

❖ Preview

The Players are Chosen

Martha looked up as Jack approached the table where she was seated. She could tell by the look on his face that there was more to their lunch than just a welcome opportunity to meet in person. After some small talk to catch up, Jack proposed an intriguing idea: He wanted Martha, his long-time executive coach, to teach his senior management team at Stellar Point Financial how to thrive, not just survive, using the eight principles. His ultimate goal, he explained, was to integrate the principles throughout the company. But first he wanted to show his team the power of the principles in action.

“I thought it would be a good idea to pick a few high-potential individuals—people with obvious talents in their areas—who would benefit the most,” Jack explained. “Once the executive team sees what these few people gain from the program, I feel confident they will eagerly participate themselves, and then we’ll be ready to roll this out to everyone.”

Martha nodded as she listened. “It’s a little different way of going about it, nonetheless, I like the reason you’re putting it together this way. You want to enroll your executive team, not sell them. I also like the idea that these people will come from different ranks in the company.”

Jack grinned. “So you’ll do it?”

“For you, Jack?” Martha smiled back. “You bet I will!”

The program, titled *Your Survival Strategies are Killing You!*, was set for the second week of September. It would be held off-site at a small lodge on the Illinois-Wisconsin border. This beautiful, natural

setting was far enough away from the company's headquarters in downtown Chicago that the participants would have the necessary emotional and physical distance from their day-to-day lives.

When Jack Williams laid out the idea to his executive team, he could read on their faces who accepted it, who was ambivalent, and who was outright skeptical and resistant. His Senior VP of Sales was enthusiastic. He quickly identified one of his top performers, Dan Delgado, as the one he would send to the course. Although a wiz at bringing in clients, Dan's interpersonal skills within the company were sorely lacking. A real controller, he was not very popular with his direct reports, and he needed some serious leadership development.

The Senior VP of Information Technology was skeptical. She couldn't imagine how a simple course could make the difference that Jack said it would. She needed proof. If she had to send someone, then the perfect test would be Alex Madison. He was brilliant when it came to programming, which was critical for developing investment models and managing intricate databases of client accounts and returns. However, his people skills needed awakening, to say the least. Lately, a conflict with one of his direct reports had escalated to the point that it was hurting the department's morale and productivity. She chose him on the off chance that he might learn something to help him advance as a manager, but she didn't expect much.

Jack's Senior VP of Marketing wasn't sure that a three-day course could completely turn someone around—especially in her department. Her staff was comprised of creative people with high energy and high emotions. She believed that putting up with their idiosyncrasies was part of the territory, as long as their creativity wasn't stifled, and she certainly didn't want some brainwashing exercise to mess with that! Still, she trusted Jack's judgment. If he wanted to try this, then she would support him.

The CFO didn't see how the company could reap any positive

return from this. Maybe people would feel good for a few days, get in touch with their inner child or whatever the heck they did at these things, but the reality was he had a department to run. He worried that maybe Jack had forgotten that they were now a publicly traded company and that quarterly financial statements were a huge responsibility. He did not want to ship off one of his people to a kumbaya-fest in the woods.

In a few days, the participants were chosen: one each from client sales, marketing, finance, and technology. At the last minute, there was a substitution from finance. The CFO refused to let one of his managers go. The second week of September was too close to the end of the third quarter to have a key member of his staff out of the office. Instead, he was sending his executive assistant. He hated to have her go, but she was the only one he could spare for a few days. Her presence would satisfy Jack's requirement for one person from his department. Besides, he could trust her to give him the inside scoop on what went on in this course.

The course would begin with check-in on a Wednesday evening and continue through Saturday afternoon. The program materials were distributed to the participants who were purposefully told only the name of the course, the objective, and the schedule. They knew that their managers had personally recommended them, but that was all. Little did the four participants know that they were about to embark on an extraordinary three-day journey that would change their lives forever.