

# MANAGEMENT SECRETS OF THE NEW ENGLAND PATRIOTS

Locker room respect is granted in proportion to effort and contribution

People who report having at least five close (non-family) fiends are twice as likely to consider themselves “very happy” as those who report having fewer than five close friends

Belonging to and contributing to a successful team heightens the “flow” feeling because the experience is shared with others who have struggled and eventually triumphed with you.

People who bond tightly feel empowered and ennobled by their membership in an exclusive club of like-minded people, an almost cult like experience which will give their lives a greater meaning

Some people are more selfish than others. The Patriots seek players who enjoy collaborating to out-compete their rivals, and this conscious selection of unselfish player facilitates bonding and helps the team succeed.

-Look for extroverted, adaptable people who enjoy training together with others; this will energize the process and help challenge each other to improve to reach a common goal

*“Watch out for those with situational value systems-people who turn the charm on and off depending on the status of the person with whom they’re interacting. Those people may be good actors, but they don’t become good leaders. There’s a consistency in leadership that’s greater than mere situational awareness.”*

You can’t have enough good leaders in a locker room

If a player comes to work with a team attitude and he’s well prepared and he’s working hard, that’s what leadership is. And everybody who . . . brings a good attitude shows tremendous leadership.

-It’s a lot easier to work when everyone is working

An effective leader:

1. Enables and motivates employees to develop their talents and use them to contribute to organizational success
2. Promotes a culture that trusts individuals to perform their jobs with minimal distraction and holds individuals responsible for results

-If the head coach takes care of the overall discipline of the team and puts the agenda out there that is really conducive to letting the assistant coaches maximize their talents, then the head coach has done his job

People learn best by focusing on a few objectives

Simplify each week's game plan to concentrate on two or three things; if you do those things right, it's puts you in a great situation to win.

Long before training camp, coaches plan what they intend to accomplish each day.

Enjoy not being able to participate in social opportunities and emphasize it is special why you cannot

Veterans should embrace rookies, and coaches expect rookies to contribute at their appropriate level

Avoid avoidable injuries

- Rest, strong weight training and smart diets
- Stay in shape year round

You either do your job or somebody else does it

- Have an answer for everything; don't hope that a team won't run something
- Players, in order to have optimal flow, need to know what they should be doing in every situation
- The team should expect to know what they are doing on every play, why they are doing what they are doing, and where his teammates will be
- When you understand the philosophy, it is easier to understand what, why and where

There are always things that you and your team can address and improve

Players are spokes on a wheel

*"Conditioning . . . is not just about getting in shape, as important as that is. It's about camaraderie and getting to know your teammates. It's being around your position coaches and getting to know your system. A lot of guys can do it on their own, but there's something about doing it the environment with your teammates. You're going it with the guys you're going to be working with all year."*

Coaches and players must fit in to the system.

American children spend the first month of each school year re-learning what they learned in the final months of the previous school year because students forget (or "unlearn") every summer.

Before each practice, coaches script every situation and drill they will put the players through.

Active participation is demanded. And poor performance leads to "detention": benching in the next game.

*"We'll teach, teach, teach, teach, teach."*

*-Woody Hayes*

*“You have to have enough complexity in your schemes so you can counter your opponent but keep it simple enough so your players can execute. You don’t want to give the players too much to learn, but you don’t want to be predictable, either. So that’s where you are constantly finding that balance.”*

Think Lego’s when putting anything together; one block at a time.

Another example of Belichick’s desire for simplicity is his reluctance to change schemes to prevent opponents from exploiting inside knowledge of the Patriots acquired through a former Patriot’s player or coach.

Don’t outsmart/outdumb yourself by spending too much time trying to guess what the other team is going to do.

It’s smarter to first teach the fundamentals, and then gradually add the complexity.

-The Patriots playbook is intricate and complicated, but coaches train new players in the basics before adding complexity in a logical, digestible manner at a pace players can absorb

Successful CEO’s do not multitask. They concentrate intensely on one task at a time.

-Smart coaches give players one or two challenges at a time and sequence those challenges by priority

Understanding a play intellectually is not the same as being able to execute it well. The Patriots repeatedly practice every play before using it to ensure each player feels the play.

-If you let those little things go by right from the beginning without trying to correct them, you are sending the wrong message

-To really understand something, you must learn it several times before it sinks in

-Coaches encourage players to solidify their knowledge by doing “mental reps.”

Belichick expects his players to proactively ask questions when they’re unclear about something and is glad when they do. Less motivated players won’t ask because they don’t want to look dumb.

Everything is not the same for every player.

-Every player has their own playing style, and eventually players learn how to play into their strengths and kind of play away from their weaknesses.

