

# Guest Author and Consultant Bob Cooper: Respecting All Team Contributions



The NCAA basketball final game is now set. Kentucky and Kansas will meet on Monday evening to determine who will be the national champion. What is so fascinating is to watch how different players contribute in key situations that make the difference in the ultimate outcome.

Like sports, business is about recognizing the contributions of every team member toward the common goal – to win. In sports, it's all about winning the game. In business, it's about executing on business strategies and providing value-added products and services for our customers. We must maintain profitability (another way to view winning), and the question remains – how do we win? Winning in business has a clear similarity to sports – the players on the court (or dealing directly with your customers), are the ones who ultimately determine the final score. The coach develops strategy (and hopefully allows for input from the team), but the players must execute.

**Do you value every member of your team?**

**Do you believe that every employee plays an important role in the organization's success?**

These are very important questions to reflect on. Enlightened leaders know that every employee is critical to success. The customer's first encounter with your organization may be with a receptionist at the front desk, a security guard, or a telephone operator. We all know the importance of acknowledging the customer. We also know that you never get a

second chance at a first impression.

Imagine an environment where the receptionist, security guard, or telephone operator are not given respect. What if they are not engaged in the process of offering ideas to make the customer's experience an even better one? What if they are made to feel like the last player on the bench who has little to do with team success?

**The following are a few suggestions that demonstrate respect for every team member:**

**1) Acknowledge Team Members** – Take the time to walk around and thank individuals for their contributions. Connect with individuals in a sincere way that demonstrates that you value them, and want the best for them. If you have 1,000 employees, then you will need to do a lot of walking – it's well worth it.

**2) Give Credit to Team Members** – If you achieve great results, let team members recognize that "winning" took the efforts of every employee. Employees respect leaders who are comfortable acknowledging that the game is won or lost by those on the front lines.

**3) Express Sincere Gratitude** – I always enjoy watching a coach after winning a big game say – "I am so proud of the team and grateful to have such great players."

**4) Respect Individuality** – Learn about each individual's strengths, and continue to build on those strengths. Don't dwell on weaknesses, but help team members to use their strengths to achieve positive team results. We are all unique individuals with strengths, aspirations, and internal motivators. Great leaders take the time to really understand each team member and create an environment for the intrinsic motivation to flourish. They are committed to each team member's continued growth and development. They care about every team member, and see them as a unique person

contributing to team success.

**5) Model Respect** – This is extremely critical. Every team member must see their leader treating every internal and external customer with total respect. Say “good morning”, “how can I help you”, “thank you”, “what’s your opinion on the best way to handle this issue”?, etc.

**Great leaders know that others are watching everything they say and do.**

If you try to fool others into believing you care about them and their needs, and really don’t, you are only fooling yourself. Great organizations that build and sustain value in the long run are built by leaders who authentically engage the hearts and minds of their great employees.

If you follow the above suggestions, and really mean it – you will always be a winner. It might not be a national championship, but you will develop the foundation for greatness.



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