

What the Movie 'Moneyball' Teaches Us about Business Development

You know the feeling – that marvelous, almost manic, energy you experience after watching a deep, thought-provoking movie that propels you beyond the “things-that-make-you-go-hmm.” You might have aimed to dust off the aspirational goals that you’ve kept to yourself and the movie motivates you to tackle them first thing in the morning. You may even be on the verge of a Jerry McGuire moment and start writing your personal manifesto. (But be careful – don’t get yourself fired.)

We all have that *one* movie. For me, it is “Moneyball.” I won’t bore you with a detailed chronicle of the movie because you’re in luck: Netflix is currently streaming it to coincide with the World Series. Full disclosure here: It’s also no coincidence that I’m writing this when Jaffe’s theme at this year’s LMA Annual Conference was baseball and its apropos analogies to business development and relationship cultivation.

For me, “Moneyball” is one of those movies where I catch something new each time I watch it, and that certainly happened a few nights ago. This time, the pivotal moments in the movie seemed to be more profound than before, and, lucky for Jaffe, I fell asleep before I began my manifesto. Even so, it did make me think about an attorney’s mindset when it comes to marketing and business development. I’ll borrow some quotes and moments from the movie that set me on this journey.

“There is an epidemic failure within the game to understand what is really happening ... and this leads people ... to misjudge their players and mismanage their teams ... [T]hey think in terms of buying players. Your goal shouldn't be to buy players. Your goal should be to buy wins. And in order to buy wins, you need to buy runs... What I see is an imperfect understanding of where runs come from...”

I know it’s deep [smirk] but bear with me. When attorneys are asked why they should market and execute business development activities, their usual answer is “to get more clients.” Seems simple and straightforward. In reality, though, they have set their sights only on the “goal”: getting more clients. That’s true, but too broad. The goal shouldn’t be to just get clients. The goal should be to recognize and understand the small “wins” necessary *on the way* to getting a client.

Wins vs. Runs

Keeping with our analogy, those “wins” *have to be broken down into “runs.”* The first run could be getting an introduction to a target client (tapping into your network). The next run is getting a meeting with the target (you don’t have to be pushy, just gracious). The next run is having an easygoing but skilled dialog at your first meeting. The next run is cultivating the relationship so meetings and communications become more frequent and



Glennie J. Green
Senior Vice President
Marketing & Business
Development
817.266.2320
ggreen@jaffepr.com

you're learning about the target's pain points. Finally, those runs produce the first win, which is having an opportunity to present your and the firm's capabilities and solutions to the target's pain points.

You haven't gotten your new client yet, but you do have a win. Celebrate it, because you're going to build on it.

OK, now I'm going to bring it home (pun intended). Where do you think those runs come from? They didn't come from a mindset that had only the end goal in play (i.e., get new clients). They came from investing a little time and planning into the "how" to get a client.

The key words in that statement are "time" and "planning." The key words unspoken are "not overnight." It's a known fact that overnight success is unrealistic, so why do we expect the lack of effort and planning to produce an overnight result? That's an imperfect understanding of how to get a client. It's also what makes business development seem so hard.

Playing Other Positions

I love this moment in the movie:

"How are you liking first base, man?"

"It's a, it's a ... coming along, picking it up, you know, tough transition but I'm feelin' ... I'm starting to feel better with it."

"What's your biggest fear?"

"The baseball being hit in my general direction."

"That's funny. Seriously, what is it?"

"No, seriously, that is."

"Well, hey, good luck with that!"

The position of first base was not Scott Hatteberg's strong suit. It wasn't even supposed to be his job. He was told to play first base (where balls are hit in that direction at 95 mph), although his learned skill and job was being a catcher. That made what should have been "Baseball 101: Catching a Ball" extremely terrifying and intimidating to him. The powers that be insisted that he remain in that position, not because he was good at it, but because when he was at bat, he was one of the best at getting on base.

As an attorney, your legal work is your chosen profession. As the legal industry became more and more competitive, attorneys find themselves having to play other positions that not only were they not trained to do, but that they didn't knowingly choose. Today's attorney is expected to develop business, and for most, they think of sales and immediately envision a pushy and intrusive salesperson. No one wants to be that guy, and I'm going to let you off the hook: Most attorneys are emotionally and socially incapable of being that guy. Attorneys are simply not wired that way. Let me walk you through some small-ball Q&A:

What is at the very core and your desire of your practice? *You do great work.*

Why? *Because you have a sincere desire to do great work for your clients.*

What endears your clients to you? *You do great work for your clients.*

What's the result? *You've created a relationship of trust.*

What else is the result? *Your client's loyalty.*

What else? *Referrals from your client.*

What just happened? *"Sales"*

You shouldn't think of it as sales or even business development. It's all just relationships.

By the way, first baseman (not catcher) Scott Hatteberg hit a walk-off home run to win the A's 20th consecutive ballgame, breaking the then-American League record of 19 games. "How can you not be romantic about baseball?" Which brings me to what most believe to be the most-profound moment in the movie, and I concur.

Fighting that Fear of Failure

For most movies, the "hook" appears early on – that scene that grabs your attention and moves you to watch the entire movie. While it's not difficult to become engrossed in "Moneyball," its most-profound scene is just seconds from the end of the movie.

"The Visalia Oaks and our 240-pound catcher, Jeremy Brown, who as you know is scared to run to second base. This is in a game six weeks ago. This guy's going to start him off with a fastball. Jeremy is going to take him to deep center. Here's what's really interesting ... because Jeremy's gonna do what he never does. He's gonna go for it. He's gonna round first, and he's going to go for it. Ok? This is all of Jeremy's nightmares coming to life."

"Ahh, they're laughing at him."

"And Jeremy's about to find out why. Jeremy's about to realize that the ball went 60 feet over the fence. He hit a home run and didn't even realize it."

"How can you not be romantic about baseball?"

This metaphorical scene brings to light what I imagine has happened to all of us at some point: We can't see our own success beyond our fear of failure. We venture to take a risk only to pull back at the first sign of success. We have to get rid of the mindset that nothing short of getting a client is a success. You've heard that (fill in your own blank – sales, BD, marketing) is just a numbers game. Sure, you can apply the same idea of sabermetrics to your business development, but think of the numbers in terms of how many times you communicate with your clients, the number of times you see your clients, the number of minutes you set aside each day (it only has to be 10) to do something marketing-related. Now you're dealing with numbers from a relationship standpoint; now you're playing Marketing Moneyball!

Are you looking for guidance with relationship cultivation or would just like to talk

baseball? Reach out to Glennie Green at ggreen@jaffepr.com for assistance. At the very least, we hope you're inspired to watch "Moneyball" if you haven't seen the movie yet. Even better, read Michael Lewis's *Moneyball: The Art of Winning an Unfair Game*.