



**Kyle Vann**  
President and CEO  
Entergy-Koch, LP

professional

### **What are top 3 principles for success in your industry?**

As the president of an energy trading company, there's probably two or three I can think of. One is you have to have superior knowledge to really be involved in the trading business. Secondly, you have to have a superior execution ability. It's not enough just to know what to do, but you have to be able to execute it. I think the third thing that you have to have is talented, principled people. Trading, like any other business, is based on principle.

### **What character qualities do you look for when hiring?**

I think paramount among all is humility. We found out certainly in a trading based business that people that lack humility are the ones that can get you into the biggest problems. Clearly native intelligence is important. Adaptability is important, too, because a truly intelligent person can take something they've learned in one area and apply it to a totally unrelated area. It's very important that a person be intellectually honest and really show a lot of dignity towards the people they work with.

### **What makes a great leader?**

There are a lot of books written on it, but I will tell you, Lauren Stanny of the Navigators did a little study on David. He made the comment, "A leader provides vision, faith and courage to coordinated effort." That's the best description I've seen on leadership. Leaders have got to provide vision. In addition to that, they have to provide courage to their troops when things are down. They've got to give them faith that what they're doing is important and achievable and likewise, it is a coordinated effort. That was the best definition I've seen on leadership.

### **Who are your heroes and why?**

Abraham Lincoln's probably my hero from the stand point of providing vision, faith and courage to a coordinated effort. Probably on the courage part, I would have to say Winston Churchill is another one. I don't know that Winston's faith was necessarily the same faith as mine, but I really admired his leadership. Clearly one of my favorite, all-time leaders was David, King David, and the way he approached leadership.

### **What are the 2-3 most valuable lessons you learned in your career?**

First, you can't be all things to all people. I used to try to do that. And I found out that I've got weaknesses and once I understand what those weaknesses are, I surround myself with people that can cover those weaknesses. I call that staffing your weaknesses. The other has to do with the fact that if you go through business or life, you're going to go through ups and downs. Churchill said it best, "Success is never final, but failure is never fatal." That's the part that I remember. If you've been successful, sometimes you think, "I've arrived." You're getting set up for a fall. Likewise, when you failed, it's not the end of the earth. It's time for you to be challenged, to refine yourself and then get up and do it again. Those are probably the two lessons I've learned the most.

personal



## **How do you define success? How has your definition evolved?**

On a professional basis, and certainly from a trading stand point, success is measured by being profitable. If you're doing that then that really means you're satisfying customers' needs in a superior way. If you're meeting your goals, your targets and things of that nature, I consider that success. Now, the second part of success on a business stand point is how you meet those goals. That is if you're meeting them within very principled behavior, that's true success. Some people may meet them outside of those principled behaviors and to me that's not success. That's the way I would define it. I think it's the combination of results and principles.

## **What is the difference between success and significance?**

I think I have to answer that from a Christian point of view. Success is measured in what I'll call a temporal time zone. In other words, success can be this successful this quarter, successful this year, maybe over a four or five year period or a long period of time. Significance is measured more in lifetimes and eternity. A person could be very successful, but not be significant. A person could be unsuccessful and very significant. Significance to me is what you leave behind for other people, that will last and help them for a lifetime.

## **What does balance mean to you? How important is balance to success?**

There are a lot of different parts of your life. Clearly work is a central part. You've got your family, you've got your faith and there's probably all these hobbies thrown in there somewhere else. Balance really has to do with trying to maintain success in a lot of those different areas, without really compromising your beliefs and your principles, in particular your family. I don't know that I'm necessarily the best example of that, but if you're out of balance, you know it and you get a lot of warning signs. Ultimately fulfillment and joy come from that balance. If you don't have the balance, you won't have the joy. That's the little sand that just keeps irritating you until you find the balance.

