

## Anchor Up: Competitive Greatness the Grand Valley Way

**Tim Selgo**

**Gary Brown, Contributor**

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*Anchor Up is an engaging and worthwhile work not just for athletic administrators but for all business leaders.*

*Anchor Up* by Tim Selgo is a firsthand account of a collegiate athletic director's exceptional career.

While most of the attention in collegiate sports goes to NCAA's Division I teams, a rare success story has been written by Michigan's Grand Valley State University in NCAA Division II sports. Despite having never won a national championship previously, during Tim Selgo's twenty-year tenure as their athletic director, Grand Valley State won nineteen NCAA Division II titles and 173 Great Lakes Intercollegiate Athletic Conference championships.

Selgo, who retired from Grand Valley State in July 2016 and is now an athletic consultant, recounts his experience at the college in *Anchor Up*, so titled because that slogan became the signature war cry of all Grand Valley State Laker sports teams. While the book is very much a memoir, it also offers athletics administrators, and business managers in general, some thoughtful advice about leadership.

With a focus on "competitive greatness," the book is divided into five parts, each representing a "leadership step." Part 1, concentrating on an organizational vision, lays out Selgo's top priorities and explains his initial visioning process. Part 2 demonstrates how the author got members of the organization to embrace his vision.

Part 3 focuses on setting goals and includes some valuable guidance regarding college recruiting and what it means to have a leading sports program. Part 4 is all about hiring the right people. This part is particularly interesting because it relates the inside story of Brian Kelly, whose first head football coaching job was at Grand Valley State. Kelly went on to be the now nationally recognized football coach of Notre Dame. Part 5 discusses the importance of team-building and trust.

The five-part approach is a sensible way to organize the book and makes it easy to digest its content. The first-person narrative lends an "as it happens" feel to the book and creates a natural flow to the author's story; lots of anecdotes bring the narrative to life. Woven throughout the book are the key principles of Selgo's management philosophy, which is characterized by the author's emphasis on people.

This is probably the main strength of *Anchor Up*; the book really serves as a how-to guide for excellent personnel management. In discussing Grand Valley State's recruiting practices, for example, Selgo describes the specific techniques he used as an athletic director, including instituting a "Laker Leadership Development Program," a two-day retreat for select student-athletes with leadership potential. In part 4, Selgo's "recipe for success in hiring" is a valuable primer for hiring managers that includes what to look for in candidates and the right questions to ask job seekers at interviews.

Tim Selgo's voice resonates loud and clear in *Anchor Up*. "Your leadership will be tested most during a crisis," he writes. "This is where building trust among your staff and your bosses will be critical. Remember, they don't care how

much you know until they know how much you care.”

It is obvious that Selgo cares, so *Anchor Up* is an engaging and worthwhile work not just for athletic administrators, but for all business leaders.

BARRY SILVERSTEIN (May 9, 2017)

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