

LESSONS LEARNED | BY GERSON ROSENBLOOM

# Dangerous Assumptions

If you've been in business for a while, it's likely that many of your regular tasks are done with little or no thought. The more automatic a process becomes to you, the less likely you are to train your people well.

With that in mind, here's my favorite type of lesson learned: something that happened outside of business that offered great instruction for the workplace.



**Specific details matter when it comes to training new employees**

## STEPPING UP TO THE PLATE

Many years ago, I helped coach a peeewee baseball league. There was one little guy who just had a devil of a time connecting with the ball. We spent the entire week working on his grip, showing him exactly how much to choke up on the bat, perfecting his stance and posture, and helping him to watch the bat onto the ball.

When game day rolled around, everyone was excited — we knew that the little slugger had the exact tools he needed to get his first hit. He walked up to the plate confidently, held the bat like a pro, choked up just a little bit, and hauled off smashing the ball through the gap into left field. And then it happened! He dropped the bat and ran for all he was worth toward third base!

It's the things that we take for granted that cheat our employees of our very best training efforts. On the baseball diamond, we coaches assumed that it would be self-evident which way to run. Because we didn't spell out all of the steps, we let down our player. Instead of this being a moment of grand triumph, his 30 seconds of glory went up in a cloud of dust.

It's the small details that count. For instance, what do you do with a new hire on their first day? Does your training look something like, "Go out there and sell something?"

Sadly, I know that happens far too often. And then, months later, the manager is upset because this sales associate just doesn't seem to be able to relate to customers. Of course, the somewhat clueless "trainer" doesn't realize that he's the source of the problem because, after decades of selling, he assumed that everyone knew how to greet customers, develop rapport, and how to probe and qualify.

## HITTING A HOME RUN

A proper training program assumes nothing. Instead, your new hire is given the benefit of everything you've learned through your many years of experience, broken down into detailed steps.

If we were to replay this new hire's first day on the job, we'd teach him how to greet a customer properly. We'd explain that saying "may I help you" is a sure-fire way to build a wall between the sales associate and customer. We'd teach him to welcome his guest warmly and to strike up a natural, connected conversation that resembles a chat between two friends. We'd be sure that our protégé knew the unique things about our company that helps differentiate us from our competition so that those factors could be incorporated into the conversation when appropriate. The details will vary based on your company, but the level of detailed training will apply to every aspect of your operation. The point is you must spell out the specifics for the person you're training.

You must take no knowledge for granted. Only then will you have done your part to help your staff get on base every time they step up to the plate. **MI**

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