

Discipline is easily one of the most difficult jobs in business. So I don't envy Commissioner Stern's responsibility in this matter. But I do have some thoughts:

I like that the commissioner fined the teams 500k, but I don't think it goes far enough. Not in terms of dollar amount, but in terms of assigning responsibility. I think the coaches, the President, GM and Owners should have been fined directly instead.

The responsibility of the culture of a team and organization, of any business, starts with the owner and is implemented by the team's President, GM and Coach or whoever is in the position to manage the workforce

No team is going to be perfect and problems will happen. The game is just too intense for skirmishes not to happen now and then. The players are just too competitive. They will happen on the court and may even happen off the court. Whether those skirmishes escalate, or whether the players are smart enough to walk away reflects how well coached and managed the team and organization is.

This isn't just about the NBA either. I haven't been inside an NFL organization, but when I see teams have player after player arrested, that tells me there are management issues in that organization and league and I'm sure it applies to other leagues as well.

Players respond to the environment they are placed in. Players respond to the expectations created for them by the organization. Regardless of sport

Coaching a team is not just about Xs & Os. Being a general manager isn't just about picking players. Being a Team President isn't just about profitability. Being an owner isn't just about entertaining customers or grandkids in your suite.

Basketball is a team game, as well as a team business. It has its own set of organizational dynamics. GMs should know whether their coach is in control of their team and what the culture for the team the coach is defining. GMs and Team Presidents should know whether their players are prepared and have the character to deal with the stresses on and off the court that the NBA brings and if not, should be taking the responsibility and steps required to put them in a position to succeed.. All should be involved in communicating with the players to define what the on and off the court expectations the organization has for them.

The interesting thing is that the players know exactly where the flashpoints are. They know who the players that will instigate or escalate problems. More importantly, and more troubling, they are left to have to decipher exactly what it means when either the team/coach/GM/Owner either knows and doesn't care, or is oblivious to what the players consider to be obvious.

It's an unfortunate conventional wisdom in the NBA that owners should "Let basketball people make basketball decisions". In today's NBA, every basketball decision affects the organization from top to bottom. In my experiences, many, many "basketball people" I have worked with in the past with the Mavs and around the league, don't know shit about organizational dynamics and management. I can tell you that working now with those who do and know its importance makes my job far, far easier.

In previous eras when the vast majority of players had 4 years of college and every game's ' and players' highlights and lowlights weren't broadcast milliseconds later on cable/satellite and on the internet, knowing basketball may have been enough. It's not any longer. A team's "Basketball People" and upper management has to be responsible for defining and managing the culture of the entire organization.

It's their responsibility to determine where their problem areas are and address them before bad things happen. To know which players can possibly create problems and either get them the help they need, or get rid of them.

When something goes wrong, the responsibility is not just that of the players involved. It's the responsibility of the entire organization to recognize what caused it and if it can happen again. Isn't it interesting how so many people are there for the press conference when a player is signed, but most of those same people are nowhere to be found when something goes wrong?

The perspective of many in management positions in the NBA is that they are immune and separate from the actions of players. If the league were to assign public responsibility, along with fines to coaches, GMs and owners that would change very, very quickly and you would see management become more proactive, aware and involved with all elements of the culture of their organizations. That would be a great thing for the NBA and its fans.