

Like a lot of parents, the parents of the friends of our kids have become our friends. I am not sure why that happens, but in the long run I am glad it does. For example, we have become friends with a lot of the people that our boys have played basketball with over the years. Through AAU basketball, we have met people not just from around the Des Moines area, but we have met great people from all around the state. Even though the kids do not play on the same team during the school seasons, I have kept in touch with several dads via email.

One of the things we talk about is the school teams our boys play on and recap almost every game from a fan/parent perspective. During the AAU season, it would be common for us to gather together between games and do the same thing, and if the timing was right, an adult beverage or two might be added to the equation, which made the conversation even more interesting.

Last week I was involved in one of those email conversations with a dad and we were discussing our high school boys' latest games and the season overall. It was a tale of two different seasons. As I write this, Ankeny is undefeated and ranked 2<sup>nd</sup> in the state. The other team is not doing quite as well and currently has more losses than wins. We share our frustrations and what we would like to see happen differently on each of our respective teams. Of course neither of us would ever say anything to our coaches or for that matter to our sons; it is not our place. Sometimes our expectations are unrealistic.

For example, I expect Ted and Ben to make almost every shot they take, which is impossible. I would really like the teams to be winning by 30 by halftime, and the student sections to go crazy with every basket. My friend would like to see a more consistent rotation of players on the floor and for his son to take more shots per game.

Somehow we got on the subject if our boys played on the same team, or the other team, would either of us be happier? Wouldn't his son want to be on a team that was undefeated and considered one of the best in the state? The resounding answer was NO. The grass might look greener on the other side, but is it really?

As small business owners and managers, we have difficult jobs. The pressures to make more sales, bring in more customers and bring higher profits with fewer resources can sometimes be overwhelming. When was the last time you stopped and enjoyed the fact that you won a new customer, made a nice profit or kept your employees happy? Sometimes as managers we do not take the time to appreciate the fruits of our labor.

When was the last time you celebrated an accomplishment? It is important to stop and enjoy the victories, because that is what motivates us to do more, to do even better next time. Unfortunately, we can't dwell too long on what we did well, because we do live in a "what have you done for me lately" society. Celebrate with those who helped you on the journey, because they will help you again.

I am sure that my email conversations will continue the rest of the basketball season, regardless of the final outcome, and probably continue throughout the AAU season. And in those conversations, I am going to try and celebrate the victories a little longer and forget the losses a little faster.

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