## **How do you prioritize your time/values? What are your priorities?**

As I've gotten older, I've had to prioritize because you really have to redeem the time that you have. I've changed my model more from where I have to do everything, to having people that I can trust to do things. I try to understand what is it that I really do well and spend as much of my time doing that as I can. Whatever I don't do well, I try to learn to say "no" to that. I'm not very good at saying "no" to things. I think it was Itzak Pearlman that somebody once asked "How is it that you became so great at the violin?" And he said, "Plan neglect." And they said, "I don't understand." And he said, "I planned from an early age to neglect everything else but this". In a way you have to neglect those things you're not good at, and stay with the things you are. That's how I would prioritize.

spiritual

## **How has God changed your life? How has your choice of faith in God changed your life?**

Dramatically. About 11 years ago, after a journey of a few years, I accepted Christ. What I realized is that He really accepted me. I was really kind of born again, not to use that term too loosely, but I was born from the inside. For the first time, I realized that God loved me. He had a plan for me, that had written a book for me, the Bible. A lot of the things that I thought were relativistic were really answers. It put a lot of purpose and sense in my life and changed my focus away from being self-absorbed to trying to be absorbed more in God and in the people of God. In that regard, it had a big change.

## **Can you follow Christ and still have a successful career, family and such?**

Yes, you can. But I'm not going to tell you that it's not without some issues. Let's just face it. If you're in a business and you're competing with somebody and their God was that job, they are going to devote everything to it, in time and effort. And if you were trying to balance your life with several other things, there's no question that you might be at a disadvantaged in a situation like that. But I think a Christian can be extremely successful. Because it's more than just putting in time that's important. It's the quality of the work you do and the principles that you have. So in my opinion, I think a person can be very successful. I don't think you have to settle by taking a lesser job or whatever. I'm not saying,



though, that maybe it won't affect you in different companies. I think in companies that are very principled in their behavior, your faith is actually a tremendous strength. If you happen to get into some companies that maybe don't believe in those principles, then I say it would hurt you.

### **How does your faith help you in your professional life?**

The tool that I use is prayer, especially when confronting a big decision, or something that's causing stress or anxiety. Before I just tried to work it out. While I still try to work it out, I now know that I've got Divine Counsel that I can certainly consult to help me. Prayer made a big difference. Also knowing that you've got other Christian brothers and sisters that you can deal with, that can help you not only with ... maybe not necessarily with the business problem, itself, but they can certainly help you with the anxiety and keeping your feet on the ground. You realize that regardless of what it is you're dealing with, you don't lose perspective of where you are in Christ. I think that's been the biggest thing that's changed. My approach to business hasn't really changed that much. Well, I guess ... I take that back. It's probably a lot more principled in a way because I'm much more grounded. But I think overall, it's given me more joy in my work than maybe I had before.

### **How does your faith help you in your personal life?**

Clearly I think about it the most in difficult times. When I've got a big meeting or a big deal or when I'm under stress or whatever, prayer is the main thing I turn to for help. My faith has always helped. There's guidance in Biblical writings about some of the things that I go through, even though it's not geared towards trading. Although they did trade back in that time. There are issues that help me. Christian fellowship also helps because you've got other people that not only understand your business, but also understand your faith. The combination of all those have really helped me get a much more balanced look. To go out and seek real Christian counsel when I have a big issue has really helped me.

### **How has God /faith changed your perspective on fulfillment, significance and success**

When becoming a Christian I had to spend a little bit of time completely rethinking every aspect of my life. I was a babe. Even though I was 40-some-odd-years-old, I started all over. I also found out, first of all that work, clearly ... which was very important to me ... still is important and there was nothing wrong with that. But now my real CEO was Jesus Christ. It wasn't necessarily who I thought I was working for. I had kind of a combination. That helped me. It also helped me realize that what I really am is a minister, a missionary. I didn't have to go to African or India or South America to be a minister. I could do it right here in my own profession. And not necessarily by just the things that I said, but the things that I did. I think St. Francis said, "Preach the Gospel every day. When necessary, use words." Well, I really found out that my actions as a leader and as an employee were actually being a minister. And so it changed my whole thought process about work. Clearly it challenged me about family, about the importance of family. I had certainly sacrificed some things in my family with time, maybe too much so. In that regard it injected a lot of balance. The main thing it gave, it gave me hope that I didn't have to find my fulfillment in earthly matters. There were eternal rewards that far out stripped anything that I could earn here. And that was how it changed my perspective.