



# Go Team!

## Training and Motivation for Workplace Wins

MANAGEMENT CONNECTION

How to model your department like a sports team to create a winning game plan

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How often do you refer to your workforce as your *team*? Most likely, every day. We are a united force, going for the win each day. This requires drafting the right players, taking care of your stars, focusing on practice and training, learning from the losses, and celebrating the wins. You and your employees have probably never been on a professional sports team, but modeling your department after the business of athletics might be the way to go. Ready to make a game plan? *Let's form a team huddle...* "TEAM" on 3! **1-2-3 TEAM!**

### INDIVIDUAL ROLES

Each person has a role that should be practiced and fine-tuned so they are always ready for game day.

#### Team Owner

If you and your team are fortunate enough to have regular conversations with the administrator, CEO, or owner of your workplace, you know the impact they can have on daily motivation and drive to win. In a school setting, this might mean the principal serves lunch with the line staff or eats lunch with the students. In health care, you might see the CEO or administrator hosting catered lunch meetings or visiting the



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cafeteria for their daily coffee. Encouraging an atmosphere of approachability and expectation to follow the organization's mission statement is a key role they can model. As a department head, you can model that relationship and invite them to serve as a guest chef or server for a meal. In the book, *The Front-Line Leader* by Chris Van Gorder, he encourages CEOs and leaders to "show up." Van Gorder states: "The first rule of presence is engagement. It's the primary purpose. Roll up your sleeves and get your hands dirty."

### Coach

In a foodservice setting, the coach might be the CDM, CFPP or the RDN. The coach harnesses each individual's strengths and coaches them on their weaknesses. To quote the fictional

### Manager

Comparing the sports manager role with the foodservice manager role, there are similarities in the following job descriptions (<https://bestaccreditedcolleges.org/>):

- **Creating and organizing schedules:** The foodservice manager is responsible for the schedule (or at least responsible for the person who is responsible for the schedule). It might be helpful to look back on your first part-time job and how your schedule was important. Honoring time-off requests when possible, giving advance notice for their work days/hours, and creating accountability for switches and time off are key responsibilities.
- **Promoting 'clients' through various forms of media:** Are you keeping up with the

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character Ted Lasso, "For me, success is not about the wins and losses. It's about helping these young fellas be the best versions of themselves on and off the field." In everyday operations, we can lose sight of our role in the individual employee's life. In reality, you might be the only person in their life who will coach and train them on their job and even in life. Take that coach role seriously and remind yourself to be that role model, which can require patience and persistence. Some days, the coach needs to take a time-out to gather their thoughts and make a play change. Make sure you take the time-outs and check in with your team.

times and recognizing employees on social or internal media? According to Market.us, 83.3 percent of total active Internet users are actively using social media. If employees sign a waiver saying they give permission for social media photos and recognition, it might be a fun way to recognize them among their peers. For example, posting a photo of the employee of the month, allowing them to share or tag themselves. Recognizing how people want to be recognized earns you bonus points.

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- **Handling and negotiating contracts:** The CDM, CFPP, along with their co-captain, the Human Resources (HR) department, most likely is involved in hiring employees. This is HR's specialty, so let them take this ball and run with it as much as possible. HR professionals are current on laws and regulations, and can take the pressure off of you and your game plan on a daily basis.
- **Maintaining positive public relations:** How the facility, system, and community view your department is a big deal. You want to be the best employer on the block. No matter what your employees' future goals are, you can leave them with a positive experience where they learn the skills to carry over into future positions or teams.
- **Ensuring compliance with rules and policies:** Writing and updating your Policies and Procedures and maintaining compliance is a critical part of your job. For employee reviews, state or local surveys, or disciplinary action, Policies and Procedures allow you to follow an objective decision-making process and game plan.

## Players

The players in food service are the front-line staff, back-of-the house cooks, servers, dishwashers, pastry chefs, and many more positions. Each player needs to understand and practice their position. Even if they have played in that position before, on-the-job training and coaching is vital. We cannot assume people know how to jump into the play during a game when they have not been to practice. Peer-to-peer training has its role, but so does leading by example and making sure you touch base with each player before game day. Leo, a director of operations



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for a foodservice organization with 700 employees, says the real training happens in the kitchen. "We always teach food safety in a classroom setting, but once they have that certification, we get into the kitchen for hands-on training. It is amazing how the book knowledge is forgotten, but once they are taking actual temperatures, they remember it forever."

## Cheerleaders

You guessed it, this might be your job too! Making sure the fans (patients, clients, inmates, students) support and cheer on the team is a huge responsibility. You can show your support by cheerleading with words and actions. Some players want loud cheering that everyone can hear, while others want the personal note or high-five for a job well done. Regardless of position and experience, all players want to know they are doing a good job. Being specific with your praise and appreciation goes a long way.

## Injured Reserve Players

In sports, the injured players still have a role. Whether they are out on sick leave or injury, we have to make sure they have a sub. Are you cross-training your employees so they can take on a new position when the starters are on the injured reserve list? There should be increased focus and importance on our players' mental health as well. Taking a mental health day may be necessary

to prevent poor performance or an extended leave in the future. Focusing on employee health and wellness benefits the team. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), healthier employees are less likely to call in sick or use vacation time due to illness. Companies that support workplace health have less call ins and increased productivity. "The cost savings of providing a workplace health program can be measured against absenteeism among employees, reduced overtime to cover absent employees, and costs to train replacement employees." (CDC)

## OTHER FACTORS FOR WORKPLACE WINS

In addition to focusing on the individual roles of team members, it's important to consider the following.

