**Case Study #1**

Leadership is guiding and directing others to greatness. Leaders are confident, respected, and successful. This case study will analyze the documentary *Magic Johnson: Basketball & Business* as well as the themes presented in the book “The Leader Who Had No Title” by Robin Sharma and discuss the key to personal and global leadership.

The book “The Leader Who Had No Title” by Robin Sharma is a story about Blake Davis, a veteran soldier who fought in Iraq and witnessed many of his friends die. Blake now works in a bookstore where he meets Tommy Flinn, a strange character full of wisdom and knowledge to share. Tommy serves as Blake’s mentor and teaches him many lessons about leadership as well as introducing him to “four extraordinary teachers who transform the way he works and lives” (Sharma, 2010) with their wisdom. The main themes discussed in the book are: you need no title to be a leader, turbulent times build great leaders, the deeper your relationships the stronger your leadership, and to be a great leader, first become great.

These themes of leadership resonate well with me. When I was in high school, I was in the marching band. Leadership was a huge part of marching band. My Junior year, I ran for band president. I gave a passionate speech about how much the position would mean to me and how I can improve the band for everyone. The night of the band banquet, the leadership positions were announced. I did not win the presidency. I was devastated and heartbroken with the outcome when I learned the more popular girl had won instead of me. The following few days were very tough as I came to terms with losing. This failure hurt me, but it did not break me. I learned some valuable lessons about leadership that can be found in Robin Sharma’s book. I learned that you need no title to be a leader. Even though I was set on the dream of becoming band president, I had to learn that I could still be a valuable leader to the underclassmen. I also learned that turbulent times build great leaders. When I was at my lowest, I was able to pick myself back up and look on the bright side. Needless to say, I finished my year in marching band as a great leader and role model to my peers.

The documentary “Magic Johnson: Basketball & Business” by Bloomberg tells the story of Earvin ''Magic'' Johnson, an NBA all-star and champion, Basketball Hall of Famer, and high-profile investor (Bloomberg Quicktake, 2015).  Magic was born on august 14th 1959, in Lansing Michigan. His parents gave him a basketball when he was five years old and from then on, it was his passion. Magic always looked up to his father and learned from him how to work hard and put his all into everything. After he graduated high school, Magic attended Michigan State where he played in the finals against Indiana state where another young emerging basketball star Larry Bird attended. Michigan beat Indiana and Magic signed a 5-year contract with the Lakers, while his rival Larry, signed with the Celtics. Magic was young, but an extremely valuable player. While basketball was his passion, Magic was also interested in business. After he had signed a 25-million-dollar contract with the Lakers to keep him on, Magic began to look for investments. He bought a radio show and made 1 million dollars from it.

Magic faced a setback in 1984 when the Lakers lost against the Celtics in the NBA finals. Magic “blew some key plays and lost embarrassingly. It was his first real failure on the court.” (Bloomberg Quicktake, 2015, 12:57). Magic did not give up. He trained all summer long and when the two teams faced off the next year, the Lakers were victorious. Everything was going perfect in Magic’s career when he discovered some terrible news. His doctor informed him that he had contracted the HIV virus. Magic was devastated and came out to the public with the news. He retired from the Lakers and turned to the business scene. Magic brought many improvements to urban communities. He built a movie theater, a Starbucks, and even fixed up a shopping center. Even when Magic faced difficulties, he always found a way to pick himself back up and find success.

The documentary shares many of the themes presented in Robin Sharma’s *The Leader Who Had No Title*. Magic was a very strong leader in both basketball and business. All four of Sharma’s themes: you need no title to be a leader, turbulent times build great leaders, the deeper your relationships the stronger your leadership, and to be a great leader, first become great, can all be seen in Magic Johnson’s career (Sharma, 2010). Magic did not need a title to be a leader. When his Lakers teammate Kareem rolled an ankle, Magic stepped up to fill in for his spot even though he was only 19 at the time and did not have a legacy yet like the other players did. They laughed at first, but realized Magic was serious. They let him fill in for Kareem's position and he led them to the championship.

