

Breakthrough - Championship Living in a Computer Age

Training Camp – Presentation 11

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Dr. Byrne was the featured Keynote Speaker at Bio'76, the combined annual meeting of the Association of Biomedical Communications Directors (ABCD), the Association of Medical Illustrators (AMI), the Biological Photographic Association (BPA), and the Health Science Communications Association (HeSCA). His 1976 Keynote presentation was powerful, and was filled with his technical insight, personal reflection, and comedic wit.

In 1985, Dr. Byrne produced a cassette series of twelve professional lectures, which defined what he called, "Breakthrough." The concepts presented in his Breakthrough series are universal and are applicable today.

The following article is the eleventh presentation from this "Breakthrough" series. It has been transcribed from a cassette series produced by Richard Byrne in 1985. Some of the content has been edited from the original transcription text in order to provide clarity or context to the reader.

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Dr. Richard Byrne

Training Camp

Have you ever been part of a championship season? There is nothing like it. You don't have to be on the team, but have you ever signed up? Frequently, when a football team in the pros has been losing and begins to win, and people look around at the local bar, on the bus, or at work and they say, "The team won! What happened there? I don't know." Then the next week you say, "Hey, the team won again! I can't believe that! Why, that team won twice, that's amazing!" Then the tempo begins to build. It only takes one or two wins. After the third win, people start meeting at lunch. "Was that outrageous! Did you see that third quarter? That was really great because the team won!" There's this contagion, this disease called 'Championship Fever,' and it absolutely takes over the city. People who have never even watched the team go buy bumper stickers. They buy stadium blankets, even though they don't go to the game. They buy a lunch box with the team's logo on it. I mean it's crazy, it's crazy. It's wildfire.

It's what I call the 'Sweet spot in time.' You know when you swing the tennis racket or you swing the golf club, once in a while you hit it just right, I mean, pop! The sweet spot. Well, I think in human relationships, frequently, there's a sweet spot in working together. It's just when things are right. There's an alignment and they're champs first. Did you know that the players become champs before it's announced? You can tell halfway through the season that these guys are going to go the route. Guess what? They decided to be champions. They've always been the, "also rans," and this year they've decided to be champions. So, in the third quarter, they're behind by 20 points, but in the stands, they're saying, "This is going to be so great, because they're going to win and they're going to win by 21 points!" How are they going to do that? Once again, the bad news is the good news. They're absolutely sure they're going to win,

because they're champions. That's what champions do, champions win.

Once a team decides to be champions, once they choose to be champions, there's a strange thing that happens; that is, they become peaceful and calm. There's a grace. There's sort of an ease about their excellence. They're not working very hard. Have you ever noticed that? If you watch the great swimmers of the world, it looks easy. They seem to just say, "Oh, what? Swim down there and back? Okay," and they just swim down there and back, just as economical as they can be. They're not struggling, they're not fighting, they're just swimming.

I'll never forget a great basketball player, who had just lost the NBA Championship to the Los Angeles Lakers; this player was being interviewed on the radio. The interviewer asked, "Hey, how come the Lakers killed you tonight?" which I thought was a pretty bad question to ask a guy 20 seconds after a loss, particularly since he was seven feet tall! He responded, "Well, see, what happened is they were just playing around, and when a team is just playing around, you can't touch them." What he meant was that the Lakers played with grace and ease. It was sort of like a pickup game in a sandlot. The Lakers were relaxed, they were at ease, they weren't struggling, they weren't fighting it. Furthermore, they could see that every play could be the big play. It's not just one play, but every play can be turned into a game winner. We all need to live that way. We need to have championship lives. We need to see that just because you have a problem, fine, but it's an opportunity that can be the beginning of the great play. In football, that can be the long ball thrown from a team's own 35 yard line, resulting in a 65 yard gain and touchdown that wins the championship. All you need is one play to win it.

How do you learn to live like a champion? How do you do that? I think this is reasonable. I think this is real. I don't think this is phony. I think you know people in your own life who live like champions. Everything they do. My mom is a champion biscuit baker. She just throws in the flour and whatever else – I don't even know what's in it – stirs it up, sticks it in there, and biscuits come out, about a foot and a half high, hot and steaming. She is a champion at that. You know people who are champions at taking care of their garden, taking care of their children, doing the best at whatever their job is.

One thing I think you need to know is that champions train all the time. Champions don't just show up for the game and win, they actually train. They go to training camp. They actually go away and they get trained. Now, I think you should probably go away once in a while. Whether or not you leave, say, for two days, that's one way to do it, or whether you train from 8:30 to 9:00 each morning, or train one day each week, you need to train yourself. I'm telling you, too many people who are adults have stopped learning. They say, "Well, school, I went to school, I finished school in 1947 and I haven't been to school since then." Ground school for pilots, they have to go ever year. If you're a pilot in a commercial airline, you have to go to school. That's part of your job. If you're going on a mountain climbing expedition, you have to go to a mountain climbing school and prepare yourself for the assault. You need that tune up. You need to learn regularly.

The key is, it starts with you. Championship living is not about the corporation, it's not about the computer, it's not about, "Well, I have the wrong software, you don't understand, I had bad advice, the consultant said..." – no, no. All fake. It starts with you. You have to assume personal responsibility for the outcome of the affair. It's your job. You have to develop the discipline.

