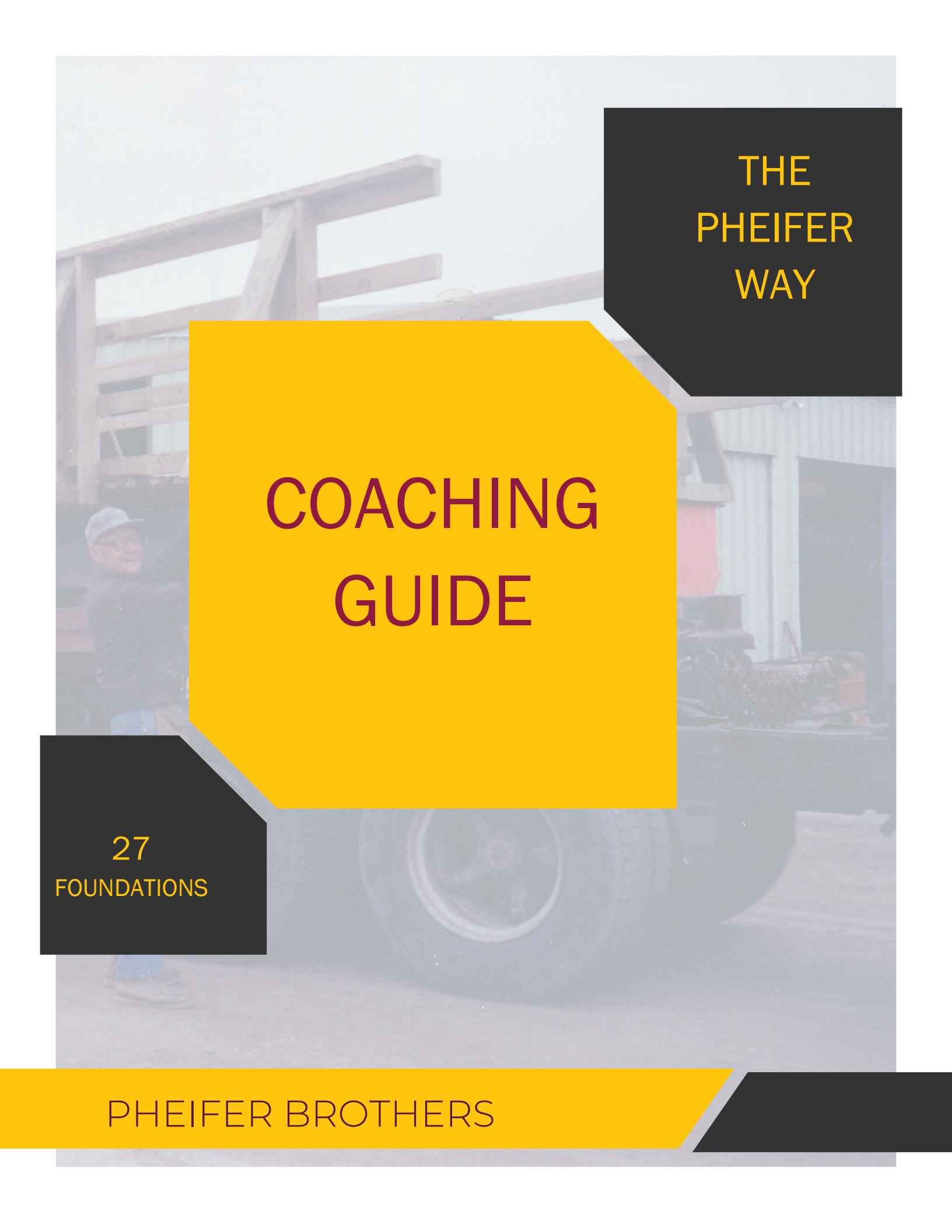




THE
PHEIFER
WAY

COACHING GUIDE

27
FOUNDATIONS

PHEIFER BROTHERS

Embracing Your Role as a Teacher



Congratulations on being part of a movement. It's a movement comprised of companies that understand how important organizational culture is to their success. Put simply, your culture has a *significant* and *direct* impact on how your people perform, and therefore, on the results your company achieves.

