

## **The Business Comes First**

*Rose Jonas, Ph.D.*

He is one of my favorite clients. He has built an impressive business from very little. He often seems surprised by his level of success, and he gives all the credit to his employees. He is both genuine and humble about it. He's one of the kindest men I've ever met and a pushover for people.

For all that, when making a business decision, he is all business. What's good for the company is his first thought. When you're newer in your executive life and still searching for the basis on which to make decisions, you want to be different than those probable scoundrels sitting on the body-mound they created of the downsized and off-shored. Younger client execs will ask me, "If I'm to be a decent president, shouldn't I put the people first?"

No. Never. Your first loyalty is to the entity that produces the income. If you're like my client, he considers his people right behind the business. He correctly knows who got him to this place. But they come after what's good for the business. Contrary to many of today's callus body-mound builders, he'll never stand on a body-mound because — when he's had to make tough decisions, they've been agonizingly made and he has always included a thoughtful people strategy.

"Cruelty," you may say, if you're young, as if you can escape being where the business rubber hits the summer-hot road. No. Pragmatic. Realistic. Sensible. If you think first about your people, that could spell disaster for your company. Your first loyalty must be to the business.

If you're like my client, a great model for a successful CEO, the distance between the business and the people decision-making is tissue-paper thin, but first is first for him. All other decisions follow.

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