



Playing time is essential to developing talent

By John A. Gentle, DLP

IN EARLY APRIL THE New York Yankees sent their top major league prospect down to their Scranton Triple-A ball team to gain critical learning experiences. In the meantime, the Yankees began the task of repeating as World Series Champions much to the dismay of those day-dreaming Red Sox fans like my wife and the editorial director of this esteemed magazine.

Today, somewhere in the United States, a logistics manager has just been called into his boss' office. He's surprised to learn that the company is giving him a highly-touted young prospect to help him meet the goals that the company has set for his department this year.

Walking back to his desk, the supervisor wonders where he's going to have this person sit and what he's going to have this person do.

How will the learning experiences of these two top prospects compare?

Will the manager's learning experience pale in comparison to the prospects? Perhaps a quick comparison of the plan for both will reveal the answer.

Since Baseball is only a sport, let's start there. A Triple-A player will be expected to develop his skill every day, working together with his teammates to win the game. He will play in the cold, rain, and extreme heat. Defensively, he will play on different size fields, some well maintained some not. He will have to learn how to compensate for the wind, sun, and the curvature of the flight of the ball as it spins coming off the bat of right-handed and left-handed hitters.

Offensively, he will face righties and southpaws. He will see curves, fastballs, change-ups, sliders, and splitters. He will compete directly against rookies, all-stars, and even potential Hall-of-Famers. He needs to understand how humidity and sea level affects the flight of the ball. Muscular development, dexterity, agility, hand and foot speed will need to be coupled with anticipation, judgment,

and the skill assessment of the fielders. Patience will need to be coupled with passion to be controlled on and off the field. Above all, the prospect will need to develop and protect his body from career ending injuries.

Now, consider the highly-touted logistics prospect. He graduated from a good business school with a major in logistics and supply chain. His interpersonal skills appear to be good, but he will need to learn the business. More specifically he'll need to understand business goals, department processes, KRAs, measures, fundamental metrics, qualifying carriers, bidding and rate negotiation, carrier development, tendering freight, along with different plant loading processes and load patterns to minimize damage and maximize cube utilization—and don't forget those pesky FMCSA and CBP rules.

The logistics manager thinks long and hard about where he should start the prospect. Maybe he can put him in with the dispatch team and have him learn the basics of tender-

ing and carrier selection. Or perhaps he can even sit with the rate negotiation team on the upcoming bid. The supervisor reasoned that as long as the new guy doesn't do anything to make us look bad or screw up a big customer's order, we'll be okay.

We're well aware that the Triple-A baseball team will provide a superior training experience. Organized with a different scenario every day, farm teams provide a well thought-out training plan, requiring and relying on all players to use and develop skills every day to win the game. At the end of the season the new player will understand the game, know the rules, get to know the competition, learn the strategy, execute the game plan, and use judgment to manage risk effectively.

If your logistics and transportation training program does not include a structured three- or four-week orientation with the business, plants, carriers, industry, regulations, pending legislation, and planned rotation assignments to different department teams with strong expectation for contribution, then you've just struck out and left your new hire stranded on the bench searching the Internet for meaningful work. □

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