



## Leadership Lessons from Rahul Dravid: A Perfect CEO of Team India

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### ABSTRACT

*Few years ago, the Wall of the Indian Cricket; Rahul Dravid retired from cricketing field. He was an inspirational leader more than a cricketer. He was never flamboyant but he was always an integral part of the winning cause. Rahul Dravid, like his perfect timing of cricketing shots, retired at the right time. Though he has retired from the cricketing field, his intelligent understanding of the game and spirit of sports is to be exploited further as the leadership and mentoring skills that he displayed on the field can give great lessons to Indian corporates as well as Indian sports. He is the perfect CEO of Team India. His steely determination and deep foresight is beyond comparison in Indian cricket. This case presents an analysis of how the leadership as well as mentoring skills of Rahul Dravid can be a lesson for management corporates.*

**KEYWORDS : Leadership, Focus, Selfless, Work Ethics, Mentoring**

### Rahul Dravid: An Introduction

Rahul Sharad Dravid (born January 11, 1973) is a former Indian cricketer and captain of the Indian Test and One Day International teams. Dravid was honoured as one of the top-five Wisden Cricketers of the Year in 2000. Dravid was also awarded the ICC Player of the Year and the Test Player of the Year at the inaugural awards ceremony held in 2004. Dravid also holds the record of having taken the most number of catches in Test matches. On March 09, 2012, he announced his retirement from international cricket. On August 07, 2011 after getting a surprise call to play in ODI series against England he declared his retirement from One Day Internationals and T20.

Popularly hailed as "The Wall of Indian cricket", Dravid is regarded by many to be one of the greatest batsmen in the history of the game. Dravid holds multiple cricketing records. He is only the second player, after Sachin Tendulkar, to reach 13,000 runs in Test cricket. On February 14, 2007, he became the sixth player overall and the third Indian (after Sachin Tendulkar and Sourav Ganguly), to score 10,000 runs in ODI cricket history. He is the first and only batsman to score a century in all ten Test playing nations. With more than 200 catches, Dravid currently holds the world record for the most number of catches in Test cricket. Dravid has also been involved in more than 80 century partnerships with 18 different partners and has been involved in 19 century partnerships with Sachin Tendulkar – a world record. On November 24, 2011, he became the second international player to reach 13,000 runs in Test Cricket only after Sachin Tendulkar. On December 14, 2011, he became the first non-Australian cricketer to address at the Bradman Oration in Canberra.

On 9 March 2012, Rahul Dravid announced his retirement from international and first class cricket. Dravid made the announcement with the BCCI president, N Srinivasan and former captain Anil Kumble at a press conference in Bangalore.

At present, he is the coach & mentor of India A and India U/19 teams. He recently started executing *Rahul Dravid Mentorship Programme* in association with GoSports Foundation wherein he is mentoring the selected athletes with an aim to contribute to Indian Sports, especially for the upcoming Rio Olympics 2016. Top Indian corporates and managers can seek and learn from the below discussed lessons from Rahul Dravid.

### Lesson 1- Being Selfless and Adaptive: Putting Organizational Goals Ahead of Personal Goals and Comforts

*"Rahul Dravid is a player who would walk on broken glass if his team asks him to"* – Navjot Singh Sidhu (Former Indian Cricketer)

At a stage in his career, Rahul was asked to keep wickets along with batting to survive in the team due to lack of a genuine all-rounder and a quality wicket keeper batsman before Dhoni. Dravid willingly took on wicket keeping glove to absolve the team of its balance issues, while risking injury and career. A complete team man, Rahul volunteered to open in test matches following a dispute between Sourav Ganguly and Greg Chappell on the issue. Dravid, being the captain displayed situational leadership and courage and showed that team

is above individual issues and a leader should be flexible, selfless and courageous in making tough decisions. In the same way, a corporate must give priority to organizational goals instead of personal goals and comforts and that he/she must be ready to adapt to the situation, accept change and adapt to it taking it as a challenge rather than sulking and fearing failure. As a leader, show maturity and initiative, display the virtue of rising above individual concerns. You keep on doing your job, as Dravid did and as a result the company will succeed so will you.