Do you have a coach? Do you have a coach that will blow a whistle or referees? We'd all live better lives if we had referees. Have you even seen a referee blow the whistle; offside, five yards. "Bill did it! Bill! This dope over here did it!" Suppose a referee suddenly appeared alongside our desk at the office. He's in black and white, he blows the whistle really hard while a TV camera points at him and he says, "Richard Byrne, procrastination, 15 yards!" If we suddenly realized, holy smoke, the world just saw that! 15 yards for procrastination! I'm going to have to move a little quicker here! Or, "Here it is, Alvin Farkle, disorganization, ten yards!" You see, if we had that kind of accountability, that visibility, we would all shape up. We have to think of ourselves as champions.

In a game, there are rules. There are rules of the game. You know the rules of your own game, don't you? You really do. You know the rules, what you're supposed to do, what you're not supposed to do, except we're always pushing, always testing. Maybe I could get away with it. For instance, do you want to be arrested at 55 miles an hour? You're driving 55, do you want to be arrested at

56? No? Okay, how about 60? Do you want to be arrested at 60? No, probably not. How about 65? Do you want to be arrested at 65? Boy, you're really pushing it here! How about 70? Do you want to be arrested at 70? Do you see what I'm saying? You don't want to be arrested at all, at any speed. You don't want the rules to work for you. Now, you're driving around at 60 miles an hour and somebody passes you and you don't like the way they did it. They passed too fast or too close or too something and suddenly you think, "Hey, referee, get this guy!" You want the rules to catch the other people, but you don't want the rules to catch you. That's not how the game is played. The rules have to catch you as well. Once you respect and understand the rules, then you can live like a champion.

Have you ever played tennis on a public court before the net was put up? Some of you are members of a country club, but I used to play at a public court and I lived where it snowed. During snow, we didn't play tennis. Then the snow would melt and I would go to the court and there would be no net. We'd say, "Well, let's knock a few balls around," and so you knock it, but it really goes where the net would be, but there isn't a net so you return it. Since the rules are sloppy, you get sloppy and within about three minutes, both of you are knocking the ball with both hands and throwing it over the field house and so forth. The rules are how we're able to play the game. We have to know the rules and honor them.

An important point that really establishes the premise for the closing side of this series is that champions are developed as balanced beings. Champions are balanced beings. Think about it for a minute. You go to training camp and one of the things they have you do is work out physically. You lift weights, and you do wind sprints so that you have a sound body. Without a sound body, you can't play the game, but that's not enough. There are also skull sessions with a blackboard where they teach you the plays from a big fat playbook that you have to memorize. You have to develop your mind as well. It's mind and body and you have to work on both of them every day.

Not only that, you have to respect and honor the other players on the team. You have to be a team. You have to be friends. You have to have social relations that work. You can't be champions and have the defensive team hating the offensive team and sticking up nasty pictures of the quarterback in the locker room. You can play the game, but you can't be champions. You have to believe in

one another. When they have rookie night and the rookies dress up and look ridiculous and the pros laugh and it's a matter of bonding. You want to be friends. You want that team to matter more than the game you're playing.

Finally, there has to be a spiritual development. You really have to have some kind of taproot. If you think you're going to get through all the kind of changes we're going through, based on your skill with a microcomputer, that's probably a pretty limited view. There used to be a time when we all lived in a hometown. I don't know if you remember that. Maybe some of you still do, if you're lucky. I used to live in a hometown and everybody knew everybody. You remember the telephone numbers of all the people you went to grade school with, because they all still lived in the same house. You had been a member of a church, a synagogue, or whatever, and you still had that support, that taproot, but increasingly, the computer age is changing that. I've already told you several times that I travel all the time. I carry a personal computer, I do electronic mail, I'm very mobile. That's good news and bad news. The good news is I have freedom, I have flexibility, I have power, I have influence. The bad news is I'm always moving. I'm kind of like a water bug dancing on the surface of the pond. I don't have the taproot I used to have of knowing my neighbors, and you need a taproot. I believe that that taproot really needs to be spiritual, rather than social or physical or mental.

This is why in a training camp, people develop the balanced being. I think that's what you're going to need to do. I think you're going to need to learn something regularly. I think you're going to need to be physically equipped to deal with the problems you face. I think you're going to have to have a social relationship that is more powerful than the technological changes. Finally, I think you're going to need a spiritual taproot in an era of unprecedented change.

In the last part of this series, I'm going to give you the best advice I have. These will be my tips for you on championship living.

References

Byrne, R. *Breakthrough - Championship Living in a Computer Age* (Audio Cassette Series), Springboard! 1985. (*This cassette series is no longer available*)

About the Author

Richard Byrne was a former professor and dean at USC's Annenberg School of Communications. He was known for making computers less intimidating for all of us. In 1982 Dr. Byrne founded one of the first consulting firms of its kind, called Springboard! His company was devoted to acquainting executives with high technology. As president, Dr. Byrne traveled as far as Europe and Thailand presenting as many as 200 lectures a year. He enlivened complex computer terminology with humorous wit and common-sense explanations. Dr. Byrne, who had previously taught at the University of Wisconsin and the University of Texas, left his position as a full-time professor at USC in 1984 to devote himself to an increasingly lucrative lecturing career.

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