



## Cathy Alfandre's E-Letter

*Create greater joy and fulfillment in your working life.*

May 2009

### **Greetings!**

"Baseball is 90% mental; the other half is physical."

-- Yogi Berra

### ***The Athlete's Mind***

Sports are prominently featured in my life these days. I'm watching a lot of spring baseball every week -- both Major League and Little League -- and I'm very much enjoying the NBA playoffs. Most of the time I just sit back and appreciate the competition, great plays, last-second shots, etc. But I also find myself thinking often about the mindset of those athletes, especially the professional ones, and what makes it so special. It seems to me that those of us doing less physical work (mostly toiling out of the spotlight of national television!) and those of us who are looking for work could learn much from them. Here are some of their characteristics that I notice.

**Focusing on the task at hand.** Man, these guys are concentrating! They know their goal, and they focus intensely on the offensive and defensive roles they must play to achieve it. I'm sure there are occasional exceptions, but they seldom if ever appear to be thinking of anything other than what they need to be doing right now. Just think of what you and I could accomplish -- at work or on the job search -- if we gave each task all our attention and energy!

**Always trying to improve.** Athletes don't settle for good enough; they don't rest on their previous accomplishments. They are continually working on fixing the parts of their game that are weakest; they're also honing the things they do well and notching them up to the next level. In other lines of work, I think many of us get into a comfort zone -- a place where we feel we know what we're doing and we feel secure. Or in the job hunt, we get into relatively comfortable habits. It's understandable to want to rest there, but when we push the boundaries, we expand the possibilities for creativity, opportunity, and greater success.

**Taking chances.** Along similar lines, I often see athletes taking risks -- trying to steal the ball or a base, diving for a catch, taking a charge.... Sometimes they fail, big time. And sometimes the risk pays off, big time. The thing is, they gamble once in a while -- and if they fail, they don't take it too hard (personally), and they learn what they can for the next time. I think this is an especially important notion for job seekers to consider.

**Asking for and giving help.** It appears to me that the best athletes ask for help from the coaches and other players in every game. And they are giving help and advice to their teammates as well. They back each other up in the field, give pointers on the sidelines or on the mound, alert their teammates to potential problems, and cheer up low spirits. Imagine how this would translate to day-to-day

work and job search!

**Shaking off the past.** In my view, the most extraordinary characteristic of the athlete is the ability to let go of past mistakes and move on. A pitcher throws a bad pitch, resulting in a big home run for the other team! Argh! And then he sets up again, ready to throw the next strike. A basketball player misses 7 shots in a row -- he just can't sink one tonight! But he tries again and hits his next 3 shots. Sometimes the past mistakes get in their heads. But more often than not, they realize that they can't change what's already happened; the only moment they have is this one, and they do something with it. It's truly inspirational to me, and I believe we could all learn from these guys.

I'd love to hear from you (sports-lovers and non-sports-lovers alike) if you have other thoughts about the connections between sports and careers.

All the best --

Cathy

### ***JobAngels***

Here's an interesting new development in the career/job search world: a grassroots movement called JobAngels. It began in January when an HR consultant, Mark Stelzner, suggested that each of his followers on Twitter help just one person find a job.

From there, this all-volunteer effort has taken off. As of early April, JobAngels had more than 6,200 followers on Twitter, including those looking for a job and those helping them find one. JobAngels also has a presence on Facebook and LinkedIn.

To me, it's a wonderful example of people stepping up to help others, even perfect strangers. Check out this Workforce Management article to read more:  
<http://www.workforce.com/section/00/article/26/41/05.php>

This bi-monthly e-letter is intended to offer ideas, tips, resources, and questions to ponder on careers, fulfilling work, and career-life decisions. I welcome your reactions and your suggestions for future topics.

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email: [cathy@cathyalfandre.com](mailto:cathy@cathyalfandre.com)

phone: 203-445-7906

web: <http://www.cathyalandre.com>