

Summary of Chartwell's Breakfast Discussion, No. 40

“Andrew Strauss on Leadership”

*A discussion held at the Royal Automobile Club with Andrew Strauss, former England Test and One Day International cricket captain.
Wednesday 6 February 2013*

1. You only get one chance to make a first impression – use it.

When Andrew became England captain in 2009, the dressing room was distracted by tensions and division, which had helped produce a string of poor performances. The pressure on Andrew to perform strongly at his first press conference was therefore intense, but at the same time he recognised the media interest gave him a valuable opportunity to signal that this was a fresh start, and that the culture of the team was about to change.

2. Don't let negativity get hold of your team. Keep everyone moving forwards.

One of the first things Andrew did as captain was to bring the team together in a closed session in which team members were encouraged to air their feelings and problems openly and honestly. Andrew insisted that nothing was 'left in the locker'. As a result, a lot of negative baggage was dumped, and the team was able to make a clean break and move forward.

3. The team comes first.

Andrew set out to create an environment in which the team was the focus. Star players were encouraged to shine, but not at the expense of the group.

Rather than impose this new culture from above, Andrew asked the England players to draw up a 'charter of principles' that would define the team's ethos and govern its behaviour. This gave players the chance to create their own culture, and to feel that they owned it.

Andrew was concerned that media interest and speculation was distracting the team from going about its business. He wanted the players to focus on those things they could control, such as individual performances and cohesiveness of the group. He banned newspapers from the dressing room.

4. Empower individuals to take the initiative.

Andrew worried that players were getting too much advice from their coaches and support staff, and were therefore feeling over-loaded and not taking enough responsibility. He therefore encouraged players to see coaches and support staff as consultants, whose advice and support should be sought selectively.

“If you want your team members to think for themselves ‘on the pitch’, you have to let them think for themselves off it.”

5. Be prepared to delegate.

In test cricket, as in business, there are times when leaders can be overwhelmed by the pressure of situations and the sheer number of factors they have to take into account. Good leaders have the confidence to delegate key tasks to trusted team members. This leaves them free to see the big picture, and stay ‘ahead of the game’.

6. Sell your decision with confidence and conviction.

Sometimes you just cannot be sure you’ve made the right decision. But if you communicate it clearly and with confidence, your team is likely to buy into it and as a result you are more likely to get the positive result you are looking for.

7. Don’t shy away from tough situations.

If you are not prepared to step up and face tough situations, you cannot expect others to perform for you under pressure.

In cricketing terms, if a player is going to be left out of the team, be sure you are the one who tells them. Leaving a player out of the side may be a routine call for you, but it could feel like a career-threatening development for them.

Your empathy will gain trust and respect.

8. Ultimately, success comes down to the team.

A good leader engages with his or her team and gets the best out of each individual. That way the team will be successful, and you will be seen as a successful leader. Simple!

To book Andrew, or to find out more about Chartwell’s services in London and around the world, please call me on 0044 (0) 207 792 8000 or email me at leovbq@chartwellpartners.co.uk.



LEO VON BÜLOW-QUIRK
Global Head of Research
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