Magic learned that turbulent times build great leaders. When he faced setbacks like losing to the Celtics or discovering he contracted the HIV virus, Magic did not give up. He used the frustration from losing to train hard. Magic came back the very next year and defeated the Celtics and his rival Larry Bird. After learning he had HIV, Magic was at a low point where he knew he had to retire from the Lakers. Even through the disappointment it wasn’t long until Magic dusted himself off and decided to make a name for himself in the business world. Magic kept looking forward and that made him a great leader.

Magic was a charismatic person. He knew that the deeper your relationships, the stronger your leadership. When he was trying to enter the business scene, he sought out many mentors. He asked legendary agent Michael Ovitz to teach him. Ovitz turned him down saying that he doesn’t work with athletes. Magic called him every day until Ovitz agreed under the condition that magic was willing to work hard to learn. Under the training of Michael Ovitz, Magic became a better leader and learned he needed to get his own licensing deal. Magic learned the final lesson over the span of his career. To be a great leader, you must first become great. Magic did this by bringing life to the Urban community and advocating for them. According to Oracle NetSuite, “One of Magic’s earliest and most successful projects was to build a movie theater in urban LA” (Beal, 2018). Many investors did not want to support the project., thinking it would not work in minority areas, but Magic pushed ahead with the idea. Within the next year, Magic’s movie theater “was one of the 10 fastest growing theaters in the country” (Beal 2018). Magic continued his improvements for the urban community. He built a Starbucks and fixed up a local shopping center. Magic improved their quality of life, by bringing them enjoyment and entertainment. With the lessons he learned, Magic became a strong leader.

Personal leadership is defined by Leadership Excellence, Ltd. as “the ability to develop and utilize your positive leadership traits to guide the direction of your life instead of letting time and chance determine your course” (Leadership Excellence Now). Personal leadership is all about taking control of your own destiny. Magic was very in charge of his life and career. After hearing about Kareem’s financial situation, Magic realized that he had to take charge of his finances. He told Bloomberg that he knew he had to “get rid of everybody and get me the right people in place and I gotta really sign all my own checks” (Bloomberg Quicktake, 2015, 11:52). In that moment, Magic took hold of his destiny. Some qualities of strong personal leadership are vision, self-discipline, and integrity. Magic had goals and plans for the future, he was able to work hard and focus himself, and he was honest and forward about his personal life and struggles. Magic is a prime example of how anyone can use personal leadership to take charge of their own destiny.

A global leader is able to lead people based in multiple regions of the world. They need to engage very diverse and distributed groups of people. In order to practice adequate global leadership, one must first apply personal leadership. Once again looking at Magic Johnson we can see an excellent example of global leadership. Magic was able to connect with such diverse groups of people on a personal level. His announcement about testing HIV positive had a huge effect on his career and made people see him in a different light. Magic continued forward, and despite retiring from the Lakers, he was chosen for the 1992 US Olympic Dream Team, which won a gold medal. The Olympics are a global event, and his performance was seen by millions of people. Magic was a global example of perseverance and strength even in turbulent times to the viewers.

References

Beal, B. (2018, May 31). Business and Basketball: Advice from Earvin "Magic" Johnson. Retrieved March 18, 2021, from <https://www.netsuite.com/blog/business-and-basketball-advice-from-earvin-magic-johnson>

[Bloomberg Quicktake]. (2015, January 26). *Magic Johnson: Basketball & Business* [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZEx_oSMpGzs>

Sharma, Robin (2010). *The Leader Who Had No Title: A Modern Fable on Real Success in Business and in Life.* Free Press.

What Is Personal Leadership and Why Does It Matter? (May 11). Retrieved March 18, 2021, from <http://www.leadershipexcellencenow.com/blog/what-is-personal-leadership-and-why-does-it-matter>