



## Everything I need to know about business I learned playing softball

**Y**ou can attend all the classes you want, but there are few things that prepare you for your chosen occupation as well as real world experience. And sometimes those lessons come from the most unexpected places.

After spending nearly five years away from the game, I rejoined a softball league this season. I was struck by how much my return had to teach me about the stuff I spend much of my time writing about.

**Lesson 1: If you don't use it you lose it** — My once (in my mind) considerable talents have diminished. Skills, like muscles, atrophy without regular use.

**Lesson 2: Proper preparation is essential** — My muscles have begun their rebellion but warming up before I play prevents injuries. From client meetings to job sites, preparation is essential for any business activity.

**Lesson 3: It's a team effort** — Over the course of a couple hours and two games, I might have only three or four plays at third base. Without the rest of my team there would be no game. No matter how good you are, you need good people all around you.

**Lesson 4: Coaching is vital** — I'd like to think a

lifetime of playing means I've learned everything I need to, but I can always learn something new and refine and improve what I already do well.

**Lesson 5: Someone has to be in charge** — It might be fun to bat cleanup, but I've got to do what's best for the team. Someone experienced needs to be designated to make your team's game plans and game-day decisions.

**Lesson 6: Bruises are part of the game** — A poorly thrown ball hitting me in the calf on my dash to home plate makes for a good story (I scored). If you don't play hard, you're not going to win.

**Lesson 7: Sometimes you need outside help** — Umpires have the toughest job on the field. Sometimes they get it wrong. Shake it off and move on.

**Lesson 8: You need the right equipment** — The wrong size bat or a glove with a hole in the webbing isn't going to do much good. Proper tools are essential to play the game well and for your employees to complete their tasks.

**Lesson 9: Practice. Practice. Practice** — Questions? See Lesson 1.

**Lesson 10: It's all about having fun** — If you don't enjoy doing it, why bother.

Classroom training on how to identify and eradicate weeds and pests, properly build retaining walls and install irrigation systems is helpful, but no replacement for on-the-job training with experienced technicians. But we're all formed and influenced by our experiences. Just remember: Don't discount learning moments no matter where, when or whom they come from. There's an old saying, "Good judgment is the result of experience and experience is the result of poor judgment." But I would argue, wisdom is the ability to apply the lessons learned in one experience to the challenges of another. Now, if you wouldn't mind, toss me a high, arching fat one. I want to crank one outta here.

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