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# Book Review: *The One-Day Contract* by Rick Pitino<sup>1</sup>

Review by Brian Pauley

As a Louisville basketball fan, I eagerly anticipated the release of this book last October, especially with Rick Pitino's team having won the NCAA men's basketball championship six months prior. What made this book especially interesting was that it was begun before the championship run and was completed afterwards. Thus, Pitino was able to incorporate that experience.

Whether or not you are a basketball fan, this book contains great personal development information that can help us all become more successful in our life's pursuits. In this review, I will focus on four key areas that readers should find particularly useful:

- Humility
- Focus
- The Power of a (Realistic) Positive Mindset
- The One-Day Contract.

## HUMILITY

In our leadership and personal development journey, it is easy to overlook the importance of humility to our ultimate success. Pitino provides a solid argument. He speaks from experience as he's learned some hard lessons in his own life, some even recently. As developing leaders, we would be wise to walk around with a perspective on humility. Ken Blanchard says, "*Humility does not mean you think less of yourself. It means you think of yourself less.*"

Here are some key lessons from this section of the book:

- Humility is learned sooner or later. It is best to learn it on your own before life forces it on you as "life can be a painful teacher." [Think of all the celebrity falls from grace in recent years.]
- Humility is required for *sustained* success. Those who lack it or lose it ultimately face major stumbling blocks in life.

- Humble people share their successes generously with others. They graciously learn from their failures, using them to teach others.

## FOCUS

Do you sometimes find it challenging to focus? I think we all do. It is important to recognize when we lose focus and to have a mechanism in place to get us back on track. Pitino teaches that we must maintain focus to be successful, whether on the basketball court or in business. Why is this so important? According to Pitino, it is the reason for many of our failures today. He states, "*So many people are failing today because they are in season but living as if it is the offseason. They are failing because they cannot maintain focus.*"

Here are some of the key lessons from this section of the book:

- Performance is your biggest ally against adversity. Focus is your biggest weapon in achieving that performance.
- Focus is an intentional activity. You must plan for it and learn to achieve it.
- To maintain focus, be sure to take breaks, particularly when you are not "in season."

## THE POWER OF A (REALISTIC) POSITIVE MINDSET

We are all familiar with the phrase "positive thinking." And, most of us would agree that it is an important component of success. But, Pitino has an interesting perspective on the concept. He describes "positive thinking" as lacking. Instead, we should focus on having a "positive mindset." He describes this as "*a positive approach based on confidence in one's ability developed through preparation.*" The key word here is *preparation*, which he says is the fuel that gives a positive mindset its power.

You have to be realistic as well. For example, no level of preparation and positive thinking is going to make me an NBA All-Star. That's unrealistic.



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**Imagine if at the end  
of each workday,  
your supervisor  
could decide to  
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Thus, the secret sauce for a positive mindset is realistic *plus* preparation.

Pitino offers these key ingredients for having a (realistic) positive mindset:

- Meticulously plan.
- Understand how to attack your competition (basketball and business!).
- Never give in to mental or physical fatigue.

### THE ONE-DAY CONTRACT

I will end this book review with an overview of what Pitino calls a one-day contract. Here is the essence of it: Imagine if at the end of each workday, your supervisor could decide to either keep you or let you go. You are on a one-day contract every day. Would this change your approach to each day? Pitino argues that it would alter your day drastically. This is how he now approaches each day.

By following the one-day contract, you:

- Have a plan of attack to accomplish what you need to each and every day, which minimizes procrastination.
- Focus on living and working in the present.
- Are required to be bold and aggressive, instead of living in fear.
- End each day feeling good about your preparation and the effort you gave. ●

#### ENDNOTE

<sup>1</sup> St. Martin's Press, 2013, 272 pages.