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Impossible Possible? Do a Leicester!

As some of you may know, I follow the English Premier League (EPL) and like many others, I could not, in my wildest craziest dreams see Leicester City taking out the premiership. Before we try to find meaning in all this, let's lay out the impossible, yet factual Leicester details.

- At the start of the season, they were 5000:1 to win the premiership. Finding alien life is 1000:1
- \$45m in transfers versus Chelsea's \$426m
- 10% of Chelsea's wage bill, 19% of Manchester United and Manchester City, 23% of Arsenal. Remember, no salary gap in the EPL. Its billionaires v millionaires v handouts
- In 2015, 26% of Manchester United's revenue
- Claudio Ranieri, at 64, accomplished Mr Nice Guy but no major trophy in 30 years of managing
- No big names. But now Jamie Vardy is EPL Player of the Year, Riyad Mahrez is PFA Player of the Year
- Premiership won over 38 games. Lost 3 games. 1 year ago they were fighting relegation

Football is one of the most skillful, tactical team sports on the planet. Owners pay huge sums at all levels - the best players, best managers, best facilities, best of everything. So if you get the best, you'd expect to win or at the very least get close. Conversely, if you're at the other end of the scale, you're obviously confident of being competitive, springing the odd surprise or two against the established kings, and better the previous year's finish. But to come in as a relegation fighter and win it by a clear 10 points over a 38 game campaign - now we're in 5000:1 fantasy land.

So what happened to Leicester City? Swapping places with Chelsea – last year's champions, best manager, best bank account and big names with big salaries. How can it be? How does it all come together, the formula to winning, not a 1-off game, but a marathon of 38 games over a period of 10 months? Don't put this down to luck. It's intriguing. I'm not sure what formula was used for this Leicester win – I don't think Leicester know themselves. I suspect, once the parties end, they'll huddle to understand exactly how it all came together – the perfect recipe. If football is a sporting analogy to business (and I think it is) what are these Leicester "ingredients" that we should use in business. This is my opinion – I'd be keen to get yours.

- Hunger for success. Complacency was the enemy of Chelsea and the other former kings of the EPL. Leicester wanted it more. Hunger is the vital ingredient to all successful businesses.
- Belief and Resilience. A never, ever give up culture, as a unit, a family, a team of 11 field players, reserves, manager and support staff. How many times do you see it in a game - 1, 2 or 3 nil down and the losing team just give up? Leicester players and their manager never ever let this happen. Never. Great business leaders know belief and resilience are key attributes to a successful business. Plan and build a great team culture.
- Super fit. Mind and body. This was evident in Leicester's play – space was shut down very quickly and counter attack opportunities were carried out at lightning speed, for the entire 90 minutes. How physically and mentally fit is your team?
- Tactics. All coaches plan each game based on available players, conditions and importantly, the team they're playing against. Ranieri did his homework better than anyone else. In business, do we plan enough to win our next order, a win-win solution to a problem, productivity improvements, etc?
- Focus. Each opportunity, each game is the final. Know where you want to get to, but remember, each quote, each step, each game is what matters now. You can't get your goal without them.
- Stay Humble. Enjoy. Good guys do come first and humility is their ticket. And if the journey is not fun and enjoyable, well, what's the point. Ranieri and his chairman owner knew this and made it happen – for the players and their fans.

A lot of the commentators have said this will never be repeated. Maybe so. But isn't it a great story. But better still, it's an inspiring lesson we can take away and apply in our lives, private and business. The underdog not only stands up and gets noticed, it goes further and wins it against all odds and without the need for expensive resources. The exact winning formula will always remain elusive. However, without these key attributes there is no prize.

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