



LEADERSHIP EFFECTIVENESS: LEADERSHIP AND TEAM LESSONS FROM THE TOUR DE FRANCE 2022

The CEO of Executive Coaching Network, Inc. and many of her colleagues are avid cyclists. While the Tour de France is always something special, this year's event was a goosebumps-making, hair-raising, tearjerker of a race. The Women's FEMME is happening – *for the first time in approximately 30 years* – as this was being written.

We can learn a lot about effective leadership and teamwork by watching the 2022 Tour de France's 21 Stages, which can be seen on YouTube and other apps.

In the Tour, there are winners in the General Classification (Yellow Jersey), the Sprints (Green Jersey), the Mountains (Polka Dot Jersey), and the Best Young Rider (White Jersey). As a rider, you can “win as much as you can,” or your team can win. Sometimes superstars will want to win the Stage for themselves and forfeit the team goal. Sometimes both the superstar and the team can win, although, that is not as likely. The main goal is a General Classification Yellow Jersey win. If a rider gets a Polka Dot, Green or White Jersey, or wins a Stage, that is great. However, this is not the strategic intention of the big, sponsored teams. Jonas Vingegaard made €430,000 (\$528,000) as winner of the 2022 Tour De France.

Here are seven leadership and teamwork lessons this year's Tour de France illustrated:

1. Together, the team wins over the strong individual – the end Stages of the Tour taught us this.
2. When we put the strategic needs of the team above our own, we all win. Wout Van Aert could have won more Stages (even though he won a lot). He waited for Jonas Vingegaard so that the team could keep the prized Yellow Jersey. Wout still won the Green Jersey and made millions of Euros.
3. Nothing is more powerful than being a good sportsperson. One of the tearjerking and hair-raising moments in Stage 19, in the high mountains, was when Jonas Vingegaard almost crashed in a turn, and then Tadej Pogacar actually did crash. Jonas Vingegaard demonstrated sportsmanship and waited for Tadej to get back in the race. Jonas still won. His reputation, his team's reputation, and his credibility will forever be linked to that moment when he didn't take a cheeky advantage. So powerful!
4. Having a plan means planning to win. Every day, the team meets to agree on the race plan for the day. They all agree to win—to do what it takes for the team—to remember the competition, the landscape, and expect the unexpected. Great planning allows for better improvisation, like when demonstrators glued themselves to the road and riders had to wait while police unglued the protestors. Can you imagine that!
5. Never take being #1 for granted. You always have to be strong to stay ahead. The hunger to be #1 is fierce. It drives riders to hurt themselves. They train all year long. They suffer, they leave their families, they sacrifice almost everything. Anyone who gets to the top and abandons the discipline will not be #1 next year.
6. Not for one second can you take your eye off where you are headed. If you do, you could crash, and crashing is serious. This year, distractions took many forms: COVID caused a lot of riders to abandon their pursuits. Other things happened. A rider's tire was compromised by a spectator's flag; there was road furniture (traffic islands and other fixtures in the road) to beware; a team car stopped and a rider crashed into the back; a “feeder” (someone providing water and food bags) put the wrong hand out and accidentally punched a rider in the face – shit happens. You always have to stay focused on where you want to go... and be prepared for every obstacle.

7. Bad things happen and it hurts. Get up and keep rolling unless you are dying. If you don't try to be resilient, you will regret it. Riders who crash need to get back in the race. They do it for the team, for themselves, for the sponsors Doctors sometimes pull a rider out. Occasionally riders pull out themselves. This puts immense pressure on the team. So, the motto is – ride unless you are gonna die.

That about sums it up. Bike racing isn't for the faint of heart. Effective leadership and teamwork are what it takes to win (unless you are doping and that is illegal).

What lessons from the Tour de France would benefit you and your team? Are your leaders racing for the good of the organization as a whole, for the team, themselves, or all of the above?