

**WELCOME
TO THE BIG
LEAGUES**

**NINE INNINGS OF ESSENTIAL TIPS
FOR THE CORPORATE ROOKIE**

CARMINE DEL SORDI

Welcome to the Big Leagues

Nine Innings of Essential Tips for the Corporate Rookie

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This book was written for you. May these words, crafted from the love of the game of baseball, corporate life, and real life, guide you always. It is also dedicated to all of the incredible coaches and players out there who strive to be the best that they can be.

em·pow·er·ized [im-'paʊ(-ə)r\,īzd]

The heightened state of being experienced after a jolting force of knowledge ignites the best in you: *Having read “Welcome to the Big Leagues” and incorporated my learnings into daily practice, I am now empowered to be an all-star contributor, take control of my destiny and pursue a more fulfilling life.*

Origin:

1645–55; em⁻¹ + power

2014; em⁻¹ + power + ized

Acknowledgements

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Introduction

Welcome to the Big Leagues was written to provide new business professionals with meaningful tips on how to cover all of the bases for an all-star career and a fulfilling life. Packed with valuable insights from those who have mastered the game, you will find many entertaining and pertinent parallels to America's favorite pastime, baseball.

It is easy to see how most of the winning strategies, disciplines, and methodologies utilized within baseball, the business world, and our daily lives are all so similar. Whether fresh out of school, still a student, or currently a player, picture yourself as that young rookie who just inked a new contract with a major league team.

What's more, you have Hall of Famers here to coach you as you step up to the plate!

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PROLOGUE: THE BEANBALL

The world needs us. You are here to contribute. I am here to bring out your best.

Greatness is blind to color, race, religion, sex, politics, demographics, or any other category that could be used to divide people. Greatness lies deep within each of us. We just need to be aware of the fact that it's there and overcome the fears that prevent us from achieving greatness.

Unfortunately, it's becoming more and more difficult to make it or to feel successful in this country. America, commonly or formerly known as the "land of opportunity," has skyrocketing unemployment rates, national debt, and government aid. As these reach all-time highs, our future looks grimmer than ever.

It's up to you and it's up to me to accept responsibility and put an end to the recklessness that surrounds us. We were taught right from wrong, and yet we are willing to steal from or hurt others to get what we want. This country was built on hard labor, but somehow we seemed to have forgotten this. Are we going to worry about taking and protecting our own while greed, corruption, and short-sighted leadership run rampant?

If this downslide is ever going to change, we must become the productive and honorable members that our society so desperately needs. Accountability, responsibility, and integrity are just three of the

characteristics that we are all aware of ... but find it difficult to embrace. These are the essential building blocks needed to restore faith in humanity.

Unfortunately, we've become a land that is fueled by instant gratification. When we want something, we need to have it now, and at any cost. Whether it's a shiny new possession or casual information, it must be immediate. As we advance through this digital age, we seem to be evolving away from the ability to exercise patience. The attention span that people had when I was a child has simply fallen off like the human tail!

In my era, we watched *Mr. Roger's Neighborhood* on television. He was polite, very soft spoken, and kept a smooth monotone. The calm man moved across the set at a snail's pace, yet we were captivated and enthralled just to watch him change his shoes toward the end of the program, an act that nearly took five minutes. Today's youth couldn't make it through 30 seconds of that show without 20 pop-ups hitting the screen, or possessing the ability to remotely control the kind man to operate a grenade launcher. This makes me think about how difficult it must be today for teachers to lecture in a classroom.

Not only do we battle impatience and a limited attention span, the concept of saving for the future has also "evolved" out of our society. Fiscal responsibility used to be passed along from our ancestors, but we have let it spiral down the drain. When and how have we become so disillusioned? Just because a bank gives us credit does not mean we should rush to buy a pricy house that we can't afford, frivolously max out credit cards, or purchase stocks on margin? We put ourselves in impossible situations and want to blame others for it.

My great-grandfather never pointed the finger at anyone. He came to New York from Italy when he was 12 years old, not knowing a word of English. He worked feverishly, saved every penny possible, learned the language, and became extremely self-educated. It all paid off big as he developed into a very successful entrepreneur. The glory days ended and he would lose a fortune during the Great Depression ... but he worked his way back, inch-by-inch, to rise to millionaire status once again. My great-

grandfather was the first person to bring the beauty salon and spa concept to New Jersey. He would eventually own multiple locations as well as properties in the US and in Italy.

