

## Football contains some sound principles for business

By: Homer Brickey  
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Americans spend a lot of time watching college and pro football and trying to understand the game.

And that could be good for businesses. Or at least that's the theory in a new book, *The Two-Minute Drill: Lessons for Rapid Organizational Improvement from America's Greatest Game*.

"Football analogies are overused, but when business leaders struggle with problems, what resonates with them are [football terms]: focus, execution, game plan, managing the clock," said author Clinton Longenecker, a professor of management at the University of Toledo. "You can see the light bulbs go on in their heads."

Mr. Longenecker, a receiver for UT's football team for four years in the 1970s, said chief executives who want to bring about changes in their firms need to formulate plans similar to football coaches' two-minute drills, used when their teams need a quick score near the end of a game.

"These days, the name of the game is speed," he said.



The book, recently released by the Jossey-Bass division of the John Wiley & Sons Inc. publishing house, uses 11 examples of how some well-known two-minute drills worked, or failed. One was UT's stunning 35-31 victory over ninth-ranked Pittsburgh in 2003, capped by an 83-yard drive and a touchdown pass with just 43 seconds left.

Mr. Longenecker gives credit for the name of the book to Greg Papp, a co-author and former controller of Aeroquip-Vickers Inc., a Toledo-area Fortune 500 firm that was acquired eight years ago by Eaton Corp. Mr. Papp now is president of Cube Culture Corp., a Toledo consulting firm. The other co-author is Timothy Stansfield, president of IET Inc., a Toledo manufacturing-consulting firm.

To be successful, companies need clear focus, effective leadership, knowledge of the competition, a solid game plan, talented and motivated personnel, and a sense of urgency, Mr. Longenecker said.

Based on studies of 1,000 firms, he said, chief executives must be their own quarterbacks and not depend on consultants or facilitators, they have to have the right players, and the definition of "winning" must be made clear to employees.

If a company succeeds in making its cultural change, it need to "share your game films" with others in the firm, said Mr. Longenecker.

One final piece of advice: Celebrate, of course, but not before the game is over. The book cites several example of games that seemed to be over but were turned upside down by wild finishes.

"Don't celebrate victory prematurely," the UT author said.