

Win-Win Decisions by John C. Maxwell

College basketball fans turn their attention each spring to March Madness, otherwise known as the NCAA Tournament. It's a hoop-junkie's dream come true - four weeks of "win-or-go-home" basketball featuring the best teams in the land. But what if they didn't keep score? What if they just played for fun? It doesn't work that way in athletics, and it seldom works that way in the professional world. We set goals, we measure results and, ultimately, we win or go home depending upon how well we do against the competition.

So when we're making key decisions as leaders, it can seem counter-intuitive to filter outcomes with the question that I'm going to recommend: Is this mutually beneficial? I love competition, but every deal shouldn't end with an "I won, you lost" outcome. In fact, I'm convinced that it's possible - and profitable - to consistently make mutually beneficial decisions with the people and organizations that work with and around us.

Here's why it's worth the effort:

1. It adds value to others.

This is a personal value of mine and a value of the organizations that I lead. It requires that we start every day and every discussion and every decision-making process with objective of helping others improve. All too often, people go into a meeting or a negotiation asking, "What can I get from them? What's in it for me? How can I sneak something by them?" Wouldn't it be terrible to spend day after day driven by the tactics of manipulation? When you're done, you can say, "I won and you lost." But then what? You go back to life. You've got to go back to why we're here. And we are our brothers' keepers. That's what we're here to do. And to lighten someone else's load is a very noble cause.

2. It compounds influence, effectiveness and results.

When you come to the table with the attitude of helping and serving others, you immediately compound the influence, effectiveness and results of everyone involved, whether it's two people, a group of people or multiple organizations. We experienced this not long ago when working with the Christian Broadcasting Network. I was representing EQUIP, our non-profit ministry, at a meeting with the leaders of CBN. Because we went into the meetings looking to make mutually beneficial decisions and not just bottom line issues like funding, we discovered ways to make each other better. They needed training for their leaders, which I unconditionally agreed to provide. And their equipment, technology and experience will help us lower production costs for things like DVD's that we use for the ministry.

3. It strengthens relationships.

You've probably heard the expression; "It's lonely at the top." Well, I want to go to the top, but I have no desire to go alone. If you're alone at the top, you're probably not a leader, anyway. Who are you leading other than yourself? Leaders take people on the journey with them. They help take others to the top.

Relationships are important, and mutually beneficial decisions strengthen relationships.

When you have the heart and desire to add value to people and you long as a leader to pour into other people's lives first, then you begin to add value to them and you begin to lift them to a higher level. The benefits are compounded and relationships are strengthened. When that happens, the score really doesn't matter. Everybody wins.