



**WOODEN'S WISDOM**  
*Personal Coaching and Mentoring*  
*from one of America's Greatest Teacher / Coaches*

SELF-CONTROL    ALERTNESS    INITIATIVE    INDEPENDENCE  
FRIENDSHIP    LOYALTY    COOPERATION    ENTHUSIASM

Pyramid of Success

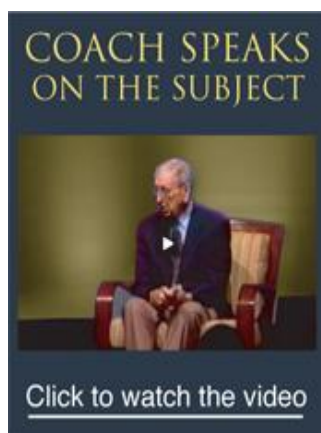
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## LOYALTY

In the Pyramid of Success, Loyalty is defined as a trait one owes: "To yourself and to all those depending upon you. Keep your self-respect."

"The third block between the cornerstones of the base of the structure is loyalty," Coach Wooden said, describing the completion of the Pyramid's foundation. "I do not see how anyone can attain true peace of mind without having something to which they must show



APPLICATION EXERCISE

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**COACH'S FAVORITE POETRY AND PROSE**

LOYALTY

*Loyalty to God or thing,  
Yield peace and self-respect, I deem.*

loyalty; someone to whom they must express loyalty at all times.”

At the center of the foundation of the Pyramid of Success, loyalty is positioned between friendship and cooperation. This is no accident. Loyalty is the glue that holds the other two together. As Coach remarked: “Once we have taken the steps towards friendship we must remain loyal to our friends lest the friendship fall apart.”

In my 30 years of teaching Coach Wooden’s Pyramid to businesses, individuals, and teams, the same question always arises when we begin to discuss the loyalty block: How can I get my employees or team members to be more loyal to the company or to me? The logic of this question is misplaced, however, because it does not take into account a fundamental truth. Loyalty can only be given, not demanded, from others. Loyalty and respect have something in common - they are both something you can only get if you give.

The definition of loyalty has three components:

“Loyalty to yourself.” This simply means that you have a set of core values that guide your behavior no matter what the circumstances are. A core value that Coach Wooden possessed was that he was a man of his word. In 1948, Coach Wooden demonstrated this in a most tangible way when he was offered a job by both Minnesota and UCLA. Preferring to stay in the Midwest, his first choice was Minnesota; however, Minnesota wasn’t quite ready to

*And when respect is shared within,  
A team could then become a “team”.*

*-Sven Nater*

*POLONIUS GIVING ADVICE  
TO SON LAERTES AS HE  
VENTURES  
OFF INTO THE WORLD:*

*Neither a borrower nor a lender be,  
For loan oft loses both itself and  
friend,  
And borrowing dulls the edge of  
husbandry.*

*This above all: to thine own self be  
true,  
And it must follow, as the night the  
day,  
Thou canst not then be false to any  
man.*

*~ William Shakespeare,  
“Hamlet,” Act I, scene III, (79 – 84)*

make a firm offer and UCLA needed an answer, so the Golden Gophers promised to call by six o'clock Sunday night with their deal so Coach could give both schools his decision. When the deadline passed and he had not heard from Minnesota, Coach Wooden accepted the Bruins' offer instead. When Minnesota finally got through later that night - a blizzard had knocked out their phone lines - Coach kindly but firmly let them know that he'd already committed to UCLA and that he would not break his word.

“Loyalty to all those depending upon you.” Coach Wooden viewed loyalty as “the force that forges individuals into a team.” The loyalty Coach demonstrated to his players was palpable. He genuinely loved them all and cared about them as people; they knew it and they knew that their coach would always stand up for them. In another example from 1948, after winning the conference championship at Indiana State, Coach Wooden and his team were invited to participate in the NAIA National Championship tournament in Kansas City. Coach refused the invitation, however, because he would not be allowed to bring Clarence Walker, an African-American player who would have been prohibited from participating solely because of his race. The following season, Indiana State won their conference again and was once more invited to the tournament. This time the NAIA relented, and Clarence was allowed to participate. A significant change for the better had been accomplished because Coach had refused to compromise the loyalty due to a hard-working and well-deserving member of his team.

“Keep your self-respect.” This is a direct result of maintaining loyalty to one’s personal values and to those with whom one interacts. “The goal is to satisfy not everyone else’s expectations, but your own,” Coach liked to say. “Be more concerned with your character than with your reputation. Character is what you really are; reputation is merely what you are perceived to be.”

Yours in coaching,

Craig Impelman

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