*“For a team to be successful, every player has to do what they do within the framework of your organization.”*

*-Bill Russell*

*“You aren’t going to make it in the door if you aren’t a team player.”*

*-Troy Brown*

Calling players by numbers, not names, seems demeaning, but Weis does so to constantly-though subtly- remind each player that they are just a cog in the Patriot's machine. And each cog must adapt to what other cogs are doing or the machine will grind to a stop. Optimal performance is possible only when all eleven teammates on the field behave as if a single brain controls them.

No one player loses a game.

Belichick constantly preaches that players must adapt their play based on holistic awareness of what is happening around them.

A second reason players study their teammates' playbooks is that if every player on the defense (or offense) knows what everyone else is supposed to be doing, then when something goes wrong, they don't waste time pointing fingers or analyzing the problem, they just fix it immediately.

*"Everything starts in practice."*  
-Deion Branch

*"Leaders don't create followers. They create more leaders."*  
-Tom Peters

The Patriots encourage each player to strive for excellence and take pride in daily improvement. They stress the satisfaction of contributing to a winning team- in any capacity- and expanding your contribution over time.

*"If it's something that's part of our system and we can incorporate it, we will."*  
-Bill Belichick

Always assume each person that you meet has ideas of potential value to you. If you listen carefully, everyone can be your mentor.  
-You have to put your pride aside and learn.

Competition in training camp is to earn a spot on the team, but players- including the team's stars- naturally engage in good natured competition year-round because competitive juices are fun and help everyone improve

*"We have a saying within the organization, and it doesn't just apply to players; 'The more you can do, the more you can do.' If a player can do more, if a coach can do more, it's an organizational plus."*  
-Scott Pioli

When Belichick finds a potential coach who enjoys dissecting how players warm up, he pounces because attention to such details signal real coaching potential.

First impressions are often wrong, so it is valuable to consciously refrain from allowing first impressions to forever color our perceptions.

*“This is not an evaluation camp. There’s no emphasis on timing and execution. It’s mostly on teaching. We have a long ways to go before we have to play.” Knowing that their every move is not going to be scrutinized allows rookies to focus on learning rather than looking good.*

*-Belichick on mini-camp*

Many inventors and writers split the creative process into sequential phases; 1) open-minded, uncritical, non-evaluative brainstorming; and 2) judgmental, critical evaluation to winnow a long list of ideas to only the best and then refine and polish them. In a similar way, Belichick refrains from judging players potential during each season’s teaching phase. He wants players during training camp to learn, learn, learn. Only as the regular season approaches does he start to accumulate evidence to make the roster and playing time decisions.

Constructive criticism is forward-looking and uplifting, not backward looking and harsh. In that sense, you want players who are comfortable in asking questions and working together.

*“The purpose of practice is to improve. The purpose of games is to execute and win. A game is an inappropriate place to offer even constructive criticism.”*

*-Tom Brady*

After Belichick arrived in 2000, he found his team had many lazy and out-of-shape players who thought training camp was for getting back into shape and learning the playbook rather than practicing teamwork and situational tactics. Belichick warned players in March that they would have to pass his conditioning test and know the system because training camp would be a training camp, not summer school or a Jenny Craig weight loss program.

*“Making work productive has to start with the end product, the output of work. It cannot start with the input . . . Skills, information, knowledge, are tools . . . The end product determines what work is needed.”*

*-Peter Drucker*

*“The best players will play the most, and the ones that don’t play as well will play less.”*

*-Bill Belichick*

Rather than monitor players’ preparation efforts, Patriots coaches advise players on what to do but closely monitor only results, i.e., how players perform in practices and games. They don’t care *how* a player becomes great, only that he *becomes* great.

You shouldn’t care how hard someone appears to work when you happen to observe him or her. You should care about how productive they are. By being organized, taking work home, working passionately and intelligently, some people achieve more with less apparent effort. A manager’s only concern should be productivity (output), not time spent in the office (input).

Patriot's players crave feedback. They want to know how they're doing because they want to improve. They don't want pats on the back. They want honest information.

Weak managers . . . believe they're being kind by not telling employee's negative things, but "phoney appraisals" instead deny employees the chance to learn and grow or develop a "Plan B" in case they are fired. Welch says managers have "an obligation to let people know where they stand" because the cruelest thing is firing someone without warning. Forthright feedback- even when harsh- is the only kind way to treat employees.

*"We all have a tendency to ease off at times. That's why you need good teachers and good coaches. To push you a little bit. We all have to be pushed . . . I'm cheating myself and I'm cheating my players if I don't get the best out of them."*

*-Woody Hayes*

*"Work implies . . . accountability, a deadline, and finally the measurement of results, that is, feedback . . . unless we build expectations into the planning decision in such a way that we can realize early whether they are actually fulfilled or not-including a fair understanding of what are significant deviations (from expectations) both in time and scale- we cannot plan."*

*-Peter Drucker*

A player's reputation is irrelevant. When a new season starts, the coaches basically throw out last year's performances as obsolete.

