

Being Humble Part II

Now about the second of the two events that led to this note, the Pro Football Hall of Fame. As many of you know I reside in Canton, Ohio, home of the Pro Football Hall of Fame. Each year we have a festival that celebrates the latest round of inductees into the Hall. If you're someone who follows football you probably know one of this year's inductees is the great running back, Emmitt Smith.

Normally discussions about someone who is the NFL's all time rushing leader, someone who was the Super Bowl MVP, the NFL MVP, and someone who went on to win the Dancing With The Stars competition on TV after his retirement from football isn't someone you'd associate with being humble. But that's exactly my point. In a recent interview Emmitt commented "My father and mom did a great job reinforcing values, staying humble." Emmitt's high school football coach confirms this when he says there was "no better team player than Emmitt. If ever there's been a role model, it's him, even after all these years, with all his fortune and fame." (see Repository article 7-18-10 for exact quote.

As my two sons were growing up I had the privilege of coaching them when they played little league baseball. Part of the coaching job was getting together with the coaches from the other teams at the beginning of the season and selecting players from the group of kids who had signed up to play. In addition to the obvious skills of hitting, fielding, pitching, and running we also looked for kids who were coachable. We know that in spite of their core skill set if they weren't coachable they were never going to learn anything new, and they weren't going to be part of the team.

No less an authority on business success than Jim Collins addresses the impact being humble and inquisitive can have on a business. In his book *How The Mighty Fall* Collins relates the story about some visiting

Brazilian investors who flew to Bentonville, Arkansas to seek advice on retailing from Sam Walton. “Over the next few days, Walton barraged the Brazilians with question after question about their country, retailing in Latin America, and so on, often while standing at the kitchen sink washing and drying dishes after dinner. Finally, the Brazilians realized, Walton sought first and foremost to learn from them, not the other way around.” That’s what’s so powerful about being humble; you frequently feel you have more to learn than you have to teach.

Being humble enables you to not take yourself too seriously. It paves the way for you to ask questions about things you’re not sure of, and it allows you to be wrong about things without feeling foolish. Perhaps most importantly being humble allows those around you to be humble as well. This is particularly important when you’re the owner of the business and you’re looking for people who share that same quality.

Apparently it doesn’t matter whether you’re an NFL MVP, a little league baseball player, the CEO of the largest retailing operation in history, or a first string cleaning technician. Being humble is one personal value that’s going to give you a huge advantage in your chosen profession.