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I have been intrigued by the storyline in the recent blockbuster book and movie “The Hunger Games” since my daughter was tasked with reading it in the summer of 2010 before she entered her freshman year at Kansas State University.

The University asked each Freshman to read the book so they could all have something in common as they arrived on campus. I decided I should also read the book so that I could join her in the conversation – and I’m so glad that I did!

The foundational storyline is about Panem, a totalitarian nation that is divided into districts and the Capitol. Each year two young representatives from each district are selected by lottery to participate in “The Hunger Games” – a battle to the death for the two lottery “winners” from each district. At first glance it is brutal and disturbing, but when you look deeper you can apply life lessons for almost every

aspect of life, political, social, personal and today – the management of an

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is yours. You can certainly create the “district” you want by planning, researching and developing the world that you want to live in.

Katniss Everdeen – The heroin of the story is a young girl who emerges as the person that everyone is pulling for. She does not come from the most prestigious district, but her natural ability to lead, make decisions and stand up for what is right is impressive. Do you have a Katniss in your firm? Young, intelligent, bold and fearless in their quest to be the next leader in your firm. In the book, they accepted Katniss as a volunteer for the games, without hesitation.

How do you react when that young talent in your firm steps up – do you kindly tell them “you are not ready” or do you encourage them to accept the challenge?

Peeta Mellark – It is a well-known fact that great people are only truly amazing if they have a team of people who surround them and make them better. As Katniss’s counterpart for District 12, Peeta is one of the people who make Katniss great. Peeta is not particularly prepared for the games, as he is not a hunter or predisposed to be aggressive, however he is strong and has a personality that is complimentary to Katniss. He is quieter, she is louder. He thinks through the situation and plans for the outcome, Katniss makes decisions quickly and comes up with new ideas as they pop into her head. Independently they are good, but the two together are spectacular.

Have you built a team that surrounds you in this way? Collaborative teams who compliment and support each other will always produce a better outcome than one person independently. Finding each person’s unique abilities and capitalizing on them will serve you well in our competitive environment.

Haymitch Abernathy – As a former District tribute and winner of one of the past games Haymitch is now tasked as the mentor and coach for Katniss and Peeta. I’ll say up front that Haymitch is quite a character and he is not the most likeable fellow in

the beginning, but in the end I find myself drawn to the fact that he has intellectual

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lessons that our up and comers will need as they move to leadership positions within the firm.

There are many other characters to explore and I encourage you to read the book series. This is fun, entertaining and the lessons that are embedded in the book are fantastic.

As they say in the book (and movie), “Happy Hunger Games! And may the odds be ever in your favor.”

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