

Leadership Lessons from Billy Beane



I just returned from seeing *Moneyball*, a great baseball flick. Brad Pitt plays Billy Beane, the GM of the Oakland Athletics 2002 squad that won an unprecedented twenty straight games that season—despite having the lowest pay roll in the major leagues. Season after season Beane would watch teams with deeper pockets steal his star players. When he realized that he couldn't compete with the New York Yankee's salaries, he decided that he needed to change the way the game was won. He needed to actually evolve the game by re-imagining it in such a way that you couldn't just buy the World Series. There are some leadership lessons in this true story for church leaders.

First lesson: Do not prematurely resolve the tension. Billy refuses to accept solutions from his scouts and assistants that were based on the old paradigm. At this point, he had no solutions himself. He simply held the tension. He steeped himself in the conflict that ensued when he consistently contradicted the "experts". He increased the evolutionary tension. It's my experience that most leaders in the church capitulate in the face of conflict. How do we support our leaders and congregations to hold the tension, when everything in us wants to resolve it prematurely for the sake of a false peace—a peace that will ultimately keep us from evolving?

Lesson 2: Staying in the fire focuses your attention on outside-the-box solutions. Billy stumbles upon a completely new model in a young Yale economics graduate. This kid is using sophisticated mathematical models to recruit and draft young players. For the record, it's called [*sabermetrics*](#). Billy hires him, after the young wizard confesses that according to

his model, Billy himself got drafted way too high, and got paid way too much (when Billy broke into the major leagues as a player).

Lesson number three: It's not about you. Billy was functioning from a higher principle than ego. He really wanted to change how the game was imagined. St. Paul gets a bad rap in many, postmodern academic circles. But in my estimation, Paul was the Billy Beane of religious movements. I don't have time to go into it in this piece, but I recommend Timothy Ashworth's, *Paul's Necessary Sin*. One of you recommended it to me. Thank you. Paul thought that the game needed to be played from the inside-out, that God had indeed written a new covenant upon his heart as Jeremiah prophesied, that the prophecy was being fulfilled through Christ, and this was for everybody, now! Paul took heat from his own team, the Roman Empire, and even his own fledgling communities. But he didn't buckle. It wasn't about him. It was about Christ in him.

The start of the season for the Athletics was an unmitigated disaster. They fielded a squad of virtual no names and lost spectacularly—with the predictable onslaught of scorn from every corner. His own manager refused to enact the model. He repeatedly started their one star player, despite direct orders from the top. The fans and the commentators were solidly behind the manager. It wasn't his fault, the experts said, it was Billy Beane's fault. So what did Billy do? He traded their one star player just before a game, which meant that the manager had to go with the game plan and play the percentages. Then, he fired their head scout who refused to make the necessary adjustments.

Lesson four: It's obvious, but sometimes leaders need to make bold and unpopular decisions, and then stick with them. Very few of us are willing to make these kinds of decisions. When I was putting together the team for Canadian Memorial I gained a bit of a reputation as the hatchet man. We fired the Music Director, who people loved, but who couldn't deliver our music

vision. We hired a very talented man to replace him, and then fired him nine months later. He wasn't truly interested in our music vision. Half a dozen people left the church. We let a community worker go, along with an administrator. Once we had the team in place, it was smooth sailing. This was a very painful, but necessary, period in my evolution as a leader. I'm a pleaser by default, so I had to learn a whole new set of skills, and the rest of the team had the courage stand with me.

Ok, what was Billy's model? There were many mathematical variables, but the single one that they chose to focus on was called "on-base percentage" (OBP). This just means that by whatever means, whether by taking a walk, getting hit by a pitch, or hitting singles, the player gets to first base. If you don't men on base, there's no way to score runs. This variable defined their strategy, and importantly what they *wouldn't* focus on. For example, they were defensively just "good enough", but focusing on one thing helped them to dedicate their limited resources.

Lesson number five: Do one thing very well.

Billy hired a pudgy Triple A player who was virtually unnoticed by Big Leagues. But when they crunched the numbers, this guy knew a ball from a strike and got on base more than anybody else. With this one big thing in mind, they coached every player on how he could improve his OBP.

Suddenly, the season started to turn around. Everybody was flummoxed. The Athletics began their winning streak that helped them win their division. They lost in the playoffs, but the paradigm had shifted permanently. Billy's manager got the credit. But it wasn't about who got the credit. After the season finished, the Boston Red Sox approached Billy with the biggest offer in the history of the game for GM's. He turned it down. It really wasn't about the money. The Red Sox won the World Series two years later using Billy's method.

So, here's the question I want to leave you with. If you had to choose one variable, Billy's equivalent of OBP for the church, what would it be? If you had to organize around a single big thing, coach toward it, possibly take heat from implementing it, and be willing to stand on it and for it, what would it be?

Seeing as there are so various families buying online and likewise exploring the internet market place, it has become increasingly famous to purchase medications online. So the next question is where can you get information that is reliable. You can find useful information fleetly and conveniently by going online. The most common sexual problems in men are erectile dysfunction and ejaculation disorders. A lot of doctors think about "[levitra cost](#)". Did learned slightly about "[buy levitra online usa](#)"? Other question we are going to is "[buy generic levitra online](#)". In effect, a medicinal reviews found that up to three quarters of folk on such drug experience side effects. Luckily, most cases of sexual dysfunction are treatable, so it is momentous to share your concerns with your associate and physician. Today, there are many options for men who suffer from erectile dysfunction. Get emergency help if you have any of these signs of a side effect to this treatment. Talk to your soundness care purveyor to see if it's sure to make the switch.