

Feature

The David Checketts Interview:

Entrepreneurship and Sports Leadership



David Checketts is Chairman of SCP Worldwide, a sports, media and entertainment company that owns St. Louis Blues of the National Hockey League, the Scottrade Center, the Major League Soccer team Real Salt Lake, and a number of other sports-related enterprises. Prior to founding SCP, Mr. Checketts was president and CEO of Madison Square Garden, overseeing its operations and its three sports franchises, the New York Knickerbockers of the NBA, the New York Rangers of the NHL, and the New York Liberty of the WNBA. We met with Mr. Checketts in St. Louis, Missouri to explore his thoughts on sports, the business of sports, and success in life.

Kaizen: You grew up in the small town of Bountiful, Utah. Were you athletic or a sports fan as a youth?

Checketts: I have been for as long as I can remember. The earliest moments of my life that I remember are all around sports. I had two brothers—one older, one younger. We were constantly playing something, and if we weren't playing something we were listening to or watching something. I would sneak out of bed, actually, at 11:30 at night and crawl down the hallway into the living room and turn on the television to watch the NBA playoffs, which, at that time, were tape-delayed. They were late at night.

In my world, for some reason, I was a New York Knicks fan, clear off in Bountiful, Utah. My friends and neighbors were all L.A. Lakers fans, and when you think about the playoffs in those days, it was either the Lakers and Celtics or the Lakers and Knicks. I just was fascinated with that Knicks team,

especially the team that won it in the late 60s and again in the early 70s. That was my team.

Kaizen: You majored in business at the University of Utah and received your MBA from Brigham Young University in 1981, graduating in the top three in your class. Looking back, what was the most valuable business skill or knowledge you acquired while a student?

Checketts: Well it was funny, because we had an Organizational Behavior professor at BYU who was somewhat controversial. He was controversial because he taught kind of "out of the box" concepts of dealing with and motivating people. Most of my business school classmates thought he was a quack. They just thought he really didn't have much to add. They wanted to get into operations. They wanted to run models. They were very analytical. But for some reason I just became enthralled with this man's concepts, and I have to

say now, years later, I was right and they were wrong. The man is Stephen R. Covey, who wrote *The Seven Habits of Highly-Effective People*, which was on the *New York Times* bestseller list for about fifteen years.

So actually in my second year of business school I became his teaching assistant and a real follower of his concepts. He's given people a lot of real solid truths about motivating and dealing with people. And sports is the ultimate people business—I call it the ultimate human capital business. It's all about the performance of live individuals. Arena stadiums help, but you can't fill them unless you have the performance of a team on the field, or on the ice, or on the court. So I learned more from him in business school than anyone else about motivating and dealing with people.

Kaizen: Your first job out of university was with Bain and Company, an east



In this issue we highlight a course-development project by Professor Bill Lewis, a paper given by Professor Shawn Klein at a sports ethics conference, and an international conference organized and hosted by Professor J. J. Asongu.

Our feature interview is with David Checketts. Mr. Checketts was CEO of New York's Madison Square Garden before forming SCP Worldwide, a leading sports management and media organization. We spoke with Mr. Checketts in St. Louis, Missouri about business in a media-intensive sports world, the challenge of character in the doubly-competitive world of sports business, and the absolute importance of being passionate about what you do.

We're also pleased to announce a grant from the Koch Foundation, which we will use for our speakers program and to launch two reading groups to be led by Professors Matthew Flamm, Shawn Klein, and myself.

When you're on campus, please feel welcome to visit us on the second floor of Burpee—or online at www.EthicsandEntrepreneurship.org. And feel welcome to take us up on our challenge: Do we—or do we not—have the coolest and most comfortable reading chairs on campus?

Stephen Hicks, Ph.D.



CHECKETTS, CONTINUED

coast consulting firm. What was your job with Bain?

Checketts: Bain is a management consultant. In those days the practice was about competitive strategy and getting corporations to formulate strategy to win competitions. So I was working with companies like Dunn & Bradstreet and Firestone and Baxter Travenol and Chrysler Corporation—all of these companies that were competing in the early 80s—and really working right with the CEO and developing a competitive strategy for the company.

