

THOUGHTS OF THE SALMON™

Management “Retrievers”

ATP Ranking - 1978	
1	Connors, Jimmy (USA)
2	Borg, Bjorn (SWE)
3	Vilas, Guillermo (ARG)
4	McEnroe, John (USA)
5	Gerulaitis, Vitas (USA)
6	Dibbs, Eddie (USA)
7	Gottfried, Brian (USA)
8	Ramirez, Raul (MEX)
9	Solomon, Harold (USA)
10	Barazzutti, Corrado (ITA)

Though I am not a tennis player, I know what a “Retriever” is: a defensive player who returns every ball and relies on the opponent making mistakes. A retriever can even win a lot, and there are also strong opinions about major champions being defined as Retrievers.

The message, quite evident, is that they win by frustration of their opponents. They do not attack, they do not take initiative, but they patiently return the ball. The stronger your shot, the stronger their return.

One of the greatest dangers for an organization is when some Management Retrievers entrench themselves in key positions. They are Officials of the Past, and they perceive any change as a passing shot that must be countered. You say that, maybe, a task could be done differently? A product line, as it exists today, doesn’t make any economic sense? Then they spend their time – and the time of their people – in the following days, dismantling your points, even if they are true.: “Let’s show that it is not that bad..”, “Let’s show that in the market someone is worse...”, “Let’s show that, compared to 12 years ago, we are better off...”, “Let’s show that if we change something, even a small thing, we could not guarantee the survival of the company!...”, and so forth. They waste their time understanding what can NOT be done, rather than what CAN be done. You propose a solution, and they dismantle it. Patiently and stubbornly.

Be aware that such characters can hang on even in top positions for a long period of time. In fact, performances can be not so bad, it is always difficult to understand how much they could have been better, external events can help (the market is growing and hides obstacles, management changes and it takes some time to understand the situation, etc., etc.).

The negative impact of these managers on the company is massive. They annihilate, day by day, the ability to change and the willingness to improve. They are a terrible example for the organization, and particularly for younger people: it sends the message that it is better never to go to the net.

What to do? Simply dismiss them, as fast as you can, without trying to play their game.

Unless you are really sure that you are a stronger Retriever yourself....

*Giovanni Carlino
(2012)*

The contents of the newsletter “Thoughts of the Salmon” are protected by copyright, all rights reserved. The information, image and/or data contained in the newsletter may not be distributed, reproduced in whole or in part without prior permission

CARLINO
— & —
ASSOCIATI