

A PRODUCT OF UNUSUAL COMBINATIONS

BY GENE STOWE



EDDIE TAYLOR
PHOTO PROVIDED

Business leaders who compete both fiercely and fairly usually have some sports experience that shows them how, says Eddie Taylor, who lettered in football and baseball at Allegheny College and has a flourishing business career 22 years later.

“They are all competitive,” he says. “Most of the guys compete on the golf course or on the basketball court or have it in their background. It teaches some key elements of life – integrity, sportsmanship, playing by rules, giving your complete effort for the team and for yourself.”

Recognizing and respecting the rules is key to success – and to avoiding the kinds of unscrupulous choices that can destroy careers.

“You respect and honor the rules,” Taylor says. “Within those rules, you’re going to compete as hard as you can. A lot of times, people go astray in business and do things they know aren’t right, perhaps unethical. They obviously don’t have barriers.”

For Taylor, who majored in psychology and graduated in 1987, participation in sports was an element in the eclectic experience that is deep in the Allegheny tradition.

The school now brands the approach “unusual combinations,” such as a biology major who minors in English, does community service, and performs in theater or dance on the weekends.

In addition to playing two sports, Taylor was co-president of the Association of African-American Collegians and worked some in student government.

“You were compelled and encouraged to do lots of things outside your major,” he recalls. “You take this natural curiosity to discover and explore. It’s about how you think about the world and broad issues.”

After a brief stint in retail, Taylor went to a large insurance brokerage firm in Co-

lumbus, Ohio, then joined a successful entrepreneur in the insurance industry, who had a managed care company for workers’ compensation in Ohio.

“I also created a workers’ compensation third party administrative firm,” Integrated Consulting Services Ltd., advocating for employers in order to hold down expenses, he says.

He bought Beverage Dispensing Solutions, where he is president and CEO, and helped organize Collaborent to help different sectors, especially government, save money with group purchasing opportunities.

Taylor, a member of the President’s Council, a group of CEOs of large corporations in Ohio that are owned and operated by African-Americans, says he’s seen a

“critical period of emergence” for African-American professionals.

The same wave of programs and encouragement that had boosted African-American

attendance at good colleges and universities in the 1970s and early 1980s is bearing fruit in businesses as they became leading professionals, especially those ages 40 to 50.

“You’ve got a number of individuals in that band that attended good schools and had expectations of themselves,” he says, adding that they have become more entrepreneurial and more successful in both large and small companies.

“You see more areas of success flowing through the middle-class African-American community. It paved the way.”

The successful ones, of course, are those who have learned to compete both fiercely and fairly.

“It is important to compete, Taylor says. “It is important to strive. But it is more important to do it the right way.” **RTD**

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