The cornerstone of creating a truly high performing culture is the regular and consistent practice of your Fundamentals. Change doesn't happen overnight. It's the result of lots and lots of repetition over a period of time. The more we think about, talk about, and practice the Fundamentals, the more internalized they'll become for our people, and the more it will simply become the way we operate.

It's important to realize that, as leaders, each of us is a *teacher*. Our people are looking at us all the time, consciously and unconsciously, and they're learning from us which behaviors are acceptable and which are not, what's considered to be high performance and what's not, and what really matters around here. Driving a culture is not about fancy signs on the wall; rather, it's about what we're teaching day in and day out.

The purpose of this Coaching Guide is to help you to become an outstanding teacher of your Fundamentals. At the beginning of the guide you'll see some general coaching tips about working effectively with your people. Following those general tips, you'll see a couple of pages for each one of your Fundamentals. The pages for the Fundamentals are broken down into three sections with blue icons to denote each section as follows:



Key teaching points – this section identifies some of the most important points you'll want to emphasize over time as you teach your people about this Fundamental.



Coaching points for working with staff – this section provides you with some suggestions for how to help associates who may be struggling with their practice of this Fundamental.



Questions to help spur conversation – this section provides you with a list of questions you can use to engage your people in more stimulating ways when leading off a meeting with the Fundamental of the week or otherwise discussing the Fundamental.

There's also a section for you to write notes. Use this guide as a workbook, as a place to record your own thoughts and ideas. And be sure to share what you're learning and teaching with your peers.

Congratulations again for being on the journey to high performance!

General Coaching Principles

ASK QUESTIONS RATHER THAN TELLING



When giving feedback, it's more effective to ask questions to help deepen a person's understanding rather than telling them what to do. For example, rather than saying, "When you fail to honor your commitments, you let down your teammates," it would be more effective to ask a question like, "How do you think it affects your teammates when you fail to honor your commitments?" Or, "If a teammate didn't honor a commitment they made to you, how do you think it might affect your trust in them?"

Questions create greater engagement on the part of the person you're coaching. It involves them, and forces them to think. When they answer a question by thinking for themselves, they "own" the solution in a way that's much more powerful than when they listen to you tell them what to do.

It's also important to ask good follow-up questions to deepen the learning. The example above might look something like this when expanded:

You:	"If a teammate didn't honor a commitment they made to you, how do you think it might affect your trust in them?"
Teammate:	"I probably would be hesitant to trust them on the next project."
You:	"And how do you think that impacts our ability to work as a team?"
Teammate:	"I guess it makes it harder."
You:	"What can you do next time to ensure that you honor your commitment?"
Teammate:	"I really have to set up a better tickler system so that things like that don't fall through the cracks."
You:	"That sounds like a good idea. How might you go about doing that?"

Notice how different this conversation is than simply lecturing the teammate on the importance of honoring commitments. The more a person makes the connection for himself, and the more he can state what he's learning, the more he'll own that learning. And of course, that's the whole point in coaching.

DESCRIBE THE FUTURE RATHER THAN THE PAST



One of the most common mistakes coaches make is correcting a teammate by pointing out what they “should have done.” The natural response to this kind of feedback is almost always defensiveness. The teammate tries to deflect what they hear as criticism (whether you intended it that way or not) by making excuses, explaining why what they did really wasn’t wrong, or sometimes even justifying it by pointing out that other people do it too. Of course, none of these responses is helpful, and that defensiveness creates “noise” or “static” in their listening channel that makes it difficult for them to actually hear what you have to say and learn from it.

Notice how the entire experience changes when we instead say, “The next time you’re in a situation like this, here’s how I’d like you to handle it.” Or even, “How might you handle this differently the next time you face that situation?” When we shift our orientation to what we want to do in the *future* (“next time”), we reduce or eliminate the defensiveness and the person is more easily able to hear us and absorb the lesson we’re trying to teach.

By the way, this is also particularly effective when helping two teammates “clean up” an issue they’re having with each other. Typically, if you get them together for a straight conversation, the first person will point out what they don’t like about what the other person did or does. The second person will then get defensive and explain why they do that or point out something the first person does wrong.



- Person 1: “You always give me projects at the last minute and then demand that I drop everything to work on them. If you were better organized I wouldn’t have to pick up your mess.”
- Person 2: “You’re not the most organized person yourself, and you always cop that attitude every time I give you something.”