*"Everyone's basically got the same number of practices and preseason games to get their team at maximum efficiency heading into the regular season and build it from there. So every meeting, every practice, every play is an opportunity to build on that, get better and improve."*

*-Bill Belichick*

Crisis management is more exciting than planning, but foresight planning avoids crises. Understanding this, Patriots planners wade neck deep into mundane details.

Smart organizations "manage by objective." They envision their desired results and then work backwards to determine a tactical path that leads to their objectives. The Patriots are relentlessly focused on winning football games. Everything derives from that objective.

*"The goal is to make an improvement on a daily basis."*

*-Tom Brady*

*"Success is impossible without short term goals."*

*-Peter Drucker*

While many teams preach "one game at a time", Belichick preaches "one game at a time, one week at a time, one practice at a time, one play at a time."

Patriots players know that every medium and long term goal can- and must- be decomposed into short-term goals.

Winning a Super Bowl is like saying were going to “build a great house”. What actually creates the house is not the dream or even the detailed blueprint but the laborious process of laying a brick, adding mortar, then laying another brick and adding more mortar. Patriots players worry about bricks, not dream houses. They pride fully strive to become the NFL’s most precise and efficient bricklayers and lay each brick perfectly, always motivated by their ultimate goal of a dream house.

Patriots set their personal goals in support of unit and team goals.

Over-emphasizing and over-rewarding non-conceptualized individual behavior-such as the number of sacks or touchdowns a player records- undermines selfless, team benefiting behaviors. Grading and rewarding a player in a team sport according to individual statistics encourages him to pad his stats at the expense of his team and teammates.

*“The more prepared you are, the better your chances are of being successful.”*  
-Rodney Harrison

Each Patriot worries about performing his role to the best of his ability, not “winning”, which is beyond his control. Even playing time is beyond a player’s control.

*“I’ve told players to be ready to go for 60 minutes, just like it’s a regular season game. They can’t control any of the decisions on playing time, so don’t even try to. Just get ready to go for 60 minutes and whomever we put in, we’ll put in.”*  
-Bill Belichick

Each player should strive to perform his role to the best of his ability. If he does, he should feel proud-even if he stands on the sideline and watches his team lose- because he did everything his team asked of him. Similarly, a team that prepares and plays well deserves praise, even if it loses a tight battle against a great opponent. Conversely, a team that wins a tight game against a weak opponent after preparing and playing poorly deserves criticism. Win or lose, each player should judge himself according to his preparation and performance relative to his potential and what his team asked of him.

The Patriots knew that it’s much easier to strengthen one’s arm than one’s character.

*“What the pros didn’t see was his confidence, his mental toughness. Football smarts. Those are difficult things to quantify. You don’t pull down a scale or a measuring tape for that type of stuff. But his teammates at Michigan knew what he had. They responded on the field.”*  
-Lloyd Carr on Tom Brady

*“There are still some critics who say, ‘Well, he can’t do this very well, and he’s not too good at that.’ Well, he’s pretty good at winning Super Bowls, isn’t he?”*

*-Troy Brown on Tom Brady*

Belichick insists on what is important and disregards what is unimportant. In short, the Patriots treat players like adults and overlook occasional minor mistakes in areas that don’t impact performance.

*“Management always has to consider both that present and the future; both the short run and the long run. A management problem is not solved if immediate profits are purchased by endangering the long-range health, perhaps even the survival, of the company . . . Management has to make the enterprise capable of performance, growth and change in the future.”*

*-Peter Drucker*

In 2000, rather than allow the team’s complacent star-driven culture to continue, Belichick overhauled the team, bringing in team-oriented and hard-working but unsung veterans, developing young players and shrinking the payroll to pay down accumulated debt and lay a foundation for success.

## FOCUS ON CHARACTER!

The 2000 Patriots kept plugging away, both because Belichick had assembled a team of mentally tough players and because they bought into his philosophy of self-reliance, staying positive, ignoring distractions and focusing only on what they could control.

*“If it is hard to make a success out of something, it is an order of magnitude harder to sustain the success.”*

*-Andy Grove, CEO of Intel*

Age balance yields three benefits 1) Player’s of different ages complement one another. Older players mentor younger players and improve their performance, while the younger players generally possess superior physical talent and energy and are less susceptible to injury. 2) Involving younger players sets your team up for sustained success and builds “institutional memory.” Relying heavily on veteran’s risks a rash of injuries or retirements that devastate team talent and destroy team chemistry and culture. And 3) Age balance helps players perceive a career trajectory and think long-term about their careers, which should encourage them to take better care of their bodies.

