

Is This Just a Fantasy?

The qualities you need in a CEO, operations chief, and in marketing.

By Bryan Rader ■ *Bandwidth Consulting LLC*

So here we are at the start of another great NFL football season. I love all the hype, the rivalries and the back-and-forth at the water cooler each week. But what's really drawing attention these days among sports fanatics is fantasy football – a rapidly growing billion-dollar market with more than 15 million players in the US alone.

Fantasy football participants are called “owners” and they compete against friends and colleagues in a league. The league is administered by a Commissioner (usually a coworker with a lot of time on his hands), and there's a draft to pick your players before the season begins. Many fantasy players go to ESPN.com or CBS SportsLine each week to see how their team is doing.

Your fantasy team offense is made up of quarterbacks, running backs, wide receivers and kickers. You even pick your own defense. And you can trade to modify your roster each week. It's a lot of fun to play – especially if your team makes it to the playoffs!

THE KEY TO WINNING

You have to pick the right players in the draft. Their statistics each week lead to how many points you earn – rushing TDs might equal 6 points. A 200-yard passing game might equal 10 points. And by the end of the weekend, you can total up the points your own players earned.

I love the strategy involved in fantasy football. Building a “superstar” fantasy NFL team is a challenging process. I wonder if it might work in our business.

What if we could create a fantasy football league for private cable operators? What if we set up a draft – and gave each PCO ownership group the

opportunity to draft a “fantasy PCO team”? Who would be on it?

We wouldn't select running backs, quarterbacks, or wide receivers. Rather, we would look for other key positions on our PCO team such as CEO, Marketing/Sales and Operations. Yes, we would actually get to draft a “fantasy team” filled with superstars.

And rather than get one point for every 10 yards passing, our team might get one point for every year added on a renewed service agreement. We might two points for reducing theft by 5 percent. And increasing customer satisfaction by 10 percent might be like scoring a touchdown!

Building a fantasy PCO team through a draft would be a great way to square up against the competition each week. Without a talented roster, how are we going to beat the likes of FiOS, U-verse and Comcast?

GOOD TO GREAT

So, what should we look for in a strong quarterback – I mean CEO – for our new fantasy team? What skills should he or she have? Well, we need someone who knows how to execute strategy by using resources wisely. Jim Collins echoes this thought in his book *Good to Great*. He talks about strong leaders picking the right people to put on the bus, arranging them in the right seats on the bus, and throwing off the ones who don't belong. Then, and only then, can you decide where you want to take the bus (er, which strategic direction to go). I love that concept in a QB, and a CEO.

What about Marketing/Sales? I believe we need a talented individual who builds a culture around “relationships,” not “transactions.” Marketing and sales people who focus on transactions with

the corporate person and don't build a dialog with the on-site staff will not succeed in the long run. After all, the game is won in the leasing office, not the boardroom. The marketing and sales folks who know how to do this are the perfect draft choices for our fantasy PCO team. They will score more points, with higher penetration rates.

And lastly, we will need to draft an operations person. What should we look for? Someone with great technical skills? What about strong procedural capabilities? I'd go with the operations person who understands how to select the right talent to fill out her or his technical team. Someone who not only understands our technology platform, but also understands people and how to motivate them, how to cheer for them, how to train them to outperform the other guys every week. That's what we need on our fantasy team to get the most points (new installations) each week.

So there you have it – the makings of the first PCO fantasy team. I am sure each of you can be successful drafting your own superstar team to beat the franchise and telco competition. This might be even more fun than fantasy football.

Just one other piece of advice – Terrell Owens may be a great pick in fantasy football. But his personality would never work in Fantasy PCO! **BBP**

About the Author

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