

Beat: Technology

Magic Johnson is still "Magic", now in business coaching!

Sports legend told his story at RSACT™

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USPA NEWS - Moscone West, San Francisco, USA. You must have heard about "Magic Johnson" in the sports field. What you might not know about is his success in business after playing on the court.

During the RSACT™ 2025 Conference on last Wednesday 30th April, 2025 Magic gave a keynote talking about his business activities and provided one of the best motivational speeches I've had the pleasure of listening to live.

As the Bio on RSAC says by way of introduction, "Having left the basketball court for the boardroom, Earvin "Magic" Johnson has successfully parlayed his skills and tenacity from the court into the business world as Chairman and CEO of Magic Johnson Enterprises (MJE). MJE provides high-quality products and services that focus primarily on ethnically diverse and underserved urban communities".

It was a real pleasure to watch Magic Johnson in action! He was brought in as a motivational speaker by the RSACT™ 2025 to address an audience of largely security professionals, experts and leaders. He had a fun way of engaging the audience, and walked around the room to be closer to sections of the audience. The cameraman had to watch out, Magic is still fast! The chest bumping and selfies with the audience aside, Magic had some interesting messages for the audience.

Competition is good

Johnson started out thanking the audience for all they do with cybersecurity and identity protection, and making sure our companies, organizations and people are protected. Big round of applause! He talked about the game where Johnson's team, the Michigan State Spartans, defeated Larry Bird's Indiana State Sycamores in the 1979 NCAA championship game, that led to a strong competitive bond between the two as their respective pro teams (Johnson the Lakers, Bird the Celtics) they were drafted to went to-and-fro winning major competitions. Here was the first message. Johnson believes that competition is essential to make you better and more successful. Both players remain friends after they moved on after their careers were shortened; Johnson by his diagnosis with HIV and Bird by a debilitating back injury. Competition between companies and even between countries rewards with great success.

Have Dreams, but have a plan and network like crazy

He talked about 'the brand' which has to be nurtured and protected. After becoming part owner and the team's president of basketball operations, he reached out to over 50 Laker ticket holders to have lunch and garner feedback, form relationships, pick their brains, and grow the brand. Activities that he continues today. An example of 'preparation meeting opportunity', was when he met Peter Gruber, and worked with Sony Pictures Entertainment to build Magic Johnson Theaters for inner cities. His Dream came true with planning, networking, and sheer hard work. Investing in Urban America was his dream, and it came true. And, although making money was secondary, he proved that money could be made in inner cities, providing jobs, services and tailoring things like Starbucks coffee shops to appeal to those who lived there.

AI is changing everything we know and do about sports.

Owing to the huge expansion in worth of sports teams and sports players, both in the male and female areas, those athletes must be protected and able to be top-of-their-game for the maximum time. Johnson gave the example of how AI is helping recognize when players get tired, when they need to rest or be substituted to avoid injuries. It's helping with nutritional needs, hydration etc. with AI analysis of bio-feedback in real time, to make faster decisions. It helps with training as well, monitoring in real time, and making sure training isn't excessive as that, too, can cause setbacks. For event attendees, AI linked with ML is helping with access to stadiums using biometrics instead of tickets, increasing security of access and security that your seat is reserved.

Distractions lead to failure

Johnson had cautionary words for why many people (and companies) fail. Bad teamwork, not enough effort (“always give 150%, all the time”), but most enlightening was how bad distractions are. Distractions occur with athletes too. You have to be committed to what you’re doing. Sometimes it’s hard, especially on your partner, family and friends. Dedicate time for them, but help them understand that work is work for you. Stay committed to your goals, and be honest on where your goals will lead you and them, and they will often support you.

SWOT – Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats

Johnson’s final message was assessing yourself using the SWOT methodology. Start out being as honest as you can. Involve friends and family if need be. He wanted every RSAC™ 2025 attendee to leave the conference and do a SWOT as a individual, and as a company that you work for or that you lead. So, you do two SWOTS, one inside the company, and one outside your company (it kind of reminded me of ‘Innies’ and ‘Outies’ in the show Severance, if you’ve seen it!). You then repeat every period. Johnson does it every year. You may want to do it more frequently. He then compares past with present. You always have to be growing, as “Individual growth is so, so important”, he said. The market is changing, so we have to be on top of what’s going on. See if you can move things from one box to another. Maybe you address a weakness. Maybe you had an opportunity that turns into a strength. Maybe a new weakness like illness, set’s you back a bit. Find a way to minimize it. "Self-evaluation is so hard. Make sure you don't lie to yourself".

A bit more background on Magic Johnson

Johnson recently made history in 2023 when he became co-owner of the NFL’s Washington Commanders. He also co-owns MLB’s Los Angeles Dodgers, WNBA’s Los Angeles Spark, MLS’ Los Angeles Football Club, eSports franchise Team Liquid, and joined the ownership group for the National Women’s Soccer League’s Washington Spirit. In January 2025, Johnson received the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the Nation’s highest civilian honor.

A Final takeaway and action for you

Happy ‘SWOT-ing’ to you all! Make sure you do two as described, one for you personally, and one for your company or role. Then update it as regularly as you can, so you stay on top of things!

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