Kaizen: While at Bain, you met David Stern, the future NBA Commissioner, who was then an executive with the NBA; and in 1983 you were named President and General Manager of the Utah Jazz. How did that come about?

Checketts: First of all, David was a big help because your life just has a way of changing so quickly. Here I was, working for Firestone, trying to take cost out of tires, and Bill Bain, the president and chairman of the firm, came walking down the hall one day, turned in to my cubicle and detailed to me that he had a client who wanted to buy the Boston Celtics. He knew I played basketball in college. He also knew that I had a relationship with a player on the Celtics, who I'd played in college with—Danny Ainge. And he said, "Maybe you should be the one to lead the case team here to figure out: Can we buy the Celtics? How much is it going to cost us? Does that make any business sense? How do you accomplish it?"

So I was given an assignment for the next three months to look at the NBA, to understand the salary cap, to understand what makes great franchises and what makes lousy ones—what's the difference between the two. And in that process I got to know David Stern, who has, in the years since, really been my mentor. It was after our bid for the Celtics fell short that David asked me to meet the owner of the Jazz, who subsequently offered me the job as president.

Kaizen: You were only twenty-eight years old at the time, making you the youngest chief executive in the history of the NBA. What did David Stern see in you that led him to recommend you for the position?

Checketts: He's unique. He's the mentor to many different people. I think what he saw in me was a certain stubbornness that he thought might succeed. In our first meeting together we ended up having this heated debate. I had never met him before. And suddenly we were in a conference room about the size of this room, and he was pacing along one side of the table and

I was pacing alongside the other and we were engaged in a heated debate about the value of teams, the NBA, where it was all headed.

Kaizen: Did you have any doubts about your ability to do the job, given your age?

Checketts: I think you're just so young and naïve at that point that you really don't understand what you've signed up for. But it became a sobering reality a couple of months into the job, the team deeply in debt, no interest on the part of people, 1,500 season tickets sold—1,500. So it became sobering after a while but at that point I knew that I could fail because Bain had offered to take me back after this experiment. But it was not an option to fail in

One of my roles environment where can really do

my hometown. All of those kids that had gone to high school with me or to college with me suddenly said, "How is it possible that this guy is the president of an NBA team?"

But we got really lucky in drafting John Stockton and Karl Malone—two Hall-of-Famers. We didn't know that at the time. That created the foundation of a great franchise.

Kaizen: And over the next six years the Jazz enjoyed a multi-million-dollar turnaround financially. How did that come about?

Checketts: We did a number of business things, but the team started to win on a regular basis and be very exciting to watch.

Kaizen: You next had shorter stays as president of the Denver Nuggets organization and with the NBA organization in New York before becoming president of the New York Knickerbockers in March 1991. How did your position with the Knicks come about?

Checketts: There's a transition in there. The Denver show was brief. The owners who were trying to buy Denver couldn't buy it. They had offered me the job there to run the team. They failed in their bid to buy the team so I ended up going to New York and working for David Stern at NBA International. I was vice-president and general manager of NBA International. And it was while I was there, much to Stern's dismay, the Knicks asked me to come over there and become president, and I dismissed the competition. And remember, that was my childhood team, so that was like a dream.

Kaizen: Over the next four years, the Knicks became very successful both financially and on the court—the team won the conference finals twice and the conference championship once, set records for attendance and revenues, and *Forbes* magazine named the Knicks the most valuable franchise in the NBA. What was your contribution to making that happen?

Checketts: This was in 1991, so I was 35. That was my dream job. And literally everything there reported to me, so I went and brought the old coach back, Red Holzman, who I had seen on the television many years ago, and started to give the franchise some meaning, I think. I hired Pat Riley to become the head coach. He was a very successful coach in his own right. I solved a very

is to create an people with talent their best work.

serious contract dispute with Patrick Ewing. I dramatically changed the marketing and customer service and in-game entertainment. I tried to build it into one of the great franchises in the league. And people in New York really responded to that. First of all, the team became really good. We were in the NBA Finals in 1994. We had a team that won sixty games in '93. And Patrick Ewing was just playing amazingly well. Riley was a great coach. We made some trades and put some talent around him. And New York just loved the whole attitude of the Knicks—a very aggressive, defensive style. And the Garden just became alive. It was really just a tremendous time.