*“The ability to make good decisions comes from being prepared.”*

*-Bill Belichick*

The better trained a player is in various tactics and techniques, the more likely he is to improvise successfully during a game.

*“Coach prepares us for every little thing. We never go into a game not expecting a situation. We go over every situation, every little thing in practice.”*



*-Dan Klecko*

*“I know a team is prepared when everyone knows what every player should do in a certain situation.”*

*-Bill Belichick*

*“We are always having situational practices. Coach drills it into us to think the way he is thinking.”*

*-Lawyer Milloy*

*“Belichick wants to give you, as a player, all the knowledge he has. He wants you to be prepared for everything, because he’s always prepared for everything.”*

*-Lawyer Milloy*

*“You can’t go out and practice average on Wednesday, average on Thursday, okay on Friday, and then expect to play well on Sunday . . . We’re going to start practicing great every day.”*

*-Tom Brady*

*“Our practices are more intense than some games.”*

*-Marquise Hill*

*“The harder you prepare, the easier the games are.”*

*-Rohan Davey*

Tom Brady says that he loves practice because practicing well is the only way to ensure you play well on game day.

Constantly simulating pressure situations in practices help players relax and focus, rather than tighten up, during games.

Preparation breeds confidence.

*“There’s probably not a situation over the course of last season or this season that we haven’t been in or prepared. Our preparation is good and we’re confident in our preparation and each other.”*

*-Roman Phifer*

*“Wile E. Coyote has a great game plan. He’s got the dynamite and the trap door, but he doesn’t execute.”*

*-Bill Belichick*

*“A brilliant idea is a job half done.”*

*-Ralph Waldo Emerson*

The German national soccer team is successful because they break down the entire sport down to specific skills and then monotonously drill each of those skills. They then monotonously drill skill combinations. Tedious but effective.

The team scripts practices carefully to simulate the full variety of game situations.

Players and coaches always know their responsibilities.

*“If you don’t work hard in practice on what you’re going to play against, you’re not going to have a chance . . . We keep going over the game plan and over it again. WE watch a lot of film and study hard, and that preparation enables us to go into the game and execute it.”*

*-Willie McGinest*

Players on the Patriots scout team are primarily back-ups and non-roster practice squad players but take pride in preparing the starters to play their best by simulating each upcoming opponent’s players, plays, techniques and tactics.

Every Patriot must study the opponent’s plays and players and then pass written tests and answer oral questions in front of their peers.

*“We don’t get nervous or tight as players because we make practice so realistic.*

*-Ty Law*

*“Everyone has a plan until they get hit.”*

*-Evander Holyfield*

*“There are two ways to run an NFL franchise. One is to believe that everything will go wrong and plan accordingly. The second is to assume everything will go right and plan for a victory parade. The New England Patriots are firm believers in Plan A, which has pretty much proven to be a winner.”*

*-Jonathan Comey*

The Patriots protect against future-blindness through “positional flexibility”, a major Belichick focus. The Patriots not only acquire versatile players but also teach players to play multiple positions.

Durability is so important that the Patriots training room has a big sign proclaiming “Durability is more important than ability.”

Developing a plan for every known situation is important, but you must also update your list of possible situations to avoid getting caught by surprise.

*“You can’t win games if you’re losing them.”*

*-Bill Belichick*

*“There are so many situations in football, and they happen so quickly. When you’ve played 58 minutes and it’s still a tie game- like so many of our games are- it’s going to come down to three or four select plays. If a player fails at that point, chances are you’re going to lose.”*

*-Bill Belichick*

*“We don’t make mistakes. That’s the key.”*

*-Ted Johnson*

Avoiding high-risk, low reward gambles can tip games in a team’s favor. But talking in generalities about what not to do accomplishes nothing. You reduce mistakes by practicing intensely and not tolerating mistakes, even during practices. Minimizing mistakes isn’t sexy, but it’s extremely effective.

*“Their true greatness lies in their completeness. It’s not their strengths so much as their utter lack of weaknesses that makes them so invincible.”*

*-Steve Sabol*

Because Bill Belichick makes few mistakes, we should suspect he is a historian. He indeed is. Belichick has lived a football life and studied football history and management science, learning vicariously from other’s successes and failures. And he has distilled his knowledge into a detailed plan for winning that he has embedded within his team’s playbook, its off season procedures manual, its scouting manual, its training camp procedures manual, its daily schedule and its culture.

Whenever the Patriots screw up, they study their mistake, figure out why they make it, and devise a strategy for never repeating it.

*“I’m a big believer in Sam Walton’s philosophy that when it comes to good ideas, you should steal shamelessly.”*

*-Joe Hatfield*

When Belichick spots a new trend, he starts devising counter-strategies.

His base defense needed to be prepared for anything opposing offenses might throw at it: multiple running backs or empty backfields. If his defense had a weakness, opposing offenses would find and exploit it. So Belichick went out and acquired flexible players who were smart and observant and could react appropriately to whatever their opponent was doing.

*“It’s the little things that have always made us what we are, and we have to make sure that we don’t lose sight of that.”*

*-Willie McGinest*

*“We try to do the little things right, and then the big things come.”*

*-Tom Brady*

*“We sort of look for those guys, the player’s that don’t just do one thing. We really don’t look for the player that is really just one-dimensional because I think to be able to play on this team you have to be multi-dimensional.”*

*-Bill Belichick*

Belichick is willing to tear up the game plan early in a game if it isn’t working. Many coaches stubbornly stick with their game plan. Belichick knows following the game plan is just an option.

*“It’s not that I’m smart. It’s that I stay with problems longer.”*

*-Albert Einstein*

Bill Belichick is always searching for better ideas. He encourages subordinates to bring him new ideas. He seeks out the opinions of former colleagues.

*“There’s no shortcut to building a team each season. You build the foundation brick by brick.”*

*-Bill Belichick*

Each project or program must justify itself anew each year, and the budget is determined without reference to last year’s budget.

*“If there’s a player out there that can upgrade our football team and make us better- regardless of the position on the field and regardless of the depth of the football team- we’re going to do that.”*

*-Scott Pioli*

Belichick has convinced his players that each season’s team is an entirely new team that must re-learn football basics. “Those elements are not going to be skimmed over. At times it’s going to be drudgery, especially for players that have been through it a number of times. But it’s a process that we have to go through.”

*“We’ll teach fundamentals first, then the scheme.”*

*-Romeo Crennel*

The Patriots eventually achieved 21 straight wins by preparing for each upcoming game, not by daydreaming about their streak.

*“We’ll judge you from this day forward. It’s performance-based.”*

*-Bill Belichick*

Belichick runs through every play until the team proves it is ready to execute that play under game conditions.

Belichick’s teams are like snowflakes; they never play the same game twice.

Every week, Patriots coaches give their players an edge by dissecting their upcoming opponent and innovating new tactics that leverage their player's capabilities while exploiting their opponent's weaknesses.

*"The easiest way to improve the fastest is on special teams, because not enough people spend enough time on special teams."*

*-Charlie Weis*

Postponing or avoiding unpleasant decisions can be psychologically comforting. But avoiding decisions doesn't solve problems.

*"The best guys in this business- the successful ones- set their own trends. We need to know what trends are best for our team, not what others have."*

*-Scott Pioli*

The Patriots only care about finding players who match their profile and fit their system, both as a player and as a person.

The time to worry about a decision before you make it, not afterwards. You must trust your decisions. But never confuse confidence with blind faith. You must always remain receptive to new facts and ideas.

*"We talk every day in our meeting room. We talk about what we need to do to get better. I bounce ideas off of Doug Flutie and he bounces things off of me."*

*-Tom Brady*

*"If you give Belichick an idea and it is sound and he thinks it is a good idea, he will go for it. If he doesn't think it is a good idea, he is not going to go for it. He is open-minded and flexible."*

*-Bill Belichick*

*"Belichick listens to the advice of his assistants, and he's not one of those guys who will take ill heed of anyone's advice. If he thinks it gives him a better chance to win, he'll do it."*

*-Charlie Weis*

No coach has time to devise every creative idea, teach every player, study every game of each upcoming opponent, analyze thousands of prospective draftees and make every decision.

Patriots director of football research Ernie Adams says Patriots collaborate so well because players and coaches "are not out to satisfy their own egos. They are committed to getting along and being on the same page. Everyone knows there is plenty of glory to go around if you win."

Coach Belichick retains authority over every Patriot decision and accepts responsibility for everything that goes wrong. This arrangement is not as dictatorial or adversarial as it sounds because Belichick hires assistants who share his mindset and possess deep football knowledge,

so Belichick and his assistants usually agree. And most disagreements are resolved amicably, following an intense but respectful exchange of ideas and facts that convince every one of the final decision's appropriateness and leads to greater understanding. Debates are civil because Belichick and his assistants care only about what's right, never who's right. A corollary is that coaches should pride themselves on offering input that helps the team make the best possible decision, not on whether the final decision is "theirs."

Though Belichick runs nothing by himself and does not micromanage his assistants, he is aware of and involved in everything. Belichick relies heavily on his staff but can overrule anything. He views his coaching and personnel assistants as extensions of himself, and Belichick is so aware of details and so knowledgeable about football that he is fully capable of overruling decisions for smart reasons and explaining his reasons to those whose decisions he is overruling.

