

THE POWER OF DISTRACTIONS

Dr. Rick Bommelje

Robert Henry is a criminal defense lawyer working on what could be his biggest case ever. He has a son, Scott Henry, who is the star quarter back for the local high school team. Last week, Scott came home from school and found his father home and decided to talk to him about some of the topics that have surfaced within his group of football friends. Recently a couple of the boys have been talking about taking steroids to help them perform better during the last few games of the season. Scott was uneasy about taking the drug and wanted to find out more information on the effects. Robert, like Scott, was the star quarter back for his high school team. Scott felt for sure his father can give him insight on how to deal with this dilemma.

“Dad, do you have a moment,” asked Scott.

“Sure, son what’s going on?”

“Did you ever take anything to help you perform better during your games?”

As the phone rings Robert replies, “No son, us Henry’s are natural performers.” He points to his son as to hold on a minute and answers the phone. On the other line his secretary tells him that he lost his star witness because the witness no longer wants to testify.

“Son, we are going to have to finish this conversation later. I just lost my star witness and I need to do something to get him back.” He picks up his keys, brief case, and blackberry and walks out the door.

Disappointed, as usual, Scott replies, “Okay dad, we will pick this up later.” As his father walked out the door he was still confused about what to do.

During the Friday night football game, Robert is in his office working as usual, and suddenly remembers the conversation he did not have with his son. ‘Why would Scott ask me that question? He would not be considering taking any drugs, would he?’ he thinks to himself as his cell phone rings. His wife is on the other line crying hysterically. “Scott has clapsed on the field. They don’t know what’s wrong with him. He won’t get up. Honey, you need to go to the hospital quick.”

When he gets to the hospital he finds out that Scott had taken steroids and that his body had a negative reaction to the drug. However, the doctors are confident that he will be okay. Robert sits back on the waiting room chair and thinks about the conversation he Scott tried to have with him. How could he forget to get back to him? How could he let his work distract him from his family?

Robert has experienced the devastating power of distractions. Distractions are all around us and as listening leaders we need to understand the devastating impact distractions have

on everyone's life. The call from his secretary diverted Robert from an important conversation that he needed to have with his son. He now understands the importance of listening and minimizing distractions. For the future he has committed to deal with distractions and understand the sources that take him away from what is really important to him. Lastly, he has committed to create and implement a plan to reduce, eliminate, avoid, or listen beyond any distractions. This may be asking his firm not to call him after certain hours or committing to spend more time listening to his family and their needs from him.

Fortunately, for Robert, his son will be okay. However he has learned a valuable listening lesson. Distractions are everywhere and waiting to capture our attention but we all have the power to reduce, eliminate, or listen beyond them and deal with the real issues that matter to us.