

Follow-up



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MAKING A DIFFERENCE THROUGH PEOPLE SINCE 1987

Spring Training

Spring training is a popular event in North American sports culture—it is the time when baseball teams get together to ready themselves for the upcoming season and hopefuls hope to prove their stuff.

One of the interesting things about the business world is that there is very little spring training. Peter Senge and colleagues in the Fifth Discipline Field book make an excellent point that few “practice fields” opportunities are provided to aspiring managers in business to try out for the team and practise their skills within the safety of a training environment. A few practice swipes are the best that most of us are allowed when we take on new positions.

What might spring training for managers and supervisors include ?

- ✓ Rules and purpose of the game, what do we do here, what is important. Expectations in line with our mission, purpose and values.
- ✓ Different playing positions on the team and role expectations of those positions. What roles do we need to fill and how do we need to fill them. What is my role? Am I coach, manager, umpire or ball boy ?
- ✓ How to get to each base. What are the benchmarks we need to work towards? How will we know we have arrived at each base?
- ✓ Coaching—How and from whom will we find support? How can we help each other?

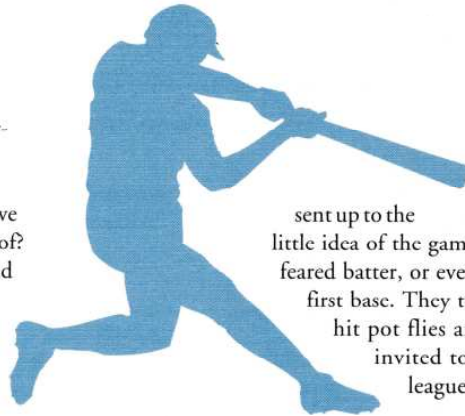
- ✓ Who are our cheerleaders?
- ✓ Which batters do we need to be careful of? Who counts around here? Is it the customer, Joe in shipping? Where are the land mines?

- ✓ How do we win the pennant? What do we want to achieve, and how will we measure success?

As you can see, it is fairly straightforward to take each of these headings and bridge them to managing others. And there are many examples in the literature aligning teams with various sporting analogies. They present an easily recognizable visual picture for people to understand what is needed.

In the spring we think of newness, rebirth—a time to refresh. You know, lambs, bunnies, flowers, longer daylight. When we think of training, we might think of fitness and health in all its aspects—body, mind, soul and relationships. We could use spring in terms of a jump start, let’s get going! Our interest is in looking at where we have been and where we are going; what we need to do to get there; where we can tryout, practice, select a team, build the team and play to whatever the definition and rules of winning are for us.

Most of us would not even consider ourselves Major League baseball hopefuls. But many people with responsibilities which, in financial terms, equal those of the salar-



ics of many baseball players are sent up to the plate with little idea of the game, the rules, the feared batter, or even how to get to first base. They tend to strike out, hit pot flies and are rarely invited to join the big leagues.

Take this opportunity to do your spring training. What will it be?

Start
Practice
Refresh
Improvement
Now
Growing

Teamwork
Rules of the game
All bases covered
Individual effort
No one left on base
Ideas
None of us is as good as all of us together
Go for the gold!