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Alumni Profile: Paul Corona

by Tim Ponisciak

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Paul Corona (MBA '93) recently authored [The Wisdom of Walk-Ons: 7 Winning Strategies for College, Business and Life](#). Paul is the founder of Optimus Coaching and the director of learning and organization development at Northwestern University. During his 27-year career, he has evolved from a business person (focused on marketing) into an education person (focused on performance improvement). His hometown is Detroit, Mich., but he currently resides in Chicago.

Paul graciously provided autographed copies of his book for the Graduate Alumni Relations team to raffle off to our alums.

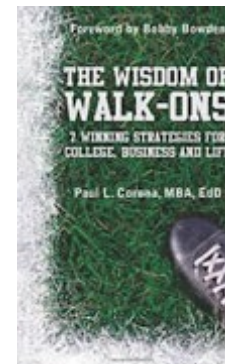
To enter the drawing, simply email your name and contact information to gradalum@nd.edu with the subject line: "Wisdom of Walk-Ons." Good luck!

Q: What inspired you to write *The Wisdom of Walk-Ons*?

A: I knew we could help people become more successful by combining great sports stories with proven strategies for self-improvement. Readers have told us *The Wisdom of Walk-Ons* does just that in an engaging and compelling way.

Q: What about the walk-on experience helps to mold leaders?

A: The walk-ons teach us seven valuable lessons that leaders and



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individual contributors can apply to do better at work, home and school. These “seven winning strategies” are 1) leverage your strengths, 2) set stretch goals, 3) work hard, 4) stay balanced, 5) be healthy, 6) appreciate your supporters, and 7) help others succeed.

Q: Did you learn anything unique about the walk-on programs you wrote about? What made them different from each other?

A: We actually looked for what was common to the walk-on experiences at some of the greatest programs in college football history. To us, that was more newsworthy and interesting than what made them different.

Q: What types of leaders were Dan Devine, Bear Bryant and John Robinson?

A: They inspired greatness in those they led. They’re in the Hall of Fame for their exemplary achievements. They built strong teams of assistant coaches, who in turn helped players win national championships and then lead successful lives after college. They emphasized doing all the little things it takes to win every day (rather than obsessing about winning championships at the end of a season).

Q: Your background is in coaching, learning and organizational development. What attracted you to this area of business?

A: I love helping people realize more of their potential, and this is a foundational part of good business practice.

Q: What did you take away from your time in the Notre Dame MBA program?

A: I learned the language of business and left with concepts and tools I still use every day. Things like strategic planning, competitive advantage, fact-based decision making, and socially responsible leadership are part of my thoughts, actions and words.

Q: Who has had the biggest impact on your professional career?

A: There really are too many to name. Having said that, Perry Metz at Indiana University and Bob Sobiech at Deloitte were particularly influential because they believed in me and gave me fantastic opportunities to stretch and contribute.

Q: Which current coaches and current athletic programs do you admire from an organizational/leadership point of view?

A: I'm a fan of Northwestern's head football coach, Pat Fitzgerald, and director of athletics Jim Phillips. They do things the right way and deliver positive results.

Q: What advice can you offer to some recently graduated business alumni who are looking to become leaders in their organizations?

A: Implement the "7 winning strategies" from *The Wisdom of Walk-Ons* !

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