Kaizen: By this point in your career you had led successful turnarounds at both the Jazz and the Knicks organizations. Where were the common elements to both successes?

Checketts: Very much. Good character players. Great coaches. Back to the Stephen Covey comment—I feel like one of my roles in whatever I do is to create an environment where people with talent can really do their best work, where they can just flourish in their best work. And that's what I try to do.

Kaizen: Building on your success with the Knicks, in 1994 you became president and CEO of the Madison Square Garden Corporation. Did you need to develop additional or supplemental skills in order to make the transition from being a team president to being CEO of a half-dozen major enterprises?

Checketts: Yes. It was very different. I had seven or eight years there and four different owners. I had to learn to manage from 50,000 feet, instead of being so close to operations. And so looking back I was too patient with some people, not patient enough with other people. It was my first real CEO job of a huge corporation—\$6 billion in value, huge financial stakes, in a city where the media and everyone hold you in such a spotlight. Enormous pressure all the time. And yet we had some success.

Kaizen: By this point in your career you have had some big successes, but you had also seen from the inside a lot of nastiness: the infighting that led to the separation of Bain Consulting and Bain Capital; you'd been in a struggle over the Jazz; you had a difficult encounter with New York mayor Rudy Giuliani in dealing with the aftermath of a brawl at a boxing match at MSG in 1996; you'd had to intervene in 1999 when the coach and general manager of the Knicks couldn't get along; and another struggle within MSG led to your leaving in 2001. Is your experience standard for the sports business world, or have you been especially unlucky?

Checketts: Giuliani today is one of my good friends. I had to fire the general manager of the Knicks. I don't think I've been unlucky. I think



Courtesy of St. Louis Blues

Paul Kariya, left wing for the Blues

that this is the case in sports for the most part, and yet I want to take appropriate responsibility for my role here. You may set out not to make any enemies but you probably will. Firing a coach is very hard. It's high-profile. It's not like firing the president of Westin Hotels. That may make it as a blurb in the *Wall Street Journal*, but firing a coach in New York, firing Don Nelson in New York, as I did, was on the back page of every tabloid, was on the front page of the *New York Times*. The Knicks were 34 and 27 when I fired him, so we were 7 games over.

Kaizen: In 2001 you started your own company, SCP Worldwide [Sports Capital Partners]. Is it different being one of the principal owners yourself?

Checketts: Yes, there are a lot of differences. But I would say that it's really been helpful for me to be in a CEO job, because what I'm trying to do now is be the owner that I always wanted to work for. And I did have some of them.

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CEE Professor News



Bill Lewis

Congratulations to Professor Bill Lewis, who received a course development grant to research a course integrating the sport of golf with ethics and philosophy. The course will teach golf skills but also the issues of character, civility, and the place of sports in a well-rounded life.



Shawn E. Klein

Professor Shawn E. Klein attended the 37th annual meeting of the International Association for the Philosophy of Sport, where he presented his paper, "Losing and YouTube: Does the Broadcast of Defeat Humiliate?" The conference was held at Seattle University in Seattle, WA. Professor Klein's paper considers whether the broadcasting of a defeat in sports contributes to, or even creates, morally problematic humiliation for the losing side, and it concludes that it does not.



Kyle Beckerman, RSL midfielder

Highest-earning players in 2009

(Source: www.forbes.com)

1. David Beckham: \$46 million
2. Ronaldinho: \$33 million
3. Thierry Henry: \$28 million
4. Kaká: \$22 million
5. Cristiano Ronaldo: \$21 million

Attendance and popularity

(Sources: www.oleole.com, news.bbc.co.uk)

- ♦ The top 5 MLS teams together averaged higher attendance than 85% of the NBA and every NHL team but the Montreal Canadiens.
- ♦ In 2008 the Los Angeles Galaxy averaged higher attendance than every team in the NBA, NHL and seven Major League Baseball franchises.
- ♦ In Los Angeles, Toronto and Washington, DC MLS teams outdraw both their NBA and NHL counterparts.
- ♦ The 2006 World Cup final attracted more television viewers than baseball's 2005 World Series pulled in on any single night.
- ♦ Soccer is the most popular recreational sport for boys and girls in the U.S. More young people play it than any other sport.
- ♦ The MLS is the 12th most attended top-flight football [soccer] league in the world.



