

the bottom line by Steve Churm

Leadership, one deed at a time

John Valley is a man who's experienced a lifetime of highs and lows. The result: a greatness of character.

Close your eyes and listen. Really listen to the words. Hear the optimism. Hear the depth. Hear the witticism. The voice is reassuring, but not passive. It's direct and confident, and it rarely wavers. There is passion and compassion in the tone and delivery.

Open your eyes, and there is John Valley, a man molded by a life of highs and lows, a man who understands what it is to be elevated by success and humbled by near death. Twice a cancer survivor, Valley – who attended Corona del Mar High School, went on to be a basketball All-American at UCLA and today is a walking billboard for positive thinking and its recuperative powers – is the real deal when it comes to leadership. He doesn't run a Fortune 100 company or hold elected office. Valley's brand of leadership, his influence over others, is more personal. He leads by example.

Growing up in Orange County and playing the sport in high school, I lived and breathed UCLA basketball. Coach John Wooden remains, to this day, an overriding influence in my life. John Valley, a transfer from Orange Coast College, was the point guard and floor leader on two of Wooden's national title teams. So when I recently received an invitation to join Valley for lunch, I accepted. What was served were not hoop memories. It was small bites of conversation about character, attitude and, ultimately, leadership. It was timely, since effective leaders seem to be in short supply on Wall Street and elsewhere these days.

For Valley, the problem in the boardroom is ego. "We must be willing to sacrifice personal interest for the glory of all," he says. "Sometimes endorsing another person's idea and getting out of the way is required. It is amazing what we can accom-

plish when no one cares who gets credit."

Moreover, Valley contends that too many businesses and those who run them focus on the bottom line. If more attention were paid to employees and helping them "find competitive greatness," then companies would be more productive. Wooden never talked about winning and losing, Valley recalls: "Winning took care of itself if we played up to our potential. That's what he preached over and over."

Valley's own "lead by example" approach is at work again with Dribble for the Cure (dribbleforthecure.com), a fundraising campaign involving kids, basketballs and pediatric cancer research set for Oct. 26 at USC and Nov. 2 at UCLA. Cancer has been a constant opponent in Valley's life, having beaten it twice but losing his daughter at age 12 to the disease. Raising money and awareness for the Pediatric Cancer Research Foundation, for which he serves as director of scientific affairs, is one way he puts his leadership skills to work: "It's all about doing the work. That is what separates people." **ocm**



Steve Churm, Publisher

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John Valley, left, learned more than how to win from legendary UCLA basketball coach John Wooden.