

# Practicing for the Emergent

Watch this video of former Dodger shortstop, Rafael Furcal, dive to catch this ball and throw the runner out from his back. Even if you're not a baseball fan, you can appreciate the amazing athleticism on this play.

Here's the interesting thing about it. It wasn't luck, and it wasn't purely talent, either. Furcal practices this play. All professional shortstops do. They know that over the course of a 162-game season, plays like that are likely to happen, and so they practice the dive and throw. And practice, as it turns out, makes it more likely that you can pull off this play successfully.

In our business, much of what we do is design for the emergent. By definition, that means that we're not planning what happens in advance, because there's no way we can know. However, we can prepare for what might happen by practicing. It's that practice that makes us confident that we can help guide a group to success, even if someone hits a metaphorical ground ball up the middle.

One of our [goals for 2012](#) is to work on "learningful" projects. As a way to encourage that, we've started the practice of asking the question, "What will we learn?" whenever we evaluate possible projects. We just started using a CRM to track these projects, and I spent a few hours this week back-filling information. Everytime I hit this question about learning, I got stuck.

It's not that I don't think we'll learn something from these projects. It's that for most of our projects, my answer is the same: It's practice. And as good as we think we are, we can still use a whole lot more of it.

Here's a TEDx talk I gave last summer on practice: