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I Want to be Like Mike - A Leader That Makes a Difference

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I WANT TO BE LIKE MIKE –
A LEADER THAT MAKES A DIFFERENCE
Leadership Conferences 2000

It's a new year. It's a new century. It's a new millennium.

This is a time we look forward. We set new goals. As we look at this business of ours going forward, what is it we are shooting for? What do we want for our business careers? For our lives? Who do we look to for the answers to these questions?

We should start with ourselves, don't you think? But as we do so, we immediately recognize that not one of us is an island. We need others.

In fact, the process of achieving and of our growth and development is always dependent upon others. A team of others that may consist of our family, our work team, our business unit, or this company that we call ServiceMaster.

But for any team to work, there must be leadership. Each of us has the opportunity to lead. In fact, we have the responsibility to lead. Everywhere I look in our company, there is a great opportunity for people to lead. Not just people looking for a title or position, but people who are in the middle of the action and making things happen.

People you can count on.

People who are team players.

People who have a heart; a commitment; an obligation, if you will, to others.

People who have the will to win.

People who give it all they got.

Now, if I were to ask you who was recently recognized as the number one athlete in the 20th century. Who would it be? That's right. Michael Jordan. Now Michael was not only a great athlete, he was also a great leader of his team. In fact he was a leader who inspired others to follow – people want to be like Mike.

Let's listen to this video about Michael and his career with the Chicago Bulls and especially his message to you and me about leadership in this business of ours.

Here show video.

Is it in you, is it in me to be a leader, to keep on improving, to stay focused on what is most important to our business, to the people we work with, our associates and to our customers?

Michael was one of those leaders the team could always count on. In that first game of the 1997 series with the Utah Jazz, Michael was there in the final seconds to make the winning shot. How many times was he called upon to be there for his team? We've got great goals set for the year, exciting prospects ahead of us. I've never been more enthused about the opportunities that are before us, but the team needs us. They need you, and they need me. They need us to make a difference. They need us from time to time to make that winning shot.

In that sixth game of the 1997 series, Jordan couldn't make the winning shot, he needed Steve Kerr. Now, Steve wasn't even one of the starters, but he was a key member of the team. He had that soft shot just above the key, and he was wide open. Every member of the team is important. Let's make sure we use all our team members. None of us are good enough to do it alone.

There's going to be times, however, when we don't feel like playing, when things aren't going our way. In that fifth game of the 1997 series, Jordan was sick, he should have been in bed, but he played and scored 38 points. He did it as a matter of obligation to his team members. No matter what the difficulty, he wasn't going to let them down. He gave it that extra effort.

What is it that binds us together – that calls for a commitment – an obligation of the leader to his or her team members. Am I

willing to give that commitment to you? Are you willing to give that commitment to me as we look forward to the year ahead of us?

Now, this past year has been a year filled with some good successes and some bitter disappointments. We have established strong growth platforms in our two new service areas - heating, ventilating and air conditioning and landscape services. But we also had to restructure and shut down some business and take some unusual charges, a first for ServiceMaster in over 28 years of growth. The results of our largest business unit were severely affected by the drought in the eastern part of the United States. While we had a good year in revenue and profit growth, we missed the expectations from Wall Street, and the stock price dropped. Not everything in life is going to go just the way we want it to go. There are going to be times of opportunity, challenges and disappointments.

At one time in his career, Michael thought he was going to be a baseball player, but it didn't work out. But he didn't stop there. His come back is one of the greatest stories of American sport. He did so because he had the will to win. Failure or defeat were never final for him. In that last game of his career – the sixth game of the 1998 series, when the Bulls were down by three, he was able to make the easy lay-up. Still down by one. Once again, he did the impossible as part of that inevitable will to win. He stole the ball and made the final shot – winning it by one.

How many times this next year will we be faced with getting the job done when the odds are stacked against us. When it looks like we're staring defeat in the face. There is a way. There is a way with a will to win. As leaders we need to give it all we got.

Do we want to be like Mike? Is it in us to be leaders? To keep improving? To stay focused? To do what is important in our business, with our associates and serving our customers? This year, let's knock the cover off the ball. It's there for us to do.

* * * * *

Revised 1/7/2000