

## ARE YOU REALLY #1?

and how you handle it when you find out you're really not...

This past weekend, college players across the country learned of their playing in the National Football League, or joining the rest of us in corporate America. Since the conclusion of the Rose Bowl in Pasadena in early January, there has been endless speculation and water cooler talk about who would be the #1 draft pick.

As it turns out, we all were wrong. Reggie Bush, Matt Leinert, and Vince Young have all been at the top of any football follower's short list, with Bush being the likely candidates for the top slot.

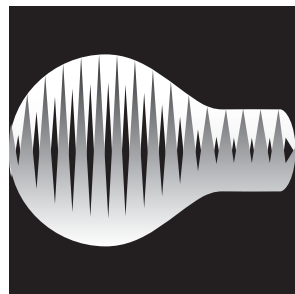


When the NFL Commissioner Paul Tagliabue announced, "With the first pick in the 2006 NFL Draft, the Houston Texans have selected Mario Williams, DE North Carolina State," we learned several things about business.

1. Business turns on a dime.
2. Being flexible in all you do is paramount.
3. Never say, "Never."
4. There are no guarantees in life.
5. Attitude and perspective make all the difference.

One company comes to mind...International Business Machine. IBM once held an 80% market dominance in the computer operating systems, and mainframe market until its demise in the early 1990's, when a smaller but more flexible company called Microsoft, came in with a progressive attitude and corporate culture, providing a fresh perspective, pitched it to the customer, and the rest is history.

It was 1987 and IBM was releasing OS/2 which combined with database technologies would be the operating system of choice for the mainframe market, and eventually their flagship product. At that time, IBM (very



corporately structured, and machine-heavy was not focused on the personal computing markets, and its employees were more concerned on internal measures rather than customer satisfaction.

Microsoft who was focused on the personal computer market, and innovation positioned itself as the little company that could, and did. The result was a corporate clash between the industry leader #1 and the challenger #2.

We know how the battle ended up with Microsoft, now the industry leader, and IBM never having been the same. The difference is Microsoft continues to mature and crossover into other markets (servers, handhelds, and collaboration softwares) using its dominant position to do so.

Microsoft can benefit by continuing to have a non-corporate culture, a smaller, customer-centric approach, and remembering both the failures that IBM encountered, and the successes that enabled them to overtake.

Microsoft, as with Reggie Bush, will show through history that it was ok to be tabbed as #2. The lesson is how they embraced it, and used it as personal motivation for growth, maturation, and eventual leadership into the #1 spot, and that is the bottom line!

Warm regards,

Scott A. Williams