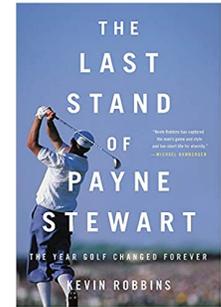


The Last Stand of Payne Stewart

Kevin Robbins (2019)

Notes by Bob Evely
Wilmore, Kentucky; 2021.



I am not a golfer. I did give it a try for a few years in my younger days, but only occasionally and never seriously. But while I am not a golfer, I was always intrigued by the uniqueness of Payne Stewart. His unique manner of dressing was a courageous move, and it set him apart from all other professional golfers. I also came to appreciate his love for golf while maintaining a balance in life that always gave preference to his family, his boldness in sharing his faith when granting interviews, and his sporting a W.W.J.D. bracelet given to him by his son.

And so I picked up this book. I learned a lot about golf and found the detailed descriptions of key tournaments captivating. But what I appreciated most was seeing Payne develop and mature thru the years. While I intended to read the book only for pleasure, I found myself picking up a highlighter because of the life and business lessons that could be gleaned. Following are just a few notes – those things I found the most interesting.

His brand (p. 50)

Early in his professional career, Payne began wearing the jaunty plus fours (knickers) that would define him for the rest of his career. He'd recalled what his father, the salesman, had said: "If you stand out when you go to sell somebody something, they'll remember who you are. But if you come dressed in a boring, navy-blue suit, you'll just be another person in the crowd." The new look was his signature, his brand.

But back it up (p. 54)

Professional golf celebrated amplified personalities, but only on the condition that they win.

What this is really about is differentiation. How can we set ourselves apart from every other salesperson that walks in the door? We want to be different in such a way that we're not seen as a salesperson but as a valuable business partner – someone that brings insights on the industry and on other businesses similar to our customer – bringing so much value that we are eagerly received as we walk in the door. Our personal brand doesn't need to be based on wearing different clothing as Payne did (though that *might* play a part). Our personal brand is based on who we are – how prepared we are, and how we stay on top of the industry and its goings on, and how much value we bring to the life of a customer. And it might be our sensitivity to our customers as persons, and not just as buyers of our services. It's thru these things that we set ourselves apart in a powerful way.

Learn from losing (p. 94)

Bobby Jones used to say that we learned more from losing than from winning.

In the sales profession there is much truth in this statement. When we lose a customer, or when a competitor wins business that we are vying for, it's important to understand the compelling reasons this happened. Don't try to talk the customer out of their decision. Respect their decision. But ask questions to understand their reasons, so you can do better the next time. How can you say things a little differently, or focus on things you failed to focus on? What can you change-up before working on the next opportunity?

Focus on things you can control (p. 127)

Payne tried to dwell on the variables he could control, like his attitude about those expected adversities that made the national championship the most grueling test in golf.

Often we worry about things we have absolutely no control over, and sometimes these worries can be so all-consuming that we lose our focus on the things we *can* control. Some things we can *directly* control (e.g. our attitude or the next step of action we take), and some things we can *influence* though not directly control (e.g. our customer’s response to our attitude and actions). But some things we have absolutely no control or influence over, so why waste energy on these things?

Own your mistakes (p. 128)

Payne thought about the many times he’d looked to blame his shortcomings on misfortune he could neither control nor change: a poor lie in unfair rough, a missed putt on an imperfect green, a turn of the ball. Chance. Destiny. Luck. Payne now tried to work on owning mistakes and accepting consequences.

It’s a big step in maturing as a person and as a salesperson when we learn to accept responsibility for our mistakes; not trying to find other persons or circumstances to blame for our failures. Instead, let’s accept responsibility for our mistakes, learn from them, make adjustments, and seek to improve on the next outing.

Always seek to get better (p. 236)

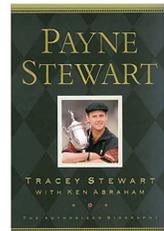
Payne always wanted to get better, even when most people would have thought there was no need. He was gracious and patient. He even kept his sense of humor. He didn’t always get things right, but he never once claimed he was never wrong. He admitted his mistakes, learned from them and kept on growing.

Even the most experienced and successful salesperson can get better. And those that are truly the best of the best always do seek to get better. We mature, we learn, we adjust, we grow, we get better. But this progression isn’t automatic. It requires effort. It requires time set aside to contemplate how things went on that last call, and what we can do differently the next time to be more compelling and more effective.

Payne Stewart, The Authorized Biography

Tracey Stewart (2000)

Intrigued by Payne Stewart as I was, I read a second book – this one written by his wife shortly after Payne’s untimely and tragic death at age 42. Tracey Stewart shares many of the same details provided in the Kevin Robbins book. But following are a few additional thoughts worthy of mention.



Our own small business (p. 75)

Each player is his own small business, an entrepreneur of sorts, banking on his ability to make a living playing the game.

We could look at the sales profession in much the same way. While many are employed by companies small or companies large, each of us is really our own small business. Each of us is banking on our ability to do well enough in the sales profession to make a living at it. As a small business owner each of us is providing a service to our customers, but also to our employer. The level of service we provide to our employer will determine our compensation and even our ability to continue in our employment. For if we do not bring value to our employer that warrants the compensation we are receiving, we should not expect to be retained – just as a small business cannot expect to retain a customer if they do not provide a great product or service.

This is not just a job. It’s an exciting way to make a living; and if we can see ourselves from the perspective of owning our own small business, we can take ownership of becoming better and better at our craft so as to succeed and even thrive.

Learn from losing (p. 272)

Just after winning the U.S. Open in 1999, Paine commented, “What happened last year, I really built on that. If you can learn from defeat, then I think that makes you a much better player.”

Enthusiasm is contagious (p. 279)

After Payne gave a pep talk to the Ryder Cup team just before the competition began, Tom Lehman commented, “If you have a problem being excited about what’s going on when you’re around him, you have a real problem.”

Enthusiasm is contagious. And it causes people to want to be around us. When customers see our enthusiasm, they understand how passionately we feel about the industry and about the services we offer. And they are drawn to us.



Sales is a lot like golf. A golf championship can be determined by a single errant shot, or a single great one. Likewise with Sales. Consider the effects of a single key point communicated very well, versus that same key point communicated poorly. A single point communicated in a compelling and convincing manner can make the difference. So, as with golf, we need to devote many hours to preparation – to be sure our messaging is clear, concise, compelling, and convincing. This can be the difference between failure and success.

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