### The Draft

Drafting the right players takes time and money. You don't want to draft the best player for the position and then have them leave for a different team because of pay or other benefits. Putting money and training into your current team is more productive and less expensive than drafting and training new players. For example, if it costs you roughly 10 hours and \$2,400 to recruit, draft (hire), and train a breakfast cook, what would it look like if you put those 10 hours and \$2,400 into training the current



breakfast cook on new plays and personal growth and skill development? Examples are registering them for a garnishing workshop, training them in leadership skills, or even purchasing new aprons that give them a sense of being appreciated on the job. Work with HR to understand the time and financial commitments of your drafting process, and make it your goal to reduce spending in this area by keeping turnover low. Keeping the current starting lineup happy makes financial sense.

### The Locker Room

Your department might have a literal or figurative locker room. The key is that players have a space to prepare, mentally and physically, for their practice or game. This is a space where you have team huddles and post information/plays that are relevant to their day. Employees also need to refresh during a time-out or intermission. Even if it isn't on game day, recapping losses (bad days when things didn't go as planned) and celebrating wins is important in the locker room. Do you have a space in your department where the team can accomplish these tasks? If not, thinking outside the box might be necessary. For example, having a wall with motivational quotes, a whiteboard to write the play of the day or to recognize the MVP is simple and inexpensive to create. Other ideas might be painting a picnic table for outdoor breaks, adopting a table in the dining room when residents are not dining, or reserving a facility

conference room for team huddles or white-board talks (training). The “locker room” can bring the team together as a family for meaningful activities. Adam Grant, an organizational psychologist and professor at Wharton says, “I saw that happen in multiple organizations where people said, ‘You know what’s really meaningful to me about my job is helping other people to learn. But I don’t get to do that very often, and if I could gather a group of people who all wanted to learn together, I would feel like I’m contributing something to their lives,’” says Grant.

### The Merchandise (aka “The Merch”)

Creating, posting, and wearing team logos creates a fun, loyal atmosphere. Perhaps you can have a logo or theme design contest and order t-shirts with the winning design, or have an annual motto that all training and change efforts build around. When players wear the same logo (uniform) as their teammates, they feel like they are part of the overall success of the team.

### The Competition

Successful teams focus on their competitive spirit and drive to win! Creating competitions to track temperatures, dummy trays, or trim service times can motivate players and improve outcomes. Players should work hard to win, but also celebrate the

success of other positions. This positive, competitive atmosphere comes from leadership and should build up, rather than push down, each individual.

### The Trophy

Ask yourself what winning means to your team. A few trophies in food service include:

- Perfect sanitation reviews/scores
- A tag-free inspection
- Excellent customer satisfaction surveys
- Low turnover rates
- Full-time equivalents (FTEs) on goal
- Spending on budget or P&Ls to be proud of
- Perfect meeting and training attendance
- Increased sales
- Improved employee satisfaction measures

Whatever “win big” means to your team, it is the role of the CDM, CFPP to draft, train, and coach that winning team. Use your support staff, skills of the players, and a smart playbook to get you there. Each small effort you make will lead to a more successful team, which in turn can trickle into your facility and even community. In the words of Vince Lombardi, former NFL player and legendary coach, “Individual commitment to a group effort: That is what makes a team work, a company work, a society work, a civilization work.” ■

## RESOURCES

- Grant, Adam. *adamgrant.net* Adam Grant – Books, Podcast, TED Talks, Newsletter, Articles
- Partnership for Prevention. *Leading by Example: CEOs on the business case for worksite health promotion*. Washington, DC: 2005
- Stewart WF, Ricci JA, Chee E, Morganstein D. *Lost productive work time costs from health conditions in the United States: results from the American productivity audit*. *J Occup Environ Med*. 2003;45(12):1234-1246

## CE Questions | MANAGEMENT CONNECTION



*This Level 1 article provides basic resources. The desired outcome is to ensure a basic understanding and explanation of concepts of the subject matter and recalling of related facts.*

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1. A manager’s role on the team includes:
  - A. Maintaining positive public relations
  - B. Drafting (hiring) every player (employee)
  - C. Training each position
2. What percentage of Internet users are active on social media?
  - A. 50.5 percent
  - B. 70.7 percent
  - C. 83.3 percent
3. Benefits of players being physically and mentally healthy include:
  - A. Increased productivity
  - B. Fewer call-ins
  - C. Both A and B
4. Why is it important to have the HR department as co-captain of the draft?
  - A. They have more time to talk to players (employees)
  - B. HR is current on hiring laws and regulations
  - C. Rookies (new employees) will feel more comfortable with someone who isn’t their coach (supervisor)
5. The “trophy” in food service might be:
  - A. Perfect sanitation scores on an inspection
  - B. Improved customer satisfaction scores
  - C. Both A and B
6. According to a quote in this article, a CEO or leader can “show up” by:
  - A. Keeping an open door policy
  - B. Eating all of their meals in the cafeteria
  - C. Engaging with employees and “rolling up their sleeves and getting their hands dirty”
7. Which statement best summarizes the parallel comparison between sports teams and the foodservice department?
  - A. The department is only successful by winning every time
  - B. Each person has skills to contribute to the overall success of the department
  - C. You should spend money on recruiting the biggest stars and only put training time and effort into their success

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