

Hi, this is Wayne Rivers at FBI, and *We Build Better Contractors*.

This week I want to talk about the 2004 Boston Red Sox and the importance of chemistry. 2004 seems like a lifetime ago, baseball, Red Sox. Come on, especially if you're a Yankees fan, you really don't want to be hearing about that. This article got to me. It's actually a question that Bill James, sort of the father of Saber Metrics, if you've never heard of him has a website and he answers reader questions pretty much every day. And a question came in about the importance of chemistry and James talked about how great the chemistry was, the 2004 Red Sox, how lousy it was the 2011 Red Sox. They had an epic collapse at the end of the season. They went from contention to nowhere and in no time flat and he attributed it to bad chemistry.

So, the question came in just, how much does chemistry really count? And he talks about how hard it is to quantify. Now, what about this is important to you? Well, contractors, I can hear you now, chemistry doesn't matter. We've got jobs over here and jobs over there, chemistry doesn't matter. Can the person project manage? Can the person estimate? Can the person operate equipment? Chemistry doesn't matter. And I would like to really push back. I think that for too long in construction, we've thought that way. This guy's a Rainmaker. This guy can get it done. Yeah, he's a jerk. Yeah, he upsets everybody else on the team, but boy, he's a go getter. And his job's always come in on time and on budget and everything else. So, you put up with a bunch of foolishness with which you ought not put up.

So, Bill James in the context of sports has this advice in his context, which is baseball. He says that "Chemistry works in a million different ways. And that's why it's hard to explain. If you work in an office or on a construction site or in a school, can the other office workers, the other construction workers, the other teachers, the administrators, can they make you more productive than you otherwise would be or less? Of course, they can. It's not really a debatable issue. I've asked that question to audiences dozens of times, and I've never heard anybody say no. If other people want you to succeed, the odds that you will succeed are better. That assistance can happen in 10 billion different ways. And therefore, it's very hard to document. If you make yourself disagreeable, people don't want to help you. If you help others, they will help you. So, in putting a team together, it becomes very important to stock it as much as you can with people who get that."

That seems like common sense. And he talks about a scale. So, this scale on the one side has confidence. And on the other side, it has terror. All right, confidence here, terror here. And he says that when people talk about confidence in sports, and I think in business too, what they're really talking about is anxiety and fear. And if you think about that spectrum, if you have a supportive group around you, people that you know are interested in your success, just as you're interested in theirs, you inspire confidence in each other. So, you're on this end of the scale. On the other hand, if you have people that are always tearing you down, then you have a fear of failure, or you have a fear of upsetting people, or you have a fear of looming conflict because someone disagrees with the decision you made.

What good teammates do is they help you have successful experiences. So, your confidence goes up and your anxiety goes down. And you think about people throughout your life, whether it's in sports or any other walk of life that have helped you. And those are the people that you have warm memories about. What bad teammates do is increase your anxiety. You think about people over time who've increased your anxiety on purpose. So, I remember, sports again, guys that were really mean and negative, even as an adult, guys that just never have anything nice to say, or always there's something in them that's broken, and they feel better when they can make other people feel bad. There are people like that. They're toxic. You have to try to get them out of your life as much as you can. But if you're forced to work on a team with some of these people, it's a real challenge.

They want to see other people fail. Now you think about the movie Bull Durham, Bill James talks about this movie, Bull Durham. You've got Kevin Costner, who's playing... I forget his name, but the old timer, who's kind of a minor league lifer. He's been in the major leagues for a cup of coffee or two, but not very much. And then there's this kid, Tim Robbins

character, Nuke Lelouch, and he's this amazing wiz bang pitcher. And he's going places. He's going to the show. Costner has no incentive to help this guy. Costner's careers coming to an end. This young kid is just on the ascent. They're even competing for the affections of the same woman in the movie. He has really no incentive to help him at all. But in spite of himself, he does. He coaches him. He puts his arm around him. He gives him tips. He causes him to think in different ways. He challenges the thinking.

Whether it's Bull Durham, whether it's sports or whether it's construction, does chemistry matter? I think it does. Bill James thinks it does. I'd like to hear your comments. What do you think about chemistry? How do you inspire the people on your team to think win-win and to help each other and pull for each other to be victorious? Put it in the comment section. We'd love to hear from you. This is Wayne Rivers at FBI, and *We Build Better Contractors*.