CHECKETTS, CONTINUED

And that's what I try to do with the CEOs now that I hire to run the companies that we've purchased. I hold them accountable. I conduct business reviews. I just conducted a business review this morning over at Scottrade Center for the arena and the teams over there. But they're not going to have me second-guessing them; they're not going to have me going around their back to negotiate with important publics that they have to deal with. All of the things that I had trouble with, I'm trying to create an environment where they do their best work.

Kaizen: SCP owns the St. Louis Blues NHL team (blues.nhl.com) and its arena, the Scottrade Center (www.scottradecenter.net), the Real Salt Lake Major League Soccer team (web.mlsnet.com/t121/) and its new stadium, and a number of other media and entertainment units. What is the current value of SCP's combined assets, if I may ask?

Checketts: Well, I'll give you a different answer than I would have in September of last year, because we've been through a meltdown; but I think this is turning into a very respectable NHL team now, two-and-a-half years into our ownership. We own the real estate and the building, we're renewing an opera house—we're going to do great things over there. So I think those assets are in the \$300-million range.

In Salt Lake we bought a major league soccer team and then we built a beautiful stadium. I'm very proud of it. I think our assets out there are worth \$150 million or so. And then the balance of our media and live entertainment assets are somewhere between \$30 and \$50 million. You know, I think all in it's probably close to half of a billion dollars in assets.

Kaizen: Soccer has not traditionally had a strong following in the U.S. How do you see that changing, and what potential do you see in soccer?

Checketts: Well, I'll challenge you on one thing you said. I think soccer *has* had a strong following in the U.S.; it's just that they follow the European teams, or they follow the World Cup. The finals of the World Cup in 2006 were watched by more people in the U.S. than the NBA finals or the World Series. Now that's the first time that's ever happened. And the reason is that there's a changing population—many more Latinos, Hispanics, many more Europeans and Eastern Europeans—who have an appreciation of good soccer. There is no question in my mind that there is going to be a very established, successful soccer league in the U.S.

The question is: How do we get in a position to



Rio Tinto Stadium, home of the Real

have the best talent here? Because one thing Americans think they deserve, frankly, is the ability to watch the best talent. They get to watch that in the NFL—there's no other football league like that in the world. The NBA has all of the best players in the world; they play in the U.S. Now, there might be some in China, there might be a few in Europe, but far and away. If you're LeBron James, you're going to play in

The right kind of toughness, just team and

the NBA. In major league hockey, even though there's a Russian league, in the National Hockey League, those are the best players. But in major league soccer in the U.S. we don't yet have the best talent. There is a chicken-and-egg problem, because until you can build the revenues up, how do you afford to pay Ronaldo and Ronaldinho and Kaká and David Beckham? We brought Beckham here, but he's so far and away the biggest name that we've ever had in that league, and until we can have one of those in every town, it's going to be tough.

Kaizen: Real Salt Lake now plays in the gorgeous new Rio Tinto Stadium (www.riotintostadium.com), which opened late in 2008. How big an investment was the stadium?



Courtesy of Real Salt Lake

Salt Lake soccer team

Checketts: It was \$110 million with land and infrastructure—\$45 million in public money; the rest was private investment.

Kaizen: This takes us into the controversies over the funding of sports venues. The most common practice has been for major sports complexes to be developed with a combination of private and public funds. Is that how it is with Rio Tinto?

**toughness, mental
takes the other
puts it away.**

Checketts: Yes, it was very controversial.

Kaizen: One part of the controversy is ethical, asking whether it is proper to use the tax dollars of people who are not sports fans to pay for the enjoyment of sports fans. What do you think of that issue?

Checketts: Well, I think we solved it, but what we couldn't communicate to people was *that* we solved it. Because even today, most people in Utah believe that we took money right out of their pockets that was supposed to go to schools or highways, when in fact what we took was a hotel tax which was being paid by tourists. And that hotel tax had already been set aside. It could only be used for one thing and that was

to promote tourism in Utah. If that's the case, you have to decide: do you want to go buy some more "Ski Utah" ads in New York or Chicago, or do you want to divert what I think was a small amount of money, \$45 million, to create a soccer team?

