

## Design Your Career

ACQUIRING YOUR FIRST JOB IN MAJOR LEAGUE BASEBALL TAKES SUBSTANTIALLY more than *dressing* for success. In the competitive hiring process, you need to *plan* for success.

Every action begins with a thought. *I want a career in Major League Baseball.* This chapter helps you develop a plan of action. Building a house is not initiated by pouring cement for the foundation. Rather, it begins with the architect's vision transformed into drawings of the finished product. Whenever we look to build something, we should know the desired result first. Then the design plans dictate which tools and skills are necessary for construction. You design a career in professional baseball in a similar way as you shoot for a Major League position.

### ***Consider Others' Perspectives***

The first step in designing your career plan is to understand the perspectives of top decision-makers (*isn't that where you want to go?*) in the organization. Studying the highest level first helps you gain an "upperlevel perspective" that can guide you. How do the highest-level employees think? What's important to them and how could you help in these areas? This knowledge aids in developing the kind of perspective and decision-making they appreciate from their subordinates. Also, by exhibiting perspectives that align with their roles, you show them your *potential* to be one of them someday.

You also begin to develop a framework regarding organizational decision-making. After all, club decisions aren't made by the general manager or Baseball Operations staff alone. They involve various departments and personnel who offer a variety of perspectives.

Let's look at Major League characteristics of the upper levels of an organization through the perspective of the club owner.

### *Minority Owner*

*In 2009, the Colorado Rockies purchased the Casper Ghosts of the Pioneer League. Believing it was a good investment, I expressed my opinion to Rockies Owner Dick Monfort before the acquisition. He said that because I thought it was such a good investment, he expected me to buy a stake in the Ghosts. I should have kept my mouth shut! Because of my well-honed ability to speak before thinking, I'm presently a minority owner in the Grand Junction Rockies (the club moved to Grand Junction, Colorado, from Casper, Wyoming). I proudly own one percent of the team. (Don't laugh; it's a lot to me!)*

*My first duty as an infinitesimal minority owner included attending the Pioneer League Owners Meeting with Hal Roth, CFO and Legal Counsel for the Rockies. We voted on formal league affairs and offered opinions on current issues from an ownership perspective.*

*As foreign as this role was to me, I had to put myself in the owner's chair and believe it was truly my money at risk. To*

*be honest, I found it boring to discuss strategies on sponsorship agreements, radio promotions, and souvenir sales. Being an executive in a few Major League clubs, I had attended meetings about the business of professional baseball that were enlightening, but I was never truly engaged in matters discussed by the Business Operations side. Trained as a player, coach, and scout, I was focused on Baseball Operations. Could I think of strategies better than someone trained in marketing and promotions? I trusted they'd figure out the best ways to proceed and didn't need me to chime in on aspects of their "turf."*

*This time, my mindset was different. I brought the acute focus of an owner whose bottom line would be affected by decisions made at this meeting. So I tried hard to get engaged. I had never given much thought to how many bobble-heads a half-season Minor League team should order before a July 4<sup>th</sup> promotion. Frankly, I couldn't wait for this meeting to end. As the talk of promotional souvenir items laboriously continued, one owner told the others about a new company that had decreased the club's costs for novelty items by five percent. The savings helped fund other promotions the club otherwise couldn't afford. The amount of money saved didn't appear substantial to my "highfalutin" Major League standards, so I was unimpressed with his glee over sharing this resource. In similar meetings I'd attended, the financial impact of decisions was measured in millions of dollars, not hundreds. "Pompous-*

*ass” described me perfectly.*

*Then he made a statement that forever changed my appreciation of having an ownership perspective. He said, “It may not seem like a lot of money, but a dollar saved is a dollar earned.” (This is widely attributed to Benjamin Franklin’s “A penny saved is a penny earned,” but this guy had acknowledged the cost of inflation.) Before then, I had always related this saying to saving my personal money for a rainy day. But wearing my ownership hat gave it a greater meaning—that is, saving a dollar is no different than having earned another dollar to be used in another capacity to create additional revenue. Until that moment, I had viewed owners as either cheap and greedy or appreciative and gracious. I had never thought beyond their tight budgets. Owners have hundreds of employees to worry about and many departments to fund. They manage a high-stakes balancing act of prioritizing dollars throughout their organizations. Additional money allocated to Baseball Operations is less money for the Marketing or Promotions Departments. From the perspective of an owner, every dollar counted more. This meeting wasn’t so boring after all.*

This story reminds you that money in an MLB organization is a finite commodity with spending held to the highest degree of scrutiny. The club’s money should be seen as sacred. As an employee, showing an ability to care about every dollar can elevate your potential from an

average employee to an executive *prospect*.

Executives are concerned with wasteful spending of precious club dollars. Unfortunately, it's uncommon for them to see employees who show that kind of mindset regarding the sanctity of the club dollar. Just as a high batting average is important to a professional baseball player, *fiscal responsibility* is important to a professional baseball executive.

*TIP:* Any research, study, or recommendation you propose in an interview should include the financial impact of your decision-making. While working for an MLB club, decide to spend every company dollar as if it were your own.