

How to turn your organization around: Lessons learned from the 2013 World Series Champions

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November 1, 2013

We all want our businesses to be successful. We want our customers and employees to be happy. We want to be profitable and be a force in the marketplace. So what happens when the goals you set forth aren't being reached? What can you do as an executive to refocus and re-energize your group? Just take a page out of the Boston Red Sox' playbook: They went from last to first in just one season. This year's championship marks the team's first World Series win at Fenway Park since Babe Ruth played there in 1918. I, along with many other avid Sox fans witnessed the team's transformation game after game. Watching them has inspired me to craft these clear-cut lessons that you can easily apply to your business or organization:

1. Restructure your management team:

The Red Sox fired their manager last year. It is no secret that the players did not like manager Bobby Valentine. He alienated his players before the season even started and fought with them all season long. He was a bad hire, and after one season the Red Sox cut him loose. Often in business we hold onto underperforming managers too long, ... way too long.

2. Change the culture of the organization:

Not only did the Red Sox fire their manager, they "fired" some of their best players. Anyone who had a negative influence on the organization was OUT.

3. Bring in people who are excited to be part of your organization:

I've read many times this year that the Red Sox carefully chose players who really wanted to play in Boston. Between the relentless press and the diehard fans, Boston can be a demanding town to play in. The new players thrived under pressure, relished the passion, and embraced the history and tradition of Red Sox Nation.

4. Emphasize a team mentality:

No one complained when top players sat on the bench during the playoffs and World Series. No one was sulking in the dugout. All the players rooted for each other- even if they didn't play all game. Most winning teams have spirit, but few were as visible as this bearded crew.

5. Strive for something bigger than yourselves, and even bigger than your team:

After the Sox won the World Series many of the players mentioned the City of Boston. They spoke about the city and how it suffered during the Boston Marathon Bombing. You could feel the emotion. This win meant more to them than just a win for the Red Sox. The Red Sox wore "Boston Strong" logos on their left sleeves and erected a large emblem on the Green Monster as a symbol of unity

since that horrific event. This win was part of the healing process for the entire city, and all those who suffered.

6. Be David against Goliath:

The Sox started the 2012 season as one of the favorites to win the World Series and then came in last. In 2013, they were favored to finish pretty close to last. Many of the players mentioned this after the World Series. They were motivated by this lack of respect - they had a lot to accomplish, and they were on a mission to prove many wrong.

7. Put faith in your best players and trust them to do their best

Look at John Lackey, the star Sox pitcher who was shunned by the fans and reporters as part of the problem over the last two years. Manager John Farrell knew Lackey was hurt and needed surgery and sent him to get healthy. Lackey came back strong and was a key performer in Game 6. Offer the same kind of support and guidance to some of your underperforming employees – find out what they need to improve - and help turn them into super stars.

8. Know your heritage and history:

What would the Red Sox be without the rich history of Babe Ruth, the curse, the 2004 comeback against the Yankees, and Fenway Park?? Do you know your company's history? What is their heritage? I often ask people I meet where they are from and how their family arrived in the place they settled. To my surprise, many had no idea. When I first started working at Charles River Apparel, I discovered that my great uncle owned an apparel company during World War 2 and manufactured jackets less than 2 miles from our original location. Our company mantra is based on the principles from the sport of rowing- my Dad and founder of the company was a rower in college. His heritage (and mine) became the cornerstone of our business. We continually strive to propel Charles River Apparel forward utilizing our core values of perseverance, determination, and teamwork. Embrace *your* company's heritage and use it to motivate your organization. Reverse your company curse!

About Barry Lipsett and Charles River Apparel

Barry Lipsett is the President and Owner of Charles River Apparel, a leading producer of performance apparel, based in Sharon, Massachusetts. Celebrating 30 years in business in 2013, Lipsett's family-owned company been recognized with numerous industry awards and has pioneered remarkable charitable programs for cancer related causes and families in need. An avid Boston sports fan and long-time Red Sox season ticket holder, Lipsett was selected to throw out the first pitch at a Red Sox home game in April. For more information on Charles River Apparel and Barry Lipsett visit www.charlesriverapparel.com.

