

# Cultivating Exemplary Leadership

## Part Two

The following excerpt is derived from the forthcoming manuscript, “Lead Me Out to the Ballgame: Stories and Strategies to Develop Major League Leadership,” which is being written by Dr. Howard Fero and his colleague, Dr. Rebecca Herman. The work is based on more than 100 interviews, conducted with current and former Major League Baseball players and managers. To follow their progress, their research, and to discuss baseball and leadership, please ‘like’ their [Facebook page](#).

*“I don’t care how long you’ve been in this game or what kind of success you’ve had in this game; every day you have to gain their trust, and every day you have to gain their respect.”*

*Davey Johnson, as Manager of the Washington Nationals*

### ***RESPECT***

Respect ... it is hard to hear or read that word without a vision of Aretha Franklin belting it out; it is something that we all seem to crave and sometimes wonder if we will ever earn enough of it. As Aretha said, we need to “find out what it means to me,” and to us, even more significant, is finding out what it means to the organization or team as a whole. How does a manager having the respect of his players impact their commitment and play? How does a player having the respect of his manager impact the team? And how does respecting your organization impact the work that you do? Rodney Dangerfield spent his career proclaiming, “I get no respect,” and as you read ahead, think about the respect you get, the respect you give, and the impact it has on the players in your life.

### ***RESPECT THE POSITION***

There is a basic notion when discussing leadership that people follow others who have power. This concept, however, needs a little explanation in that power does not and should not come from a people’s positions alone, but should come from who they are and what they do. The power should come from the person, not the position. It’s true, as Ned Yost,

manager of the KC Royals pointed out, “when you become a manager, right off the bat you garner respect because you’re a manager.” This is the positional power we mentioned above, and a power that many people throughout the world rely upon. This type of power, however, only goes so far. As Yost continues, “you’ve got to earn that ‘respect’ every single day.” We may get a person’s respect from our position initially, but we will either keep it or lose it depending on our actions once we are there. Following a leader or a manager solely because one is in charge will take us far enough to avoid getting reprimanded or far enough to do a good job. Following people because we respect them and what they stand for will bring us to levels of performance that will lead to greater personal and in turn greater organizational success.

### ***THE RIGHT FIT***

What’s important to point out in regard to respecting the manager (or for that matter, respecting the players, the team, or the game in general) is that the first step in cultivating a culture of respect is putting together a team comprised of people with not only the ability to hit a ball, make a play, or throw strikes, but a team of people with a moral compass, a team of people who have drive and character, a team of people who want to be there and will do what is necessary to support the team as a whole. Talent is important, but fit is vital. We as leaders need to, as Jim Collins points out, “start by getting the right people on the bus, the wrong people off the bus, and the right people in the right seats” (Collins, 2001).

### ***EARN IT***

The task of cultivating the respect of his players, as a Major League manager must do, is not any different from earning the respect of an employee or a colleague in any organization, so how does one do this? Well, to borrow a line from the Smith Barney commercials and John Houseman from the 1980s, “he earns it!” Sean Burroughs, who we spoke to when he was a member of the Minnesota Twins, pointed to honesty and openness as two of the things which lead him to respecting his managers. A manager needs to be honest with his players about their position on the team, what is expected of them, and what they need to do to succeed. They need to be “true to their word, and true to what they preach.” As infielder Eric Hosner of the Kansas City Royals told us, “the players notice that, and then ‘they’ gain a lot more respect.”

### ***A CULTURE OF RESPECT***

Having respect for the manager, having a manager who respects his or her people, having respect for the organization you work for, and having a respect for what you as an individual are doing...these ingredients together are what will bring out the best from the individual and in turn from the organization as a whole. A culture of respect will lead to success on and off the field, in and out of the workplace, and with all those who see the individual and who he or she represents.



*Dr. Howard Fero with Washington Nationals Manager Davey Johnson.*

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