

Business

5 Leadership Lessons From Football Coaches

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If you're one of the millions of football fans in America, then this time of year is like Christmas.

It's football season! Whether you're into college football, the NFL or both, does it get *any* better than the fall?

But what if football just isn't your thing. How can you appreciate this time of year?

We're here to help. To start, some of the greatest leaders you'll ever meet are football coaches. **They know how to motivate and inspire a large group of people to work together toward the same goal.**

You might love football, or you might hate football. But either way, you can learn a lot of leadership lessons from these coaches.

Some examples:

1. Don't be afraid of change.

In the early 1970s, after a few mediocre years coaching Alabama, some people wondered if **Bear Bryant** was finished as a coach. But in 1971, Bryant put in the “wishbone” offense and led the Crimson Tide to eight SEC Championships and three national titles in a decade. Would most of us even know Bear Bryant’s name if he didn’t have the guts to make that change?

2. Teach. Don’t shout.

One of the greatest winners and leaders in NFL history is **Vince Lombardi**, legendary coach of the Green Bay Packers in the 1960s. Lombardi once said, “They call it coaching, but it is teaching. You do not just tell them [. . .] you show them the reasons.” Compare that approach with the stereotypical loud-mouthed leader who treats his team members like 4-year-olds in a daycare.

3. Prepare.

Tom Landry made the Dallas Cowboys into “America’s Team” during the 1970s. Landry was one of the first NFL coaches to hire a strength and conditioning coach. He was also the first to hire a quality control coach to study game film and look for tendencies in opponents. Now all NFL teams have specialty coaches. Landry famously said, “**The will to prepare is more important than the will to succeed.**”

4. Put a culture in place.

Whether you’re leading a team or an entire organization, it’s important to emphasize the importance of team culture. When **Bill Walsh** took over the San Francisco 49ers in 1979, the team was 2–14 during the previous season. Walsh then led the team to three Super Bowl titles during the 1980s. In his book, *The Score Takes Care of Itself*, he partially credits those victories to the cultural changes he made: “It was a way of doing things, a leadership philosophy, that has as much to do with core values, principles, and ideals as with blocking, tackling, and passing; more to do with the mental than with the physical.”

5. Stay patient.

Bobby Bowden didn’t win a college football national championship until his twenty-eighth season of coaching in 1993. Between 1987 and 2000, his Florida State teams never lost more than two games in a season. They were dominant. But what would’ve happened if Bowden had let a five-win season (1976) or a six-win season (1981) get him down? He would’ve never influenced thousands of young men and become the most successful college football coach of all time.



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