

Transition from Video

- We all have our heroes. Historical figures ... political leaders ... or great achievers from the worlds of science, business or even sports. We look to them for inspiration – especially in difficult times – because they point to qualities that may be within us. Qualities that can help us overcome adversity and achieve things beyond what we may suspect is possible.
- I'm confident that many of you made a connection with some of the people featured in the video, and if asked would include some of them on your own list of inspirational figures. They're many of the same ones I would offer.

The Road to Greatness

- So why are we talking about greatness?
- Obviously, the worldwide business climate over the past couple of years has been tough for everyone ... [CLIENT] included. Reversing the CV decline was, and had to be, our Number One Priority. So we made some key decisions. We turned the telescope around to focus more on our clients' needs, and we changed the way we work with them. We implemented the GPS framework, simplified the comp plan and reduced the number of accounts our AEs owned.
- As a result of these and other initiatives, we've managed to reverse the CV decline. But that's just the beginning. We've just started down the road. To achieve true greatness, we have to keep at it, and stay focused. And GPS is the strategy that will get us there.
- We're at the point where this company is really going to take off. We are poised for greatness. And all of us are in the unique position to be part of this tremendous opportunity. And all of the hard work, all of the grueling times we've been through in the past few years, will really pay off for us.

What it Takes to Get There

- So we are on the road to greatness. And that's why this is the ideal moment to look at those qualities and characteristics of some of the world's great leaders and historical figures. It's those qualities that will get us to our goal. Qualities like:
 - Being strategic, and thoughtful in what we do.
 - Sticking to a plan and remaining focused on our goal
 - Persevering through difficult times
 - Staying focused on our clients
 - And building solid relationships that count with the people who are key to building our business.

Historical Figures

- So let me talk about a few of my own heroes ... the ones I draw inspiration from ... and how they lived those qualities we seek to emulate.

- Just recently, I had the opportunity and honor to meet Mohammed Ali. Arguably the greatest heavyweight boxing champion of all time, Ali was also one of the smartest fighters to step into the ring. In 1974 in Zaire, Ali faced off against one of his toughest opponents, George Foreman, in what became known as the "Rumble in the Jungle."
- In preparing for the physically intimidating Foreman, Ali knew he couldn't out-power his opponent – so he decided to out-think him. He did his homework and prepared a strategy. One component of that strategy, the famous "Rope-a-dope" maneuver, is well-known. By leaning back against the ropes and covering up, Ali let Foreman's blows fall harmlessly (well, "harmless" is very relative in this case) to the sides of his body, until Foreman tired himself out.
- The other piece of his strategy was a move called the "right-hand lead," which is a punch that's thrown when your right shoulder is farthest from your opponent. It's not often used because the extra distance the punch has to travel across the body and to its target (your opponent's head) gives the other fighter time to anticipate it and react. It also leaves you vulnerable to a left-hand counterpunch.
- For these reasons, the right-hand lead is rarely thrown. And in the two years prior to the Rumble in the Jungle, no one had dared use it against Foreman. Ali's trainers and manager warned him against using it, but Ali would not be deterred. He felt he could surprise Foreman and he predicted he would score a knockout in the first round.
- Well, it didn't go exactly that way. It was a long, tough fight. Ali did not get his knockout in the first round, but he stuck with his strategy. Ultimately he landed 12 right-hand leads. And combined with the "rope-a-dope," Ali's strategy ultimately paid off, and he regained his title as Heavyweight Champion of the World.
- He did it by developing a strategy, sticking with that strategy and, literally, fighting his way through adversity.

Nelson Mandela

- Of course, sports isn't everything. Or at least, so I've been told. History offers countless examples of great people persevering through enormously difficult times while remaining true to their beliefs and principles. And when we look to these stories of greatness, certainly we're not saying our own struggles and goals are on the same plane as theirs. Rather, we are holding up their examples for inspiration.
- Nelson Mandela spent 27 years in prison – most of them in a spare, 4-by-8-foot cell equipped only with a couple of blankets and a bucket. He endured hardships that most of us can only begin to imagine. He was forced to labor in the limestone quarries, subjected to the brutal African sunlight that, reflected off the bright stone, ultimately damaged his vision. But he kept up the fight for equality and justice, saying, "We would fight inside as we had fought outside ... [just] on different terms."
- He could have won his release many years earlier, but Mandela refused to compromise on the principle of one-man, one-vote. His ideal of a "democratic and free society" was one he said he "hoped to live for," but if need be, was "prepared to die for."
- And of course, the struggle didn't end when he was released from prison. Building that free society upon the ruins of apartheid is a struggle that goes on even today. And that's another crucial lesson for us. We must not confuse milestones on the road to greatness with our ultimate goal.

Conclusion: One Person Can Make a Difference

- How useful is it to make comparisons to great figures of history? How likely is that there is a leader here of the stature of a Gandhi or a Mandela? Let me just say a couple of things about that.
- First, greatness often comes from the unlikeliest of places. As a youth, Winston Churchill had such an undistinguished academic record that his own father remarked that he lacked "cleverness, knowledge, and any capacity for settled work."
- Albert Einstein didn't speak until the age of three. But as a 26-year-old patent clerk, he wrote a scientific paper on special relativity that upended the laws of physics that governed the world for three centuries.
- And Lech Walesa started life as the son of a peasant farmer. He didn't become politically active until the age of 37, after he was fired from his job. He joined the strikers in the Lenin Shipyards and, through a combination of wit and charisma propelled himself into a leadership position. He transformed a labor strike into a revolutionary political force that ultimately brought a peaceful end to Communist rule in Poland.
- What it all comes down to is the power of the individual to make a difference ... the power that is within each of us to transform our surroundings, whether it's our own immediate world or the world at large. You know, those who make history are often not aware at the time of the momentous impact their actions will have. They don't set out that day to change the world – rather, they are simply following their beliefs, doing what comes natural to them.
- So as we follow this road to greatness together, I'll leave you with a final example – one that I'm sure is indelibly imprinted into everyone's memory. In 1998, Time Magazine named its 100 Most Important People of the Century, a list that includes some of the icons I've talked about today. In the category of Political Leaders, right up there with Gandhi and Churchill and Franklin Delano Roosevelt is an anonymous hero called simply, "Unknown Rebel." We know him as the young Chinese man who stood up to the tanks in Tiananmen Square in 1989.
- No one knows who he was, or whether he survived the events to come – but no one will ever forget his courage in the face of enormous odds. He stands today as an example of how, in the right circumstances, an ordinary individual can achieve extraordinary heights of greatness.
- Thank you.