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No October for the Mets

Being a Met fan is perilous, especially this year: they were destined for the baseball playoffs, World Series and world champions. As a Met fan it was a disastrous letdown, a total disappointment and perilous to my well being. In fact, the manner in which they disintegrated is not too far removed from the manner in which companies for whom I have worked have also self destructed. Both the Mets and these companies share similar faults, which could have been corrected if they were addressed.

Senior Management

Fred Wilpon, the CEO of the Mets, provided Omar Minaya, the General Manager, with an unlimited budget. Omar spent copious sums of money signing players, who lived up to their reputations for the most part. However, both Fred and Omar recruited for skill rather than for talent and when the Mets started to lose, there was no one who could rattle the saber to inspire the team. In the companies where I worked, the CEO and executive also recruited for skills, but many of the executives had little talent and were unable to inspire their departments when events became unfavorable.

Middle Management

Willy Randolph, the manager of the Mets, and Rick Peterson, the pitching coach, developed their players into near winners, but they failed to develop a leader amongst them who could inspire the rest of the team when they were slumping. In the companies, the managers were good at articulating the mission of the executive team but they had little ability to inspire the workers because they didn't know how to develop a winning attitude.

Players

The players were selected because of their skills and their ability to perform their jobs. However, they became complacent and felt that all they had to do when they were losing was to turn on their skills to outplay their opponents; talented players never underestimate their opponents and play against all of them with all their might. In the companies, the employees also became complacent and forgot that the reason they were there was to produce the best products possible for customers. Talented employees never forget this.

Fans

Met fans are loyal. They support the team through thick and thin and feel the jubilation of a win and the heartbreak of a loss, probably more than the players themselves. When they realized the players had given up, they felt disenfranchised, despondent and mad. They were in a perilous state and booed the team while they were playing. In the companies, the customers realized that something was amiss and they became disenfranchised, despondent and mad. The difference between the fans and customers, however, is that the fans had no where to go whereas the customers went to competitors.

The Future

Companies that have disenfranchised customers can regain their credibility only by being completely honest and open in their dealings with them (think James Burke, the CEO of Johnson and Johnson during the cyanide incident or Lee Iacocca, the CEO of Chrysler, who proclaimed that he would make a better car and pay off the loan before it was due). Broken companies need to reassess the spirit of the people they have working for them, retain those who want the company to succeed and jettison those who don't care. Similarly the Met executive team has to be completely honest and open to the fans, reassess their personnel, retain those with fire in their belly and get rid of those who don't care. If the companies did this, they would have been around today. If the Mets do this, maybe there will be October baseball in New York next year, despite what the Yankees do.