In what seems like a former lifetime, I took a chance at entrepreneurship within the restaurant and bar industry. At a very young age, I learned what it takes to run a tight operation. To this day, I am tormented by the incompetence that I observe when dining out. Fine establishments are run by adolescents who care more about checking Tweets than quality and the customer experience. The wait staff frequently passes by with empty hands, never to check on the table or remove a dirty plate, the cooks garnish entrees with wilted vegetables unfit for a rabbit, and the dish-washing crew believes that a faint impression of lipstick is okay to be left on a glass. Where is the pride in their work?

Sadly, the shoddy performance doesn't end there. It exists all around us, so much so that it has become the norm. At the supermarket, we watch the clerk overstuff our bag, causing it to tear apart later. In retail stores, we put up with the sales associate who is ill-informed on the product or too busy to field a question. The landscapers, contractors, or drycleaners are unskilled, yet charge top dollar for mediocre work.

The same incompetence can be found in the products we purchase, where the need for higher margin always outshines quality. From the button that springs from your new shirt during its first use to the brand new car with the illuminated check engine light, there are simply too many examples to list. Rather than delve into healthcare, I'll ask one simple question: What do you call the student who finished last in medical school? Answer: Doctor.

The corporate world is not exempt from this crisis. It's visible in the careless way we communicate, and the uninspired way we pursue each day. Those who do carry ambition often display too much of it, working solely for money with huge egos and a muddled definition of success. The it's-all-about-me mindset has no place in business. We know this but continually prove otherwise, and often need to be reminded.

Something has to change. We must wake up!

If you are a part of the corporate workforce, you have arrived at the big leagues. It's now your turn to make a difference. Start by doing things right again. Follow in the footsteps of the determined men and women who made America the greatest nation in the world. Take pride in what you do, commit to the quality of your work, and encourage others to do the same. Accept accountability for your actions and learn from your mistakes. Our ancestors never looked for excuses. They were bold and resilient, with an eagerness to learn and willingness to improve from each and every blow along the way. This rare characteristic has been ingrained in our DNA. It's time to resuscitate that dormant gene, take control of our destiny, and give this country its heartbeat back!

Changing the world sounds impossible. However, behaving responsibly and being the best you can possibly be each day, while helping others to do the same, are the only catalysts needed to make our society rise once again. Day-by-day and individual-by-individual, life's amazing journey will be what we choose of it.

This book was written to help you make it in the corporate world, and to thrive through the pursuit of a more fulfilling life. The examples you read are real, and are coupled with valuable skills and lessons learned from great mentors and important studies. Top tier baseball players and all-star business professionals share many of the same traits and characteristics. There are also unwritten rules for each game that players must follow in order to succeed. We'll explore these interesting parallels and other real world examples to drive key points.

So knock the dirt from your cleats and get ready to step up to the plate!

“Baseball is a rookie, his experience no bigger than the lump in his throat as he begins fulfillment of his dream.”

– Ernie Harwell

“BASEBALL GIVES YOU EVERY CHANCE TO BE GREAT. THEN IT PUTS EVERY PRESSURE ON YOU TO PROVE THAT YOU REALLY HAVEN'T GOT WHAT IT TAKES. IT NEVER TAKES AWAY THE CHANCE AND IT NEVER EASES UP ON THE PRESSURE.”

— JOE GARAGIOLA

1ST INNING: PLAY BALL

Congratulations and welcome to the Big Leagues, the corporate world that is. You have successfully marketed and sold yourself. Way to go! Similar to Babe Ruth, who first signed for a salary of \$250 per month, someone has actually paid for you to be a permanent player on their team, and that now propels you to professional status. Please take a moment to relish in the limelight of this epic achievement, but not for too long.

The commitment that brought you here will not be enough to boost you up the corporate ladder anytime soon. You see, in the corporate world, there is no such thing as a “natural.” If the ultimate aim is to become a poised and polished executive, the only way to get there is through years of practice and personal development. Reading a how-to book will not improve your batting average, nor will it make you a shoe-in as the next CEO. That will take a lot of hard work, patience, and luck, along with an unyielding motivation toward continuous improvement.

Fortunately, you have already demonstrated the fact that you have potential, or you wouldn't have nudged a foot in the door. But don't think for a second your company was sold on anything other than your potential. These sobering facts may help deflate an oversized ego:

- Never lose sight of the fact that your employer does not need you.

- The company has and will manage just fine without your contribution.
- Employees are dispensable and the larger the company, the more dispensable the employee.
- Realize how big of a privilege it is to be part of the team.
- Never take this privilege for granted.

Sound like a harsh environment? It will be more trying than anything you have experienced in the past. Will it be fair? Of course not, but if you play the game to the best of your ability, the rewards will be worth the relentless sacrifice. Unlike Babe Ruth, your salary will not increase 10-fold within the first few years, but you will receive perks like healthcare, 401k matching, employee stock purchase programs, bonuses, stock grants, travel, PTO, and more, all instituted to support your overall well-being and quality of life.

Stepping into the corporate world is unlike anything you could have ever known. First is the demanding schedule. College and part-time jobs teased you with oodles of flexibility, such as seasonal breaks, blown off classes, a coworker to cover a shift, and hours of free time to utilize as you see fit. Unfortunately these are all things that no longer exist for you today. Instead, you are now expected to arrive bright and early each morning with a can-do attitude for 227 days per year, which assumes your team offers a decent holiday package. Heck that's 40% greater than the 162 games a baseball team plays each season and at least 25% greater than those 180 glory days of high school.

Showing up on time and looking professional every day is the easy part, but we'll get more into punctuality and uniforms later. You will soon learn that thriving each day is a completely different story, as most of the roadblocks or pitfalls in your way may not necessarily be internal.

Second is the fact that you now have a boss. If this person is good, he or she will share many of the same attributes as a teacher or coach. But in reality, your boss will be flawed, and all of the responsibility to develop will sit on your shoulders. So get on this person's good side, because even though you may work for an excellent company, for the next few years you'll be lucky to get exposure beyond two layers—your boss and your

boss's boss. These are the two who control your world and will determine, and probably dictate your fate.

Lastly, you'll need to earn your stripes and place on the team. The respect of your peers is a vital component toward your success. Unlike college, where you can skip the professor, who is known to be a hard ass, in the corporate world there is no escape from this person. In fact, you may need to depend on him or her to get the job done. You'll definitely need to depend on others to master your new role, so start showing gratitude and prove yourself as a team player now.

"I know there's certain things regarding your job or whatever you may end up doing [that you don't like], but I'm here to tell you, don't let your job define who you are. Your relationships will define who you are. No matter what you choose to do in life ... you are going to be in a position to make an impact on somebody's life."

– Bernie Williams

Who are you?

In today's culture where people seek instant information, you must know who you are before those around you quickly take the liberty to slap on a label.

An old FedEx Kinko's commercial comes to mind where a manager lectures his staff on an upcoming presentation. He states that everyone needs to assume their usual responsibilities and touts the following: "Jeff, you keep feeding me old information. Dean, I need you to not keep living up to your resume. Sue, you're in charge of waffling. ('Are you sure?' she retorts.) Jerome, you'll talk a big game and then do nothing. ('Let's do it,' he says confidently.) Rick, can you fold under pressure for me? ('Like a lawn chair,' he replies.) And Ted, you just keep thinking that everyone is out to get you." ('They are,' responds Ted.)

Okay, maybe the peers within your organization will show a little more tact, but you will be surprised by how quickly they'll feel the need to categorize you. At first it may even start off in a trivial way, like by college mascot or favorite sports team.

Just imagine that you started a new career in Boston, and the only thing the team knew about you was that you were a die-hard Yankees fan. It's crazy, but people will already have preconceived notions on what you're all about. It may take months before you hear someone admit that you're "okay for a Yankees fan." This is precisely why religion and politics have become such taboo subjects. Trust me on this. I've worked for Fortune 500 companies on both coasts, and being from the east comes with a stereotype.

"One of the fellows called me 'Cyclone' but I shortened it to 'Cy' and it's been that ever since."
—Cy Young

Serious consideration needs to be placed on how you would like to present and/or brand yourself. If not, there will likely be a big disconnect from what you think and what others have to say about you.

Let's start with appearance. Baseball players are lucky, the owners removed all wardrobe decisions by providing uniforms. The New York Yankees took it one step further by implementing a facial hair policy that doesn't allow hair below the lip. You, on the other hand, need to build your image from scratch.

Remember, those dorm days of rolling out of bed and throwing on a t-shirt with crazy motif, a pair of shorts, and sandals are now over. That sophomoric attire used to be revered in places like Silicon Valley, CA. However, nowadays, where image is everything and people want to be taken seriously, even in such places as Northern California, the fashion climate has begun to change.