Employees resent bosses who claim credit and point fingers. Belichick does the opposite, so assistants do not resent his meddling and looking over their shoulders as they otherwise might.

Leaders must find managers they trust, grant them authority and responsibility, train, monitor and assist them and hold them accountable. A wise manager delegates to subordinates because he lacks the time to do everyone's jobs.

Mistakes at any level erode on field performance.

Many "smart" people enjoy feeling like the smartest person in the room. Truly smart people want to be the dumbest. As Rick Pitino says, "I don't hire assistant coaches; I hire future head coaches."

Truly smart people:

1. Know what they don't know
2. Know they don't actually know some of what they believe they know
3. Know that they don't even know about some of the stuff that they don't know.

*"You may think I'm a genius, but not that long ago people thought that I was a failure, so don't let temporary setbacks crush your passion for pursuing your dreams."*

*-Bill Belichick*

If a player has a good idea, it will receive future consideration.

*"Any time you make a decision, it's gonna maybe be good for somebody and not be good for someone else, but in the long run it's good for the team, and that's why you make it."*

*-Bill Belichick*

In a Belichick-Weis offense- emphasizing error free football- a quarterback's primary job is not winning games, it's not losing games due to mental mistakes or poor throws.

One reason Belichick decided to cut Milloy is that Milloy was not the essential leader outsiders perceived him to be, so he knew the team would overcome Milloy's departure.

Listen when someone you trust knows more than you.

*"We all collectively agree on what we will do going into a game, and then sometimes you modify that based on the game."*

*-Bill Belichick*

Belichick strives to make major decisions only after collective consideration and debate, ideally after reaching consensus. But when consensus cannot be achieved, Belichick will not delay a necessary decision.

*"We try to plan things out and work them out and get everybody's input. Everybody may not agree with the final decision, I'm not saying that, and there's a time and a place for people to voice their opinions and then at some point somebody has to make a decision or collectively we make a decision. Then everybody goes forward with it, whatever that decision is. It's all about coming to the right decision."*

*-Bill Belichick*

Belichick involves others in decision-making because he is smart enough to know what he doesn't know, and what he thinks he knows but isn't sure he knows.

Belichick demands that everyone state their opinions loudly and with conviction backed by facts.

Former Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara begged students in their future leadership roles to encourage conflict and force unspoken anxieties into open debate.

The Patriots understand this leadership challenge so thoroughly and fear it so profoundly that they have institutionalized a culture that:

1. Demands that everyone express their concerns
2. Tolerates dissent
3. Focus debate on ideas, not on who originated those ideas
4. Rewards those who challenge the status quo in intelligent and productive ways.

*"It is the job of management to make the individual's values and aspirations redound to organizational energy and performance."*

*-Peter Drucker*

Belichick worries about preparing players, instilling confidence and calming nerves, not hyping players up.

The Patriot's locker room has tremendous positive energy. New players immediately feel their new teammates' excitement, enthusiasm and intensity. The Patriots bring about this environment

themselves by have more intense and higher energy workouts during the off season, then being more calm, focused and deliberative during games.

Belichick succeeds in getting his players to prepare productively all week and to optimize their game-day performance by avoiding excessive emotions that might result in stupid decisions on the field. Belichick finds players who need little external motivation and feeds them facts that provide whatever motivational spur they require.

Belichick and Pioli believe that if a Patriot can't himself ready to play each and every Sunday, he ought to take a hike.

People want to be part of something greater than themselves. People want to inspire and help others. People want to embody the principles that they hold dear.

Preparing to win football games is about enduring pain to improve oneself, sacrificing to help your teammates, proving that you can accomplish what people say you cannot and becoming a role model for teammates, family and fans.

If you don't put everything into it, I don't know if you'll ever be able to evaluate what you're trying to accomplish.

We never expect anything less than the best from our opponents.

Because they prepare so thoroughly, Patriots players always deny feeling "pressure", instead perceiving a "challenge" or an "opportunity" or a "test".

*"The individual player knowing what to do and making the right decision instantly in ever changing situations, decisions that hinged on their understanding of their distinctive role in a collective effort."*

*-Bill Belichick on his expectation of his players on the field*

Belichick's goal is correcting mistakes, so he tells you, after every practice and every game, everything that you did well and everything that you did poorly.

Also, throughout the season, Parcells tries to moderates players' highs and lows by cheering them up after losses and knocking them down after every victory.

Belichick yells at you only when you're screwing up, and he always explains precisely how you're screwing up. Once you stop screwing up, he stops yelling.

Belichick never attacks a player arbitrarily, just to scare him.

