

## SAMPLE STORY

### EVERY ROLE IS IMPORTANT

What kind of role do you have on your team right now? Are you happy with your role? Maybe you are the team's star or maybe you are "just a role player". Whenever that you start to think that you are the most important person on the team or, unfortunately, that you are not important because your role is not glamorous, then think about cars.



Think about the most beautiful car with a big strong engine. Now think about what happens to that shiny fast car that gets everyone's attention if the spark plug is faulty. A \$100,000 car can be sidelined by a bad spark plug that costs \$10. Cars need all the parts working together properly for them to operate effectively. It is the same with teams. No role is more important than another. Here is a story that Kevin Templeton told in his book *To The Hilt* that really drives this point home in an unforgettable way ...

*Charlie Plumb graduated from the US Naval Academy. He was a fighter pilot who helped start the "Top Gun" school in Miramar, California. He flew seventy-five missions in F-4 and F-14 Tomcat Phantom jets over Hanoi off the USS Kitty Hawk.*

*On his seventy-fifth mission, just five days before he was to rotate off active duty, Plumb's plane was hit by a surface-to-air missile. The plane was on fire and would not respond. The stick was frozen. Finally, Charlie and his radar man ejected from the F-4 and parachuted, to be captured by angry North Vietnamese soldiers. Captain Plumb spent almost six years the Hanoi Hilton, a notoriously tough prison. There he faced torture, hunger, filth, and oppressive jungle heat. he went into prison at twenty-four years of age and was released at age thirty after a prisoner exchange.*

*Charlie was eating dinner at a Kansas City restaurant when a guy a couple of tables over was staring at him. The stranger got up and approached Charlie's table. he said, "You're Charlie Plumb. You flew seventy-four successful missions off the USS Kitty Hawk. On your seventy-fifth mission you were shot down over Hanoi and captured. You*

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*spent six years as a POW at the Hanoi Hilton. You got out when they had a prisoner exchange."*

*Charlie told the man that he was right. But there were hundreds of men on that ship. An aircraft carrier is huge. It's like a floating city. He was sorry, but he didn't remember the stranger. "Who are you?" he asked.*

*"I'm the man who packed your parachute," the man answered. Charlie thanked him for doing his job well. He asked him if he knew how many parachutes he had packed. The man said, "No, I never counted. I was just glad I had the opportunity to serve."*

Think about that for a moment. The famous and glamorous fighter pilot was saved because an ordinary unknown guy packed his parachute correctly on that particular mission. Can you imagine if the parachute packer had felt sorry for himself because of his lowly job? What if he resented going to work that day because he wanted to be a fighter pilot? What if he wanted to get the attention? What if he said to himself, 'what does it matter, if a pilot gets shot down, they probably won't survive anyways?'

Parachute packers weren't famous and they didn't get any glory. They sound a little bit like basketball players that set screens, baseball players that lay down sacrifice bunts, or football players that block. However, a team cannot be successful without these people. The media will highlight the player that scores the points but will rarely talk about the people that help make those points possible.

If you are a "parachute packer" on your team, then take inspiration from this story. True, your role won't include saving someone's life but it certainly entails helping your team to win. Whatever parachute you are asked to pack for your team, do it with the attitude of knowing that it is every bit as important for your team's success. It just might not be as glamorous.

If you are like Charlie Plumb and you are a pilot on your team. If you are a star, then understand that you are not the only important person on the team. Legendary hall of fame basketball coach John Wooden used to say that it takes ten hands to make a basket. Be the first one to high five the parachute packers on your team. Be the first one to praise them during an interview after the game.

Charlie Plumb, a star pilot, owed his life to a role player that was a star in his role – a role player that took pride in his role regardless of whether he would ever be recognized for it. If Charlie Plumb had died that day, no one would have blamed the parachute packer. All eyes would have been on what the pilot could have done better. Just like in a basketball game, no one notices a bad screen being set or a pass being a little off target but they do see the shot being missed. If you are in a team sport, it takes every player to do their job in order to achieve success.