

[Slam-Dunk People Strategies with ESPN's Steve Lavin](#)

by [Elaine Rigoli](#)

The locker room is not the boardroom, and the basketball court is not the corporate talent acquisition department.

So as ESPN analyst Steve Lavin warmed up the crowd at Expo on Thursday morning, it was unclear how his theories on people management — on really building a solid team — were applicable to his audience.

Lavin started the game slowly, but as he shared his passion and outlook on choosing the right people, his passion became palpable. He's not talking ATS, he's not talking ROI, and he's certainly not talking time-to-fill metrics.

But what Lavin knows – and knows well – is sticking to a core belief system and applying motivating tips to help you create your own winning, successful teams. Here are traits of winning people for a winning team:

- **Eternal learners.** Pick candidates who have the following traits: an appetite for knowledge; a natural curiosity ("If you're not naturally curious, practice it and raise your level of consciousness; listening is a skill!"); a thirst for finding a better way; and avid readers.
- **Passion.** Pick candidates with enthusiasm, zest, and zeal. He quotes Ralph Waldo Emerson on soul: "When it breathes through intellect, it is genius; when it breathes through will, it is virtue. When it flows through affection, it is love."
- **Bounce back.** People who achieve at the highest level have resiliency. Find applicants who can overcome any obstacle.
- **Mentors.** Lavin had a dream to coach college basketball, so he put pen to paper and wrote to "the Jeffersons, Franklins, Lincolns – the founding fathers of basketball. There is something about receiving the snail-mail letter with a nice stamp. I have every letter I have received from John Wooden over the years!" As you refine your thinking, writing, and speaking, he suggests it will improve the effectiveness in your vision and getting others to buy into that vision.
- **Physical.** At some point, he says, start on that path of good health, even if it's incremental and 10 minutes a day, then 20 minutes. "Physical health will impact everything else. The physical has to be there!" he says. Encourage this in yourself and in your team.
- **Gratitude.** Give thanks every day of the week, he advises. "If you have gratitude, you have grace and perspective. Humor and humility also come out of grace," he adds.