### Lesson 2 – Hard Work and Dedication

*"Ask him to walk on water for his team and he'll ask you how many miles!"* –Harsha Bhogle (Cricket Commentator)

He was a dedicated, disciplined and a hard worker as a player. He used to be the first to reach the practice sessions and the last one to leave the practice sessions. He was so dedicated that in order to adapt to ODIs, he would spend hours and hours to work on a single technique at nets. Like he went to master newer abilities, the square cut of a turning ball, the glance off the pads of an in swinging delivery and the pull shot along the ground etc. Post-training sessions, he used to have a long chat with his coaches and senior players to lay down the strategies as well as to get the tips from them. There's no short cut to hard work and corporates should learn from him that a leader is the one who leads by example not only in terms of performance but also in terms of hard work, learning, discipline and dedication. He/She should be disciplined and punctual enough to arrive before the employees and if not before, at least he/she should arrive on time. On the other hand, employees & managers of the organizations will have a better learning and hard work approach when they will see the top management doing the same. Besides, a corporate need to be dedicated enough to work on each aspects of strategies such that strategies laid down become a technically sound as well as competent enough to adapt to the changes occurring outside the organization.

### Lesson 3 – Mental Conditioner and Team Builder

*"Try to take his wicket in the first 15 minutes. If you can't then only try to take the remaining wickets"* – Steve Waugh (on Dravid) to his bowlers

He himself is an effective mentor and his exposure to mental toughness has been very much fruitful to the Indian Cricket (India A & U-19 teams) as well as his IPL team, Rajasthan Royals. The above statement is so critical because Sports Psychology claims that once a player has acquired all the physical and technical skills required at the international circuit, then success is 10% physical and 90% mental. He used to read books that were based on the mental skills of the international players which helped him to capitalise on his mental skills too. Therefore, he was more of a mentor than a player for Rajasthan Royals. Besides, his team building skills was all embracing: whether he talked to individuals or the team, he ensured that the juniors were given due importance. One way of doing this is to make the juniors feel comfortable in a team environment. In a team meeting, Sanju Samson's or Stuart Binny's views were as equally considered as that of Shane Watson's or Ajinkya Rahane's. He created an environment for

talent to flourish. Take example of Pravin Tambe, who did not even play a single match at a domestic circuit, yet he could win the purple cap for picking maximum wickets in the tournament. Tambe, in his talks mentioned that David never asked him about his age (43 years then). The team called to be underdogs, performed a lot better as a unit and entered into the finals of the Champions League T-20. Here, what corporates should understand is that every employee has got some talent and in some way they are different, and you need to take the responsibility to identify and make it flourish as Dravid did for Rajasthan Royals. On the other hand, they should create such an environment where gap between all management levels is thin because people may not be talented enough or there may not be enough resources but if they have a sense of belongingness within the organization, they will be delivering their best performances for sure.

#### **Lesson 4 – Greatest Work Ethics: Play within the True Spirit of the Game**

*"Winning & Succeeding has no meaning, if you play foul."* – Rahul Dravid

He always said the right things. More importantly, he always did the right things. Take into consideration the above statement with which we can clearly identify him with ethics, principles and the most important, dignity. Dravid has shown that one can combine being a good human being and a competitive professional. In fact, through his game, Dravid has expressed his personality with poise. He has been a model of fair and tough cricket. You don't need to be a mean or selfish to survive in a competitive environment. You just need to focus on your natural strengths and you will find yourself competitive enough to face the opposition and this is what Dravid has been doing since last so many years. Sledging has been so often called as natural by many cricket players but Dravid did not stop following his principles and ethics. Situations did arise when opposition players try to sledge him, tease him but he never exchanged words with them nor did he react the same way. He strongly believed in playing fair cricket and he remained stuck to his ethics of the game. Here, it's a big lesson for corporates that besides, merely making profits, business houses also do have ethical and social responsibilities. As Dravid played fairly on-the-field, corporates and managers are also supposed to play fairly in the market because the goodwill and reputation of the business companies are based on how ethically it performs and also because the way you perform whether ethically or non-ethically leaves a shadow behind for generations to come.

