

Point of View



A LEADERSHIP COMMENTARY ON LIFE TODAY BY BOB SHANK

October 11, 2010



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Dear Marketplace Friend,

I was checking into a hotel in Charlotte and arranging my 4:30am wake-up call when the widescreen in the lobby bar caught my attention.

I was 2689 driving miles (www.mapquest.com) away from Palo Alto; *why would the hotel patrons in the Eastern Time Zone be on their feet in the final seconds of the Stanford-USC football game?*

They had no horse in the race; what caught their intensity was the excitement of the conclusion. With about a minute to play, USC pulled ahead by one point; the 35-34 edge was because of a missed point-after kick earlier in the game by Stanford's Nate Whitaker. Five seconds to go, he had a chance for redemption, and he stepped up. What kind of difference could a kid from San Diego – at 5'9"/185 lbs – make, on a NCAA Division 1 football field?

Apparently, quite a bit of difference. His bulls-eye kick pushed Stanford up by 2: the scoreboard read "37-35," and the clock read "00:00." It was over. *Even the Carolinians at the Renaissance were impressed...*

Earlier this week, I was with a young friend with a high-intensity sales responsibility. I knew the question to ask, just days into October: *"how are*

you doing, going into the fourth quarter?" His life, every year, organizes around a quota that is live-or-die, in his company. Through the jumble of football games and cultural holidays, the North Star of his target number compels his performance.

Moses understood the importance of the game clock in life; he counseled the coach to revise the game plan based on the minutes left in the countdown: *"The length of our days is seventy years - or eighty, if we have the strength - yet their span is but trouble and sorrow, for they quickly pass, and we fly away... Teach us to number our days aright, that we may gain a heart of wisdom." (Psalm 90:10,12)*

Today, I'm on the faculty for a unique conference for leaders on the California coast. There are about 120 men in the room; last night, everyone introduced themselves. It happens more for me, all the time: I was one of the 12 'Fossils' in the room (*90% were likely to call me, "sir"*).

We're recruiting new participants right now for **Master's** groups across the country. It struck

me last night: *I'll be 60 when these new TMPers finish their time with us.*

What? **Bob Shank, 60?**

Here's a website for you:

<http://gosset.wharton.upenn.edu/mortality/perl/CalcForm.html>

There, you'll find a calculator that asks the questions necessary to predict the time on your game clock. My results:

Life Expectancy: 88.59 (Lower Quartile: 80.81; Median: 89.43; Upper Quartile: 97.04)

Bob Buford framed the discussion with his book, *Halftime*. I've been dealing with folks on this subject for 15 years, since *HT* was published. Let me make it personal. *How do I "number my days?"*

I'm planning for 80 years of playing time. I've got to have a "disaster plan" (*financial*) in case my decades of running and clean living have thrown me in the Upper Quartile. The realization of my Kingdom Calling will be assured by 80 (*in case I'm in the Lower Quartile*). That means...

That means that 60 is my threshold for the Fourth Quarter. I've got two decades left to do all of the scoring I plan to do. If there's any recreation left in my high-mileage body at 80, I'll grant myself some toys when I shift into Overtime (80+). *Is that too late to learn to play?*

If you're convinced you're going to coast, you take the first team off the field at the end of the Third Quarter and put in the rookies. If you don't know what it will take to win, you leave the A-List in the game and play 'em 'til they drop. That's my strategy: first team Bob, on the field... for the duration.

Sorry, Cheri. Cancel the bus tours. We're not available. ***I want to kick that field goal with five seconds left on the clock...***

Bob Shank

Bob Shank is Founder and Chief Mentoring Officer of The Master's Program (TMP).

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