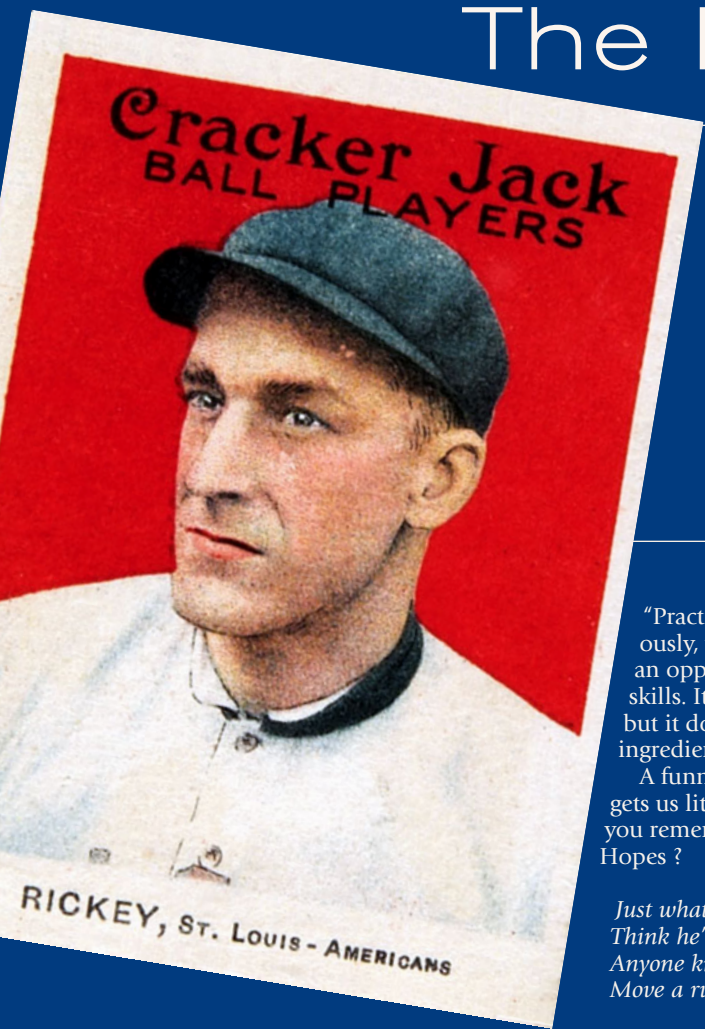


THE UN-COMFORT ZONE

With Robert Wilson

The Main Ingredient



In 1907, during a major league baseball game, second base was stolen 13 times by the winning team. The catcher for the losing team, Branch Rickey, was unable to pick off even a single runner. That record stands to this day. It also spelled the end of Rickey's career as a baseball player after just two short seasons. With nothing else to do, he went to college and law school.

"Practice. Practice. Practice." Obviously, you can't take advantage of an opportunity if you don't have the skills. It's a good recipe for success, but it doesn't reveal the secret main ingredient.

A funny old song from Frank Sinatra gets us little closer to the answer. Do you remember these lyrics from High Hopes?

*Just what makes that little old ant
Think he'll move that rubber tree plant
Anyone knows an ant, can't
Move a rubber tree plant!*

I love that song because a stanza later we learn the ant CAN: "Oops there goes another rubber tree plant." Is having "high hopes" the secret ingredient? No, but it gets us closer to it. You see, the ant succeeds because he doesn't know that he can fail.

Think about some of the people you know who are successful. What is it that makes them big achievers? What traits do you associate with them?

When I ask this question of my audiences I frequently hear the following ingredients: Courage, Perseverance, Enthusiasm, Discipline, Confidence, Decisiveness, Self-reliance, Responsibility, Focus, Ambition, and Optimism.

All of these are certainly traits of successful people, but which one is the overriding characteristic? Which one is the main ingredient?

None of the above!

That's right – none! Yes, they are all important, but there is one ingredient that makes the cake, and that is simply your belief that you will succeed. It's called Self-Efficacy. Your belief in your ability to achieve what you seek is the biggest part of actually getting there. The best part is that self-efficacy is a trait that can be acquired at any age.

We acquire a sense self-efficacy in four ways. The first way is cumulative. With each success we achieve we add a new layer of confidence in ourselves. The second way is through observation. When we see someone similar to ourselves succeed, we realize that we can too. The third way is controlled by our attitude. A positive attitude enhances our belief in our abilities whereas a negative one destroys it. The fourth way is from the encouragement of others who believe in our ability to succeed. This is where you as an effective manager can help your people succeed. Tell them that you believe they can meet their goals and you will help them believe it too.

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Six years later, he returned to major league baseball. This time as a manager – and what a manager he turned out to be! He created the modern baseball farm system which enables major league teams to nurture and develop future stars through their minor league teams. He was the first to establish a permanent spring training facility in Florida. He changed the way statistical analysis is used in baseball by proving that on-base percentage is more important than batting average. Branch Rickey is best known, however, for breaking the color barrier by bringing African-American Jackie Robinson into the major leagues. It earned him a spot in the Baseball Hall of Fame.

Rickey offers this as his recipe for success, "Success is where preparation meets opportunity." A simple formula that reminds me of the old joke: "How do you get to Carnegie Hall?" The answer: