

The Business Connector

A Quarterly Newsletter from AmSpirit™ Business Connections

Keeping Score

Winter 2008 Vol. 10 No. 4

Keeping score. It is a natural part of most any athletic competition. In fact, we would be hard pressed to find a sporting event anywhere in the world that does not have some sort of tally system to keep track of who is ahead and ... well, who is not.

Even four-year-old kids in instructional sports programs – where parents proudly proclaim “we don’t keep score” – can and will tell you their unofficial, yet highly accurate tally of any contest.

We measure football in terms of points, baseball by runs and with hockey we speak of goals. In basketball, we award victory to the teams with the most, while in golf, we declare the winner to be the one with the least, and with soccer, the triumphant team is likely to be the one with any tally at all.

The fact of the matter is that keeping score is not just part of sports, it is vital to them. Without the score, we might as well just be fooling around with a ball in the backyard. It is the score itself that tells us whether we should adhere to the planned strategy, stall for victory, or press for a comeback.

The whole notion of keeping score has made its way into our daily lives as well. In the business world there is the Dow Jones Industrial Average, housing starts and Consumer Price Index. Each of these is akin to keeping score.

Closer to home than these measures of macroeconomics, there is still the notion of keeping score. Some of us contend with sales records, others focus on production quotas, or even the number of days without injury.

Keeping score is a natural part of sports and it has become part of much of our personal and professional lives. Despite this, we should never allow any notion of keeping score to become part of our daily networking activities. That is we should not tally, track or score how much we have done for anyone in comparison to anyone else with whom we interact.

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First of all, the primary underlying theme of networking is to give without expectation. That cannot happen when we try to keep score. Attempting to tally and track *who* has done what for us relative to what *we* have done for them, simply flies in the face of the notion of “giving and expecting nothing in return.”

Even beyond this basic concept of recommended networking practices, keeping score of who does what as we interact with those around us is simply impractical. We each have hundreds of contacts and no two of those acquaintances are the same. The human brain is simply not equipped to compartmentalize and compute all the data.

Even if we could, how do we go about keeping score? How do we even begin to quantify the value of one referral, introduction or kernel of information to another? The value of some things have an immediate apparent benefit. On the other hand, for some things the

value may not manifest itself for years to come.

Furthermore, what we give in the realm of networking does not deplete us. After all, referrals, introductions and information do not take money from our pocket. For the most part, these things have no value to us. So what does it matter what we might get in return?

Even if we could quantify the tally of “who has done what,” why would we? As the exchange in any good networking relationship ebbs and flows, the score could never possibly be “all tied up.”

As a result, part of the time, we would be ahead in the count – getting more than we have given. This would likely leave us feeling a sense of guilt. The other part of the time, you would be behind – not getting as much as we have given. Then we would likely waste energy with feelings of animosity.

It is acceptable to keep score in football, basketball and track ... and any other sport we can think of. It is what elevates the activity from a mere pastime to an actual contest.

It is also acceptable to keep score within our personal lives through tracking accomplishments, focusing on quotas and striving for goals. These tallies keep us driving ahead and looking for more.

In our associations with others, however, there is no value in tallying who has done what. When we network, we need to simply do for others and simply trust that whatever we do will find its way back to us – because it almost always does. ✓

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