And this is what we did: We created a stadium that's going to host the MLS All-Star game this year on July 29th. It will be broadcast in 144 countries, and when that broadcast opens you will see a fly-in and you'll see the snow-capped mountains, and they'll remind people this is where the Winter Olympics were held in 2002. To me that is a much better advertisement for Utah than what you can buy on the screen. But believe me, I haven't been able to get people to understand that those are the taxes that we used.

Kaizen: Are there other factors that make it worthwhile for the government officials who have to make that decision?

Checketts: One argument that I made was: How many jobs do you actually create by spending money on advertising in New York or Miami on "Ski Utah"? One might argue that you create jobs in the ski industry. I don't think so. But what I do know is we created 600 full-time jobs by building a stadium. And the taxes the stadium will throw off, in terms of sales tax and property taxes, will far outweigh what the government invested in hotel taxes. Any public-private partnership—

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"Every single day I wake up and commit to myself to becoming a better player."

—Mia Hamm



"Success is no accident. It is hard work, perseverance, learning, studying, sacrifice and most of all, love of what you are doing or learning to do."

—Pelé



"Don't let what you can't do stop you from doing what you can do."

—John Wooden



"You are never really playing an opponent. You are playing yourself, your own highest standards, and when you reach your limits, that is real joy."

—Arthur Ashe



The Scottrade Center in St. Louis

CHECKETTS, CONTINUED

especially now, but even a few years ago—is going to be controversial, is going to get fought about.

Kaizen: So your argument has three legs: The tax money used was dedicated for that purpose; the job creation argument—the 600 jobs as opposed to spending it other ways; and then spinoff benefits that come from tax valuation, real estate valuation, etc.

Another line of argument is economic—that sports facilities have to be so expensive these days that only governments can raise that kind of money. Is that true? Would Rio Tinto have been viable without the government funds?

Checketts: No. We wouldn't have built it. It couldn't get done, and most projects in sports can't get done today without government funding. I don't know many that we could go back and find that have been totally privately funded.

Kaizen: About leadership in particular you have said, "As a leader, it becomes your challenge to be able to identify people who at a certain point in time rise to the occasion." What traits do you look for when hiring or promoting key people?

Checketts: It's almost impossible to identify that in interviews, but you can learn a lot about people based on their past performance.

We have this problem with the St. Louis Blues right now. And as I gave them my annual State of the Franchise Address just before the start of training camp, I said to them, "The thing that this team needs to learn to do is to win, and to grab hold of a game in the last five minutes when you have a one goal lead, on the road." It's actually that simple. You're up three to two, seven minutes left in the game last night in Nashville, you should win that game. The right kind of toughness, mental toughness, just takes the other team and puts it away.

I always looked at coaches in the NBA and I said, "What is their record in games that are decided by three points or less?" That, to me, separates a great coach from a not-so-great coach, because that's where coaching really has an impact—in games decided by three points or less.

Kaizen: Can we break "mental toughness" down a bit? Is it a matter of saying, "I am going to win?" Or being able to handle your emotions or being cool-headed when the pressure is on? What makes someone have mental toughness?

Checketts: It is instilled by a coaching staff who understands that concept. It is a wise coach who can tell immediately on the faces of his players when he needs to take a timeout, when he needs to do something differently, when he needs to disrupt the flow. Then he learns to trust a certain group of players that he's going to put on the ice or on the court in the last three to five minutes of the game to get the right things done.

Kaizen: At all stages of your career you have been simultaneously running several operations and planning future ones. Where does all your energy come from?

Checketts: I think it comes from anxiety, I guess. I don't have anything, necessarily, I'm trying to prove anymore. If I set out to be in this business for 40 or 50 years as my career, I wanted to look back and say "I did the very best I could" and "I learned enough and developed enough skills and created enough value that I could be considered one of the best in the field for a long time."

So that's what drives me now—as I started out saying—is to create environments where really extraordinary people can do their best work.

That's my value. Create an environment where John Davidsons, the Bill Mannings, the Jason Kreis, the Pat Rileys, whoever it is, can step into a situation where they can do their best work. If that's what I accomplished, then I'll feel like I accomplished a lot.

