

THE EXTRA POINT

BY JERRY ROBERTS



974 Culture vs. Strategy – Which Wins?

Is it strategy that will lead you to the winners circle as an organization, or could it be that something else is more important? I'm Jerry Roberts, and we'll answer that question, next, on The Extra Point.

There's no doubt that a great strategy is a key factor in driving success in an organization. However, is strategy the end of the conversation? A fellow named Peter Drucker would disagree.

According to Drucker, often referred to as "The father of modern management," there is something more important. That would be company culture. In fact, Drucker once said, "Culture eats strategy for breakfast." His feeling was that the culture of the company determines your success, no matter how effective your strategy may be.

For the 2021 World Series champion Atlanta Braves, Drucker's words would likely have heads nodding in agreement. They built a successful culture, then added key players at midseason which led to the Braves surging to Major League Baseball's top team achievement.

However, the foundation for their championship may have been laid on a rainy May night, in Boston.

The Braves were there to play the Red Sox and when the rain came, the game was delayed for three hours. Players headed back into the clubhouse to try to occupy themselves for what they knew would be a long night.

Apparently, the Red Sox know how to be a good host to not only their players, but to the visiting team as well, and installed a soft-serve ice cream machine in the visitors' area. Braves players helped themselves to the ice cream, told stories, and turned a boring rain delay into a great experience.

When the rains stopped and the game

continued, the Red Sox won the game, but the Braves might have come away with something more important.

The Braves certainly felt they did, and liked the experience so much they petitioned successfully to get a soft-serve ice cream machine installed in their own clubhouse when they returned to Atlanta. What happened from that point forward may go down in ice cream history, as well as baseball history.

The team had a losing record, but began to mesh and do better. The team's management was encouraged, and took a big chance when they acquired several key players to make a run at the playoffs. They won the National League East Division, then beat the favored Milwaukee Brewers in the Division Series. Next up were the defending champion Los Angeles Dodgers.

The year before, the Braves had pushed the Dodgers to the brink of elimination in the National League Championship Series, before the Dodgers beat them four games to three. This time, the Dodgers suffered key injuries in the last week of the regular season, and the Braves took advantage to win and move into the World Series, where they beat the Houston Astros to claim the championship.

The win was attributed to top performances by several Braves players, including some of the new acquisitions, as well as solid coaching and managerial decision-making.

Could it also have been influenced by the soft-serve ice cream? Management experts like Peter Drucker have long held that liking the people we work with is a major issue in how we rate overall job satisfaction. The Braves players clearly became a tighter unit after that rainy, ice cream fest in Boston, and that continued after new players joined the team. (Con't.)

One thing is for sure. Baseball players are generally a superstitious lot. Whether or not the ice cream machine actually had anything to do with the team's success this season, you can bet it's going to be in that clubhouse and always full next year.

Is there something the people on your team like to do together, something that is successful in drawing everyone closer?

As Peter Drucker told us, "Culture eats strategy for breakfast." How's your company culture?

That's the Extra Point. Be responsible and make something good happen today. For 93.3 and the Ray Gibson Show, I'm Jerry Roberts.

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