#### **Lesson 5 – Constantly being focused and Learning from Failures**

*"He is so straight and negotiates almost every delivery with his bat, why does he need pads at all?"* – Danish Kaneria (Former Pakistan Spinner)

When Rahul initially came on to the scene, he was seen primarily as a test match player who struggled to score at a high strike rate. For a period of time, Dravid used to get stuck on one end, failing to rotate the strike. However, Rahul worked on his game to bring new facets to his batting to improve his strike rate. His tremendous performance in World Cup 1999 made people stand up and take notice of his ability to hit. Same concerns were raised by critics who thought Rahul to be unsuitable for T20 cricket, but Rahul has again proved them wrong with solid performances in T20 circuit. In a profession where opponents use mind games to bring you down, Rahul never got into the trap. Besides, he wasn't a successful captain and he accepted that fact humbly and did not let it get him down emotionally. He just went on with it as a failed job opportunity and kept his focus on his game. His concentration was rock solid which never let him lose his temper. A management corporate must also understand that as a professional, you are never complete and keep growing by learning from your mistakes and bringing changes in yourself as Dravid did because criticism's best answer is through performance and not by words. Energy should be focused on preparation and performance. Failures should be seen as lessons and should drive you to work harder and come back stronger. Let nothing collapse your concentration and determination. Your focus should be bigger than anything your opponents throw at you.

#### **Lesson 6 – Develop Multiple Skills**

*"Time and Tide wait for nobody except Rahul Dravid"* – MTV India

Everyone would agree that he did everything that was expected of a great player – and then he did everything that was not expected of him as well. He stretched beyond his potential and delivered. As we all know that he kept wickets for India for many years, although he was not a keeper. Wicket Keeping is not an easy task and it requires a great deal of courage to accept such a role, especially when you have already established a niche for yourself in the team or organization. On the other hand, he was a one-down specialist in tests as well as one-dayers, yet he opened the innings for India to play an additional batsman in the side, when Team India was struggling to place a competent opener. Besides, he's the one who batted at all possible positions, from No. 1 to No. 9. In the same way, a corporate leader, regardless of his/her position, may require delivering multi-skilled performances as situation would demand. Therefore, be open to develop and acquire as many skills as possible because no matter how well prepared and competent you are, circumstances may give you a rough time and you may never know what may you be called upon for and if you have those additional skills, then you get an opportunity to prove yourself and move up the ladder ahead in your career stages. And the most importantly, prepare yourself for all the challenges like Dravid so that the above quotation made by MTV India can be true for you and your company!

#### **Lesson 7 – Being a Great Leader and a Strategic Planner**

*"To succeed as a captain in T20, you need to swallow your pride and do what is right for the team. Putting the team ahead of himself comes naturally to Dravid"* – Akash Chopra (Former Indian Cricketer)

Some people are born great, others achieve greatness and some have greatness thrust upon them. Dravid certainly belongs to the second category. Philip Kotler might believe in the top down approach but Dravid is all about the bottom up approach and this is why he's also a great team builder as discussed earlier. While many believe Royals' strategy of keeping a small squad is a money-saving exercise, Dravid's view is that it's always prudent to pick the right personnel and then empower them. In a big squad, there will be insecurities and unfulfilled expectations, which may give rise to conflicts. Dravid's ingenious utilisation of limited resources has proved that at times a team is as good as its captain allows it to be. As a captain, Dravid strongly believed in laying down plans and strategies by considering strengths & weaknesses of theirs as well as the opponents' unlike Dhoni, who just believe in being spontaneous and reactive. They both have their own style of leading, both are successful. The strategy of saving your best batsmen and giving them the easier conditions to suit their stuff is not the best way to go about things in a Test or an ODI. One can be pretty confident that in the five day game, Watson or Hodge would have walked in after the fall of Rahane. But in a 20 over contest, sending in your relatively unaccomplished players to face the music first up and saving the better for later is a strategy that will pay rich dividends, especially in bowler friendly conditions. Hence, the "lesser" batsmen in Samson and Faulkner were sent in first. Had they managed to be among the runs, it would have been great. If not, they still had a Watson and Hodge waiting in the hut. Rahul Dravid had realized that and his plan turned out to be a masterstroke. A few critics/purists may call it defensive but anything that's effective can never be defensive as such at the end it beautifully worked out for Rajasthan Royals. In the same way, a corporate manager should focus on laying down competent strategies to challenge the competitors and he/she should understand that the same strategies may not work all the time and therefore plans should be contingent and may need to be updated even after you have entered in the field because situation will not always be as per plans and strategies.

