

Position Paper 2

Joe Girardi was the best choice to manage the
New York Yankee's baseball team.

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Joe Girardi was the best choice to manage the New York Yankee's baseball team. Contingency theories of leadership include situational factors in evaluating the success of different leadership styles. (Robbins) While Joe Torre's 4 World Series titles in 5 years may never be duplicated again, (Yankees' Website) the team's inability to appear in the World Series the last four years has been a result of Torre's leadership style no longer fitting the situation. This is a unique, but informative context to analyze theories of leadership.

I argue that the Yankees need a transformational leader and Girardi is the best choice. An alumnus stated, "The Yankees no longer have that desire to push themselves to the next level." (NAA 342 Discussion) Torre's transactional style of leadership was successful with the type of players the Yankees had in the 1990s. But the team now must be developed throughout the season and inspired to "put out extra effort to achieve group goals." (Robbins)

While Torre has much more overall experience, evidence suggests that quality of the experience and its fit to a given situation is much more important. This situation is new and Torre has not adjusted. Girardi has the experience of transforming a team to play far above its talent level as he did earning National League Manager of the Year leading the Marlins to an impressive season. Neither Mattingly nor Peña have the same experience. Mattingly had not managed and Peña's early success ended in a disappointment. (Recap) Furthermore, Peña respects Girardi and will be valuable on the Yankees coaching staff. One of Mattingly's strongest attributes was his commitment to the Yankees, yet immediately after the decision he resigned. (Kepner Oct 29)

Girardi's style as a transformational leader is further confirmed based on two actions after his selection. First, he inspired his team with a sense of vision and mission by wearing the number 27 to represent his new mandate. (SI.com) Second, he went down to the Dominican Republic to the team's academy which displayed his commitment to development at all levels of the organization. (Kepner Nov 16) Together with his intelligence and ability to listen, (Kepner Oct 30) he has all the qualities of a transformational leader.

Critics challenge that Girardi will not succeed because of other factors beyond his leadership style. Does Girardi have the respect of veteran players? Jorge Posada sees Girardi as a mentor and resigned with the team. (NAA 342 Discussion) Girardi's ability to gain the respect of veteran's is made clear from this, especially considering that Posada beat Girardi out for the starting spot in 2000—an event that could have complicated their relationship.

Critics also point to Torre's adeptness at dealing with Yankee's management and the media. Regarding the former, more uncertainty exists with Girardi because of his poor relationship with the Marlins owner that led to his firing. John Flaherty said of Girardi though, "I think what really came out of it was that he learned some things about ownership and the front office and the manager all having to get along." (Kepner) He will be able to take that knowledge to the Yankees. Perhaps having learned, he said about George Steinbrenner, "I still think the Boss is the Boss. And obviously, I've always enjoyed my time with him, dealing with him." (SI.com) Girardi has enough experience in the Yankee's organization to understand the management personalities far better than in Florida and will be successful handling these relationships.

The media spotlight on the Yankees is unlike that of any other baseball team and Girardi is replacing a legendary manager. Despite his disagreements with the owner in Florida, he was a class-act after the firing when dealing with the media. Another example stands out as well. When Darryl Kyle passed away it was Girardi who addressed fans at Wrigley field. (Wolgoren) Such poise and control in an incredibly difficult time gives me confidence in Girardi's capacity to handle the intense media in New York.

This situation is similar to that of a blue-chip company that was at the top for nearly a decade but has seen profits flatten as products have not kept up with consumer's taste and competitors have strengthened. The CEO that maintained such superior performance has had an incredible run, but times have changed. The CEO is not a *bad* CEO, but a new style of leadership is needed to transform the company back to the top. For the Yankees, Joe Girardi's transformational leadership is the best fit.

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