Of course, none of this is helpful. If we instead focus the conversation on what each person needs from the other in the *future*, we open up a pathway to success.



- Person 1: “When you give me a project like this in the future, it will help me a lot if you can give me a warning in advance so I can reprioritize if necessary.”
- Person 2: “I can do that. It will also help me if you tell me what else you’re working on so I can help you decide on the priorities.”

Notice how talking about the future is more likely to keep the dialogue productive rather than allowing it to simply become an airing of complaints. After all, the whole point of the conversation is to find a way that we can work together more successfully.

REMEMBER THAT BEHAVIOR CHANGES GRADUALLY



You have a serious conversation with a teammate struggling with a certain behavior during which the person promises to change. The teammate seems serious and committed and for the next two weeks you notice a big difference. But before long they're back to having the same issue they had before your big talk. You get frustrated and angry, convinced they were just giving you lip service and they obviously had no intention of changing. Sound familiar?

One of the most common mistakes managers make is that they have an unrealistic expectation about how people change behavior. We're all creatures of habit. The teammate likely spent years developing the habit of behaving the way they did. Simply recognizing the problem and intending to change is not nearly enough to overcome a deeply ingrained habit. If it were that easy, we'd all immediately improve once we know there's a problem.

Sustained behavior change only comes after an extended period of time, filled with fits and starts, with gradually increasing periods of good behavior interspersed with gradually decreasing periods of relapse. Eventually, the new behavior gets imprinted as a habit and becomes more easily sustainable. So what's the implication for your coaching?

When setting up an improvement plan, expect and plan for relapses. Work to support the teammate during these relapses to help them get back on the program. You can even agree upon a signal you'll give each other when you see it happen so that you can gently get them back on track. Work with them to set intermediate goals and check in frequently. Your support and coaching can make all the difference in helping someone demonstrate significant and lasting improvement, rather than naively expecting them to miraculously change as the result of one serious conversation.

NOTICE HOW OUR WORDS EITHER LIMIT OR EMPOWER US



The words we choose have an enormous impact on how we think. Watch out for the way in which absolutes tend to limit us.

Compare the following sets of statements:



- A. *"He never accepts feedback.* He's just going to be defensive and argue with me."
- B. "He often gets defensive and argues when I give him feedback."
- A. *"I'm not* a very good listener."
- B. "In the past, I've tended to struggle with my listening."
- A. *"People don't* change. "
- B. "In my experience, it's often difficult for some people to change."

In each pair of statements above, the first sentence frames the situation in a declarative, absolute way. When I say, “I’m not a good listener,” I’m making a statement as if it’s an absolute certainty. It leaves no room for other possibilities. To a certain degree, it absolves me of responsibility to change or improve. But when I say, “In the past, I’ve tended to struggle with my listening,” I’m leaving open the possibility that I could be different. I’m acknowledging my past tendencies but I’m leaving room for creating a new future.

Absolute statements come across as immutable facts, leaving no room for alternative perspectives. These types of statements can be very limiting. Phrases like “In my experience” or “I have a belief that” suggest an openness to considering another point of view. They’re more empowering. You’re saying that this is what you’ve seen in your experience, but others may have had different experiences. You’re implying a willingness to be influenced.

Be on the lookout for the absolute statements your teammates make, as well as for your own. Modifying your language to use more empowering phrases is often the first step to creating meaningful change.

USE THE LANGUAGE OF THE FUNDAMENTALS AS FREQUENTLY AS POSSIBLE



When giving feedback or discussing situations, be sure to use the specific language and vocabulary of the Fundamentals. For example, rather than saying, “Make sure you understand the customer’s question fully,” it would be better to ask, “How might you use ‘generous listening’ to better understand the customer’s question more fully?”

Every time you use the specific vocabulary of the Fundamentals, you help to take them “off the wall” and bring them into everyday practice. You help your team to understand them in the context of real issues, and you help them see the Fundamentals as practical rather than theoretical. Notice, by the way, the use of a question in the coaching example above, rather than a statement.

NOTES:



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1. ACT WITH INTEGRITY.



Demonstrate an unwavering commitment to doing the right thing in every action you take and in every decision you make, *especially when no one's looking*. Always tell the truth, no matter the consequences. If you make a mistake, own up to it, learn from it, and make it right.