Players don't enjoy getting screamed at for no reason but will try to improve after coaches point out their mistakes.



Belichick's primary disciplinary device is bringing in players of character, in part because this allows his coaching staff to concentrate on teaching, not discipline and mind games.

An employee works harder at any given moment if he feels good about what he's doing than if he merely perceives that working hard will benefit his career.

In a "high performance work organization":

1. Workers are smarter and better educated
2. Jobs involve more discretion, creativity, task variety, flexibility and learning
3. Workplace culture is more collaborative and collegial
4. Managers are more supportive, pleasant and appreciative and reward employees for doing well.
5. The physical work environment is more pleasant
6. Job performance is more apparent to workers
7. Workers are more satisfied with their bosses and colleagues, take greater pride in their work and derive greater satisfaction and meaning from their work
8. Work is done with greater passion, effort and creativity

Worker's who are told what to do- such as line workers at McDonald's- tend to be unhappy, take little initiative or pride in their work and do only what they're specifically told to do.

*"When we hire people, the most important things we look for are loyalty, integrity and character. And #2 is work ethic, and #3 is brains. But if you don't have #1 and #2, #3 doesn't matter."*  
-Robert Kraft

*"You prepare for the worst and- if you're a fourth stringer- you never know if you're going to play or not but you still prepare as if you're a starter. When your number is called, you have to go out and do your job."*  
-Asante Samuel

Belichick tells his players that not everyone can march in the parade; some people have to watch and cheer.

Belichick focuses each player on the question, "What do I need to do to perform my best?"

On a poorly run team, individuals worry about teammates' responsibilities.

Belichick wants players to focus on the process (preparation and execution), not the outcome (winning and losing).

The Patriots avoid mental errors through intensive preparation. Only productive practices prepare players to play mistake free football. This requires constant, sustained passion and intensive, dedicated training, not short spurts of passion.

Belichick uses gimmicks sparingly but effectively to solve specific problems.

***“If 99.9% were good enough, each day the post office would lose 400,000 letters, 18 planes would crash, 3,700 prescriptions would be filled incorrectly and ten newborns would be dropped during delivery.”***

Fear is a lousy long-term motivator.

Compared with his disciplinarian former colleagues Parcells and Saban, Belichick focuses more on conveying information and less on cussing players out at high volume. Belichick expects his players to listen to coaches and to perform professionally.

Belichick does not believe in hierarchical command and control or bossing others around. He believes in roles, teamwork and self-discipline.

Ideally, criticism is offered in a supportive, light-hearted, humorous way.

Smart leaders are both firm and humble.

A player who fails to discipline himself is more trouble than he's worth because coaches are too busy strategizing, teaching and evaluating to be tyrannical dictators.

Belichick believes it is wiser to coach with more intellect and less emotion

Don Shula said that when he learned to restrain his anger, he became a more effective coach.

Smart coaches worry about being right, not being popular.

Coaches who “let the inmates run the asylum” make some players happy in the short term, but team performance degrades and, in the long run, leaves many players unhappy when they find themselves stuck on a lazy, losing team with a defeatist attitude.

Belichick stays close enough to his players to inspire them but aloof and dispassionate enough to make tough decisions.

Competitive players and coaches need not love their teammates. It is sufficient that they respect their job performance.

It's pointless to beat up on a hard working, disciplined player who's generally performing well when he makes an occasional mistake. A mature player will beat himself up inside when he makes a mistake.

*“The problem is when we consistently make the same mistakes. As long as we make a mistake and correct the mistake and it doesn't happen again, that's okay. The problem is more or less when we make the same error multiple times.”*

*-Eric Mangini*

If several players slack off and suffer no consequences, others begin asking “Why should I work so hard?”

Giving players positive reasons to want to do something is much smarter than yelling at them for refusing to do it.

*“When you get employees headed in the same direction, they demonstrate power you can’t even imagine.”*

*-Sharp president Katsihiko Machida*

*“Tom Brady takes practice as seriously as anyone. That rubs off on the team.”*

*-Deion Branch*

Like hyenas, Patriots players collaborate intelligently and communicate effectively to achieve their collective goal.

*“There’s one way to do things around here, and that’s collectively, that’s as a team, that’s hard work, that’s preparation, and we all do the best we can. And if we don’t think you’re doing enough, we’re going to let you know. We may joke about it, but still, we put it out there.”*

*-Tedy Bruschi*

*“Selfishness can be a cancer to a team that can gut a team from the inside and cause things to fall apart.”*

*-Roman Phifer*

Each player and coach must motivate himself.

Persevering together through the agony of training camp is such an essential bonding experience that Tom Brady smartly joined his offensive teammates for their punishment lap when they were punished with a lap around the field during a 2005 training camp session that Belichick had ordered Brady to skip.

