

Phil Jackson – Core Principles

Phil Jackson won 11 NBA titles – with three different three-peats – as a coach.

How did he get superstars like Michael Jordan, Kobe Bryant and Shaq to buy into the team and check their egos?

With 11 core principles that are relevant far beyond basketball:

1. Lead from the inside out

1. For all the Xs and Os and motivational talks, Jackson found leadership really came down to one thing: authenticity.
2. “Be attuned to your inner voice and be at peace with it.”
3. Players can sniff manipulators. He knew the only option was to be himself.

2. Bench the ego

1. Jackson believed in a key leadership paradox: The more you try to exert direct power, the less you really have.
2. So, he dialed back his ego and delegated to empower other team members.
3. But he always made sure he still had final say on key issues.

3. Let each player discover his own destiny

1. What non-obvious strengths do your team members have? What is the best version of them?
2. Jackson considered these Qs. He gave roles, but was open-minded about player growth.
3. He didn't typecast and always sought genuine connection.

4. The road to freedom is a beautiful system

1. Essentially, discipline = freedom.
 2. Jackson's system was the Triangle Offense.
 3. Players were given rules and concepts, but it also afforded them enough freedom to showcase their individual abilities within a team structure.
5. Turn the mundane into the sacred
1. Jackson never lost sight of the fact basketball is a game.
 2. But within that game is intense pressure. He tried tai chi & yoga to relax his team, but these didn't work.
 3. Meditation did – and long served as his tool to bring players together.
6. One breath, one mind
1. Jackson was into mindfulness before it was a buzzword.
 2. When hardship hit, he literally wanted players to take a breath, gather themselves, and avoid any emotional reaction to adversity.
 3. He wanted mentally-tough players entirely on the same page.
7. The key to success is compassion
1. There are plenty of times to be stoic and demand more, but Jackson knew he also had to be able to relate to players' hardships. He gave out compliments.
 2. They're not weak – they typically earn more respect and enhance credibility.
8. Keep your eye on the spirit, not on the scoreboard
1. Jackson said he could tell whether his team was playing well simply based on body language and movement.
 2. Play within yourself, do your specific job, help your teammates.
 3. Jackson felt the rest would take care of itself.
9. Sometimes you have to pull out the big stick
1. Like many, Jackson wanted his team ready for

hardship. On occasion, he held practice in silence and even turned off lights.

2. He aggressively trained and conditioned true mental toughness long before the adversity presented itself.

10. When in doubt, do nothing

1. As leaders, we frequently want to make decisions and take action immediately.
2. But sometimes, the best strategy is to pause, particularly if emotions are high and egos are at play.
3. There's an art to knowing when to stay back vs. when to intervene.

11. Forget the ring

1. "Obsessing about winning is a loser's game."
2. Again, Jackson wanted his team to be process-based. Practice intensely, improve mental resolve, sacrifice, then operate in sync.
3. He viewed his job as getting his team ready, then letting go of the outcome.

In essence, Jackson's principles come down to:

1. Authenticity
2. Sacrifice
3. Unification
4. Mindfulness
5. Intense preparation
6. A growth mindset

Ideals that, if properly incorporated, can elevate our own teams.