

In order for me to properly tell you this story, I have to give you some behind the scenes information. To start with, every other week when I sit down to write, my deadline is the Thursday morning before the Tuesday printing of the paper. My time to write is almost always Wednesday nights, then I edit my writing over a bowl of cereal and submit to the paper before I head to work on Thursday morning. When my parents read this, they will probably flash back to my school days in trying to submit my homework on time.

By the time you read this, the final outcome will be known. That final outcome is the result of the Iowa High School Athletic Association state boys' basketball tournament. While the other classes certainly play good basketball, the class I am most interested in is the large schools, class 4A. My interest is personal because son Ted has the privilege to play on the Ankeny team, and I have gotten to know a lot of the parents of the other players. Because I write this on Wednesday night, the only thing I know is that Ankeny did with their quarter-final game, qualifying them to play twice more at Wells Fargo Arena.

We all know that all moms are special, but I believe basketball moms are on a different level. Wednesday morning before that first game, a group of moms took time out of their day to decorate the bus that took the team to the game. This is where I enter the picture. My wife thought it would be a nice idea to place inspirational quotes throughout the bus. My job was to find the quotes, enter them on the computer and print them out using appropriate, but different fonts. She did make it a little bit easier because she presented me with a t-shirt that Ted got last year for the state tournament. The back of the shirt had several very usable quotes.

It didn't take me very long to type the quotes off of the shirt and find a font. It took a little longer to find the additional quotes (my wife wanted a minimum of 15), so I went to the internet. Google took me right where I needed to go and I was able to print all of the quotes off with relative ease. One of the non-basketball quotes is from the famous football coach, Vince Lombardi: "It's all about the individual commitment to a group effort."

Which takes me back to the basketball team. Ankeny has one of the most balanced attacks in the state. They have taken to heart Coach Lombardi's advice and are giving the individual commitment to the group effort. It doesn't matter to them who is the leading scorer or rebounder on any given night, as long as the team wins. It doesn't matter if they play a lot or a little, each player is doing their best, in games and especially in practice to contribute to the success of the team.

How is the teamwork in your workplace? Do people have that we, not me attitude? How do you reward teamwork in your workplace? No matter where we work or what we do, we need the help of everyone to be successful. I am a strong advocate of providing both individual and team rewards when the company is doing well. It is about understanding that every employee is valuable or they wouldn't be there. You do not want people to slack and rely on someone else, you want everyone to contribute to the best of their abilities and role in the organization, then reward that contribution.

Because this is Wednesday night, I do not know the outcome of the rest of the tournament. I am sure you can refer to the sports section of today's paper to find the answer. What I do know is that I couldn't be prouder of this team, the way they approached the game and the role that each player played.

*Small Business Today is a bi-weekly feature written by Tom Friedman, market president of First National Bank, Ames-Ankeny.*