Kaizen: When leaving Madison Square Garden in 2001, you bought your employees a gift—a table-top scale—the scale being symbolic of the need to balance one's life. How have you managed to balance your ambitious career goals with your other important life goals, such as your family and other relationships?

Checketts: I think about it all the time, and I think if you're not thinking about it, then you're probably not getting the kind of joy and fulfillment out of your life that you should. If you become extreme in any of those cases—either an extreme work addict, which is easy to do in this business, or extreme family/personal—neither one works. So that was why the scale was meant to say, "We have to have a balance in our life."

In my view, the best people are people who have outside interests, they have hobbies, they have people who are meaningful in their lives, so they have a certain stability about all that which allows them to perform well at work. And if you neglect that personal side, that relationship with your children, your family, your partner, you will probably be less effective at work.

The best people have they have hobbies, who are meaningful

Kaizen: If you had to pick just one, which of your accomplishments has given you the most pride?

Checketts: I guess I would say that my proudest one is probably the creation of a charitable enterprise at Madison Square Garden to take care of after school kids. When I say "after school kids," these are kids who get out at 2:30 in the afternoon and return to an apartment where there is no parent there. 70 percent of

CEE Guest Speaker: Timothy Sandefur



Timothy Sandefur

On September 16, 2009, the Center welcomed guest speaker Timothy Sandefur. Mr. Sandefur is Senior Staff Attorney at the Pacific Legal Foundation, a public interest law firm in California. Mr. Sandefur gave a lively talk entitled "Market Entrepreneurs and Political Entrepreneurs: Some Legal and Constitutional Issues," in which he contrasted the views of the Progressives and the Founding Fathers on liberty and individual rights and discussed how the Progressive agenda has led to an increase in political entrepreneurship. Visit the CEE website to watch Mr. Sandefur outline these issues in a brief video interview.

kids born in inner-city New York were born to a single parent. So what has happened is that this after school issue has become a huge issue. So we started something called the Cheering for Children Foundation at Madison Square Garden. It's now called the Garden of Dreams Foundation (www.gardenofdreamsfoundation.org). And it was meant to create after school programs for New York City kids. And it involved our teams, our players, our coaches. Every time I signed a player I'd get right to the point where I could set the contract in front of him, and I'd say, "Now look, before you sign this, I want \$100,000 a year for our charity to take care of after school kids. Don't sign this if you're not willing to do that." For some player who's going to make \$3 or \$4 million, it seems like a small price to pay—a tax deductible \$100,000 gift. But then we took that money and we created after school programs all over the city, where kids could leave school, go and play an organized game of street hockey, basketball, get on a laptop, do their homework, get a tutor. They had a place to go until mom or dad or grandma or grandpa or whoever it was would come home at 6 p.m. So we had them from 2:30 to 6, at a place where they were safe and well-protected.

outside interests, they have people in their lives.

Kaizen: And, looking back, which of your projects was the most fun?

Checketts: There's a lot of those. I loved renovating Radio City Music Hall. That was really thrilling for me because, first of all, it took me two years to buy it, two years of negotiating with one of the toughest real estate guys in New York—just over the top. We finally made a deal at 4 a.m. one morning in his apartment, only because I said, "I'm not leaving until I make a



Mr. Checketts (center) breaking ground for the Rio Tinto Stadium

deal here." So we went to dinner, we closed that restaurant. We went to a club; that finally closed at 2. I said, "I'm not leaving." We finally went to his apartment, and at 4 a.m. we shook hands.

And then I set out to renovate the whole place—nine months, \$70 million, to make it exactly what it was in 1932 again, because it was really tired and run down. But we started peeling paint and replacing chandeliers with exact replicas of what was there before. We even replaced the carpet with the same carpet that was there in 1932. We had to have it made. But all these little touches were so important to me and it was like I was bringing back early 20th century New York again. I'm going to do that again here with St. Louis's Keil Opera House.

Kaizen: Given the huge expansion of professional sports over the past twenty years, where do you see the biggest opportunities for the next generation of sports entrepreneurs?

Checketts: Well, I always tell young people

who are interested in doing this that I think they need to get a solid education in business, communications, finance, some vocation. And then they need to spend a couple of years out and about, working in all of the areas that involve this industry. It could be sponsorship, it could be operations, it could be the contract side—there's so many places for them to spend time.

