

Team Unleash Your Potential

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The movie AIR, the Michael Jordan – Nike story is a glorious example of the power of insight.

Without insight the world would not have AIR JORDAN.

There are so many inflection points in this movie, each of which was initiated by an insight.

*****SPOILER ALERT*****

Only read on if you've already seen the movie, or don't care about having it spoiled for you.

Here's the list I came up with (from memory). I encourage you to watch the movie and see if you spot these and perhaps other examples of the power of insight.

- 1) Realizing how special Jordan was as a player. As Sonny watched tape of Jordan's game winning shot, he realized this play was designed for Michael. He would recount the sequence to his colleague, pointing out how relaxed Jordan was right before he was about to make the biggest shot of his life to that point. How he was asking for the ball. He pointed out how the coach designed the play to draw the defense away to give Jordan an open look. Presumably the coach knew just how special Jordan was because he'd put his own future on the line to give this 18-year-old kid the ball when it counted the most, when the game was on the line. In this one play, Sonny saw the potential future and the greatest that was surely to follow.
- 2) Sonny was visiting Team USA's Olympic coach to get some info about Jordan and his family. The coach tells an amazing story about witnessing Martin Luther King Jr. famous, I have a dream speech. In his story he explains that MLK changed the second half of his speech. He read the audience and shifted gears. He made up the entire second half of the speech on the spot. Keep in mind this is perhaps one of the most important speeches in American history. And it all came from MLK having an insight that what he was saying wasn't working. It seems to me that what happened came from wisdom. MLK was guided and was in flow. He spoke from the heart and changed the world forever. This theme repeated near the end of the movie which I'll refer to later.
- 3) Despite being discouraged by everyone at Nike and Jordan's agent, Sonny had an insight. He knew he had to break the rules and he went to North Carolina to meet the Jordans. In the movie Sonny refers to having a feeling. He just knew he couldn't take no for an answer. During his meeting with Mrs. Jordan, Sonny talks about how special Michael is and demonstrated that he saw who he really was. He saw what Mrs. Jordan already knew. It was pivotal to getting a meeting to pitch the Jordans.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GxVb37d7oZ8>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7zey2gSlcQ4>

- 4) Once the meeting is set, Sonny still needs to convince the CEO that he should allocated their entire budget on this one deal. There's plenty of push back. There's a scene of the CEO out for a long run. When he returns to the office, he tells Sonny he's got "the full budget". Sonny asks, "how'd you come up with that decision?" The reply, "I went for a run!" That's what I call an insight. Running, walking, exercising is a common "Insight Friendly" place for many people. When they run, their thinking slows down. They get into CLARITY, and they create space for insights to happen. This was a big one.
- 5) When they were designing the shoes and talking about colors, just as they were talking themselves into following the NBA rules on the percentage of white the shoe had to have, the marketing guy (Rob Strasser), blurts out "we'll pay the fines". A fresh new idea that comes from insight. In hindsight this is one of those "why didn't anyone else every think of that" moments. Its pure marketing genius. Publicity is worth probably 10 times the cost of the fines.
- 6) During their pitch meeting to the Jordan's, they're playing a video which was going over like a lead balloon. Sonny pulled an MLK. He shut down the video and made a heartfelt speech that appealed to how special Michael was, how he would be remembered and have a legacy.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e0wZB56TdbE>
- 7) When Mrs. Jordan phones Sonny to negotiate terms, she introduces revenue sharing. Something that was unheard of. It just wasn't done and at that moment Sonny couldn't see past this rule. He was about to lose the deal. Luckily the CEO Phil Knight, went for it. Even though he knew he'd just disrupted the industry and it would never be the same again.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cgqcCX_TAZI

Those are the insights that led to the creation of AIR JORDAN. Of course, a career unlike any career ever seen has made Air Jordan's the most successful show line in history. Even years after he retired, his shoes and his brand are still a market leader.

Now that's what I call unleashing potential!