentals of integrity, and that character education should be a part of our children's formal education. I am active with the Character Education Partnership in Washington, D.C. Our mission is to incorporate character lessons in the schools, to complement what is taught in the home and what happens in other parts of the community, such as churches and business. One of my roles is to explain the role that business plays, as an active partner in the community, to shape the character, values and behaviors of children K through 12. The more I see the shift that's happened in school systems across this country, the more I see a great need for the community to become actively involved in help shaping our children's value systems.

Tom Lickona, one of the leading voices in the character movement, has said, "We need to go from the three R's to five R's" reading, writing, arithmetic, respect, and responsibility. It means teaching that bullying is wrong; that it matters if you cheat or lie. It means being accountable for your performance as a student, showing respect for fellow students, for your teachers, for your school, for your community. It means getting involved and giving back to the community. All these things matter.

It's up to the adults, through our actions not our words alone, to be models of integrity and character for children – all children – and to teach them the specifics of right and wrong. A portion of my time at Dunn Enterprises is devoted to supporting Character Education Partnership and other entities, to engage the business community in this very important issue facing not just corporate America, but all of America.

NM: How would you define your role as an executive coach for CEOs – what do you bring to the table? How are you different from other consultants?

KD: Unlike most other consultants, I've actually sat in the CEO's chair. I bring a credibility founded in direct experience. It isn't something I've read about, written a book about, taken a class about, or just dreamed about. I've done it. I've had responsibility for 130,000 employees, 2,500 restaurants, nearly \$4 billion in sales and all the challenges that go with that. I understand the press of priorities, having to make a decision based on the best option open to you at the time, even if it isn't what you really want to do. I've been a CEO, I've run an organization, and it's that experience and those skills that I bring to the CEOs I'm working with. It's clear that I am speaking to them on the same level. I can be very direct. I encourage them, as I did with franchisees and regional management when I was a CEO, to be more decisive, to act more quickly, to do what they know they need to do, and to do it now.