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### **Four Lessons A Baseball Manager Could Teach Your Team**

There is a saying that says baseball is the game most like life. For one reason, the season is long; coaches and players spend more than eight months together-this year being the exception. For another, it is a team sport that is truly individualistic; employees do the same because while they are part of a team they are judged by individual results. Since the heart of the game is one on one, pitcher versus batter. And for another it falls to the manager to pull players together to get them to play as a team, as fielders and as players. Which is exactly what managers off the diamond do.

How do managers get a group of players to play together? Well, one manager does it by telling each and every one of them that he loves them.

According a story by Matthew Gutierrez in the Washington Post, Clint Hurdle, then-manager of Pittsburgh Pirates, spent one on one time with each of his players several times a season. He also did the same with his minor league coaches. These meetings are not love-in's; they are face to face sit downs meant to discuss the key issue or issues facing a player. When things are going well, the meeting may take a minute; when things need to be said, the meeting will stretch to an hour.

What Hurdle is doing is real-time coaching. Which might seem obvious since as manager he is a coach, but not every manager is like Hurdle. He is part strategist, part organizer, part cheerleader, and part motivational speaker. He even has a newsletter that he sends to his subscribers noting his thoughts.

Players listen to Hurdle because he has been one of them who played 10 seasons in the majors where his career average was .259, not bad for the modern era. He struggled with alcohol and has been married three times and divorced twice. Hurdle also is raising a teenager with special needs. In short, when Hurdle speaks, his words resonate with authenticity.

And that may be the heart of his connection to players. Hurdle has experienced the highs and lows of the game, and life, and so he can connect more effectively with his players. And for that reason, here are some things that Hurdle does that managers outside of sports can emulate.

**Know your people.** Organizations that succeed have a culture of coaching. Managers spend time getting to know their employees on a personal level. They understand what motivates them as well as what turns them off.

**Schedule coaching meetings.** Coaching does not happen if you don't schedule it. Have regularly scheduled sessions that focus on development, both as an employee and as a professional.

**Keep your door open.** The best managers spend much time listening. They make themselves available for players. Consider these "ad hoc coaching" that occur outside the schedule. They can be times to cheer up or console, or sometimes cajole. The most important thing is to keep the door open.

**Instill confidence.** The best managers do something special for their performers. They bring out the best in each one instilling greater level of confidence. While an employee may say he does not want to let his boss down, the good employees are doing what their manager wants them to do: succeed for themselves, not for someone else.

Not every manager can, nor should, try to be Clint Hurdle, but what each in his or her own way can do is reach out to people on the team and connect. Let them know that you care and that you are there for them. This is not rocket science, but there is science behind it. Research shows that when people feel that their boss cares about them, they will be more inclined to do better.... Managers like Clint Hurdle practice that lesson every day.

\*Source: John Baldoni, Forbes.com; Matthew Gutierrez, Washington Post

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