And then I think they need to go to graduate school. I really think that made all the difference for me. I like an MBA, but I also like a JD. If you look at all of the successful commissioners, they're all lawyers. They're not businesspeople *per se*, they're all lawyers: David Stern, Gary Bettman, Paul Tagliabue. Professional sports has become so contractual in the important relationships and labor becomes such a big deal, that a legal background, for someone who wants to be in this industry, is very valuable.

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2009 International Conference on Business & Public Policy



Presenters and attendees of the ICBPP conference, organized by Professor J.J. Asongu

From April 23-26, 2009, scholars from around the world, including several CEE professors, gathered in Rockford to attend the first International Conference on Business & Public Policy. The conference was organized by Professor J.J. Asongu's Institute for Research on Global Business and co-sponsored by CEE. Presenters included Professor Jeff Fahrenwald on bridging the gap between theory and practice in business, Professor Asongu on marketing research, management, and business planning, Professor Kadamian on entrepreneurship and the liberal arts, Professor Hicks on the entrepreneur's ethical code, and Rockford's Mayor Larry Morrissey on the city's economic future.

CHECKETTS, CONTINUED

Kaizen: What is the best advice you've ever been given?

Checketts: The most influential person in my life was my father. Even though Covey was very powerful, Stern has been a great mentor, and there are others along the way that I've certainly learned from, I would say it was my father. My father was a Marine in World War II and a tremendous man—just a great, great person. But he was also a lover of poetry, and he made us memorize poetry when we were growing up. He actually paid us money. That's how we earned money from him sometimes if we needed to go to the movies or a date or something—we needed to memorize a poem.

Dad loved Tennyson but his favorite was Kipling, and so that very simple, powerful poem "If" has played a big role for me. There are more times than not, especially in the early days in New York when I was under pressure and thinking maybe the job was too big for me, those lines, in my father's voice,

*If you can keep your head when all about you
Are losing theirs and blaming it on you,
If you can trust yourself when all men doubt you,
But make allowance for their doubting too;
If you can wait and not be tired by waiting,*



Mr. Checketts admiring Busch Stadium, home of the St. Louis Cardinals

And it goes on:

Or being hated, don't give way to hating ...

*And risk it on one turn of pitch-and-toss,
And lose, and start again at your beginnings
And never breathe a word about your loss.*

I mean, you would have thought that Rudyard Kipling had been running sports teams because it's the perfect description of what it's like and how you feel, and it has been a real inspiration to me. And it's always in my father's voice because I took over the Knicks in 1991 and he died in

1988, so I was really missing him. I thought that he would've gotten such a big kick out of my suddenly being in New York, but I didn't have that chance. Maybe he did.

This interview was conducted for Kaizen by Stephen Hicks. To learn more about David Checketts and SCP Worldwide, please visit <http://www.scpworldwide.net/index.asp>. Kaizen's full interview with Mr. Checketts will be posted soon on the Center's website at www.EthicsandEntrepreneurship.org.

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MORE INFORMATION ABOUT CEE AND ROCKFORD COLLEGE

Kaizen is published by the Center for Ethics and Entrepreneurship at Rockford College. Founded in 1847, Rockford College is a four-year, independent, coeducational institution offering undergraduate and graduate degrees in traditional liberal arts and professional fields. One of 81 colleges nationwide designated as a "College with a Conscience" by the *Princeton Review*, Rockford College is also among 76 U.S. colleges and universities selected by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching for inclusion in a "Community Engagement" college classification. Rockford College is one of 11 colleges in Illinois and 276 in the country with a Phi Beta Kappa chapter, the oldest and most prestigious academic honors society, and in 2007 was named a "College of Distinction."

In the Next Issue:

Ray Stata on
Entrepreneurship
and Technology
Leadership



Kaizen (改善) is a Japanese term meaning "change for the better" or "continuous improvement." Kaizen has been applied worldwide as a method for improving the efficiency of all aspects of a business continuously through a cyclical process of standardizing operations, measuring their efficacy, evaluating the data, and innovating to improve performance. Kaizen is also used to eliminate wasteful effort and to humanize relationships within the workplace.