Key teaching points:

- This Fundamental is a foundation for building a strong reputation and a strong brand.
- Be committed to doing the right thing in every circumstance, every time. Even one instance of not doing the right thing will cause others to wonder if we're telling the entire truth or always doing the ethical thing. And once this doubt creeps in, it can be nearly impossible to erase it.
- Most people usually know what the "right" thing to do is. That's not typically the problem. It's actually doing it every time that's the issue. It takes an internal sense of honor, and sometimes discipline, to resist the temptation to do other than what's right.
- When faced with a difficult decision, a good "litmus test" is to ask yourself if you would be proud to tell your children what you did in that situation. If the answer is "yes," then it's likely the right thing. Or ask yourself what decision would allow you to sleep best at night.
- Doing the right thing may not always work to the company's benefit in the short term; however, as an overall way of conducting our business, we're rewarded many times over by always doing the right thing.
- This Fundamental applies to all the people we touch, including customers, prospective customers, suppliers, and co-workers, etc.
- Doing the right thing may differ based upon perspective. The key here is to be less focused on what's right for a specific individual or group, and rather be focused on the overall right thing to do, i.e., the action that demonstrates the most integrity.
- How we handle mistakes is often a good indicator of integrity. Do we cover up the mistake and hope no one finds out? Do we make up a story to explain away the mistake? People of integrity own up to their mistakes, apologize, and then do whatever is necessary to make it right.



ACT WITH INTEGRITY.



Coaching points for working with staff:

- It's not unusual for a teammate to ask for guidance when faced with an ethical dilemma. They're really wanting to know what the company stance is and/or what action will be supported. This is a great time to ask them what they think the "right" thing to do is. Rather than telling them what to do, let them articulate the action that demonstrates integrity, and then support them by noting, "that's how we do things here."
- When teammates are hesitant to own up to their mistakes, it's often an indication that we've not sufficiently established an environment of blameless problem-solving. A blameless environment makes it safe to own up to mistakes and emphasizes learning from them. The more you help your team to see mistakes as learning opportunities, the less they're afraid to admit them.



Questions to help spur conversation:

- Where did you learn your "moral compass"?
- How do you teach your children to act with integrity?
- Have you ever been faced with a sticky ethical decision and done the wrong thing? What happened and what did you learn? How did you feel?
- Have you ever been faced with a sticky ethical decision and stayed true to your sense of integrity? How did you feel? What did you learn?
- Which of our vendors or suppliers do you think consistently demonstrates the most integrity? How do you think they teach that to their staff?
- Have you ever worked for a company where you felt that doing the right thing might not be supported by management? How did that impact your pride in working for that company? How did it affect their reputation?

NOTES:

2. BE VIGILANT ABOUT SAFETY.



Know and practice the safety procedures for your job. Watch out for the safety of those you work with, for we're all part of the Pheifer family. *Never* take shortcuts that compromise your safety or that of your teammates.



Key teaching points:

- It's important to emphasize a "no compromise" mentality about safety. Nothing takes more priority than safety. Not speed, not cost, not anything.
- Safety is everyone's responsibility. It's important that people understand that if they see anything unsafe, they should take responsibility to speak up, and where necessary, step in.
- Safety is not only being responsible for ourselves, but also for our teammates. Often we may see something unsafe that a teammate is about to do and they may be unaware. We have to be vigilant in looking out for each other.
- Being vigilant about safety means being aware of our surroundings and potential hazards. Many workplace injuries can be avoided by greater situational awareness and planning.
- Many injuries are the result of using the wrong tool for the job. Here again, good planning can help prevent this.



Coaching points for working with staff:

- The most common cause of safety issues is speed. It's when we're trying to get something done as quickly as we can that we tend to cut corners and take safety risks. Staff will tend to follow your lead. When you emphasize safety over speed, they will. The opposite is also true.
- When you are uncompromising about safety rules (e.g., steel-toed boots, safety goggles, ear protection, hard hats, harnesses, etc.), you send a clear message to staff. Here as well, the opposite is true.
- Posting safety statistics and celebrating safety results are important indicators of where safety fits in your priorities.
- Having a ritual around a safety tip of the day or of the week is a good way to keep staff focused on safety.



BE VIGILANT ABOUT SAFETY.



Questions to help spur conversation:

- What's