#### **Lesson 8: Corporate Social Responsibility**

*"A Wolf that lived for the Pack. That is how Rahul Dravid is. You tell him he played well and he will tell you that somebody else played well too. I don't know if he is a human being. How can a human being so selfless?"* - Harsha Bhogle

Corporate social responsibility (CSR) refers to a business practice that involves participating in initiatives that benefit society.- Business News Daily

As stated initially in this case, Rahul Dravid is presently engaged in *Rahul Dravid Mentorship Programme* in association with GoSports

Foundation wherein he is mentoring the selected athletes with an aim to exceeding their performance levels and thereby increasing the number of medals to India's tally in the upcoming Rio Olympics 2016. Being a former cricketer, he's not only serving the Indian Cricket by mentoring the young Indian team but he's also chosen to mentor the future Olympians to help them perform at their best. By executing such a programme, he's benefitting the society and the country. This is as synonymous as working for a social cause. This is where he's fulfilling his social responsibilities. Likewise, besides, merely making profits, organizations should also be involved in activities that benefit the society as a whole.

*"My approach to cricket has been reasonably simple: it was about giving everything to the team, it was about playing with dignity and it was about upholding the spirit of the game. I hope I have done some of that. I have failed at times, but I have never stopped trying. It is why I leave with sadness but also with pride."* – Rahul Dravid on retirement

**Conclusion**

*"Had Rahul Dravid been born in any country other than India, he would have been much more famous than Sachin Tendulkar"* – Jacques Kallis (Former SA Cricketer)

*"If there was one Indian player who could get a direct entry into the famous Australian Team of the late 90s, then it would be Rahul Dravid"* – Glenn Mc Grath (Former Australian Cricketer)

*"Dravid's career is a proof that nice guys don't finish last"* – Steve Waugh (Former Australian Cricketer)

The above statements by famous cricket personalities speak a lot about him. When it is about Dravid, nothing can be concluded because we may never know where it all started and where it all ended. RD means a perfect package of ingredients needed to succeed which includes, 3Ds- Discipline, Dedication and Determination and 3Ps- Perfection, Persistence and Pacifism.

**Rahul Dravid: Awards & Honours**

Year	Awards/Honours
1998	Arjuna Award
1999	CEAT International Cricketer of the World Cup
2004	Wisden Cricketer of the Year
2004	Padma Shri, ICC Test Player of the Year, ICC Cricketer of the Year, MTV Youth Icon of the Year
2006	Captain of the ICC's Test Team
2011	NDTV Indian of the Year's Lifetime Achievement Award with Dev Anand
2012	Don Bradman Award with Glen McGrath
2013	Padma Bhushan

**Acknowledgement**

"Rahul Sir, you have been a huge source of inspiration for me. Your approach and attitude of leading and serving the Indian Cricket has immensely touched my heart as well as soul. Your simplicity awakes me as a person and as a player. It's when I started following you, my own game exceled in a way that I never ever imagined of. I feel as if you; yourself guided me on how to work on mental skills. Being a cricket player, I admire you a lot, both as a person and as a cricketer. Words would fall short to express my gratitude towards you and therefore, I'd like to dedicate this case study to you. I apologize in advance, if anything mentioned here in this case is offensive"

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