*“This is a collaborative effort. Our leadership group doesn’t believe in egos and we’ve surrounded ourselves with a group of players who are similar to us personality wise, who are more selfless than selfish. Not one cares about whose getting credit.”*

*-Scott Pioli*

*“The most successful entrepreneurs think of their companies as a separate entity from themselves. They have a sense that if they have done their work well, the proof will be in their companies out-growing, outpacing, and even out living them.”*

*-Harvard School of Business professor Nancy Koehn*

Many innovative small companies fail to grow because the entrepreneurs who run them are too proud to relinquish some control to create an organization greater than themselves. In great organizations, no one monopolizes leadership.

*“Example is not the main thing in influencing others. It is the only thing.”*

*-Albert Schweitzer*

Leaders who get their hands dirty also relate better to employees and their challenges. When CEO's take time to do an entry-level job for a day or a week, they invariably come away humbled by the demands of the job and gain insights that enable them to make more informed decisions.

*“Football is preparation, preparation, preparation, and then you get one chance to play.”*

*-Bill Belichick*

But that commitment to prepare didn't start the week of Opening Day, and it didn't start in training camp, either. It went back to the off-season program in March, the passing camp in May, the mini-camp in June and all the hours of meetings and work that lead up to training camp.

Games are not won on game day. They can be lost on game day, but they're won in the months and weeks leading up to games.

Showmanship and motivational speeches are often as impactful as New Year's resolutions.

Belichick takes a workmanlike, blue-collar approach to football and expects each player to act professionally and intelligently at all times.

Work is fun, and hard work is really fun.

Using the word “consistency” or “consistent” is the ultimate compliment to a player.

The job description for a New England Patriot would be as follows: Professional, hard working, playing with physical and mental toughness and able to stand up to a competitive challenge on a week-in and week-out basis.

Coaches take advantage of player's different strengths by using them in different situations.

Coaches rotate players in and out of games for four reasons:

1. To boost motivation
2. To keep everyone fresh and avoid burnout
3. To survive injuries with minimal impact
4. To gain strategic and tactical advantage

Sometimes just calling a play for a player one time will spark them to excel for the rest of the game.

If a boss handing the tough assignments to the same people, others will get bored, slack off, feel resentful, or worse. Less obviously, but perhaps even more importantly, rotating also motivates “starters” by preventing them from being too comfortable.

His consistent, predictable scheduling of family time helps his assistants and their families maximize the value of their time together, raising the quality of free time, though not its quantity.

Some workers are exhausted and depressed by their jobs after just several hours. Others can work all day, every day and still feel a thrill.

He also carefully screens potential assistants and players to ensure that they love football so much that they will want to put in the hours he expects of them.

Finding people who love their jobs is even more important in staving off burnout than the number of hours worked.

Belichick works hours no boss could ever force an employee to work, but he doesn't consider it “work”.

Because your brain interprets the world around you, you can- to a substantial degree- control your reactions to external events . . . or at least moderate their intensity.

Once you make a decision, make the best of it. Looking back with regret or anger helps no one.

Players who sign on the dotted line maturely accept these sacrifices as the cost of belonging to a great team.

*“Revenge is a dish best served cold.”  
-Sicilian proverb*

Winning or losing in the NFL is about execution. What this game is about is whether or not you can execute under pressure in critical situations.

Sports psychologists say too much excitement is as harmful as too little excitement.

If you've been playing well the whole year and you get to the playoffs, then try to do something different, you're messing you're game up . . . Whatever you've been doing that's been working, you have to do the same thing.

A team full of players in love with their “work” will outperform a team whose players are playing for fame or fortune rather than the pure joy of the experience itself.

The trophy . . . stands for the team, not statistics.

Communist societies eventually collapsed because people lacking incentives eventually become lazy.

Every photo hung in the team's facility celebrates team achievements.

On some teams, players care only about their own position. On the Patriots, everyone admires everyone else.

Patriot's players don't care what the media thinks of them. They care what their teammates- who see all their flaws, feats and foibles- think.

One reason Patriots work hard at "thankless" tasks is that their teammates and coaches thank them.

One common mistake in "incentizing" employees in a manner that encourages them to behave selfishly or to ignore job responsibilities for which the company offers no rewards. Rewarding employees for individual achievement can damage collective productivity by encouraging employees to waste time gossiping about and discrediting their colleagues, waste time sucking up to their bosses, claim credit for others' ideas, sabotage others' projects, refuse to help others, work only on whatever is being measured and rewarded to the detriment of all the other job responsibilities that are not being measured and rewarded. Individual incentives can produce an uncooperative work environment that devolves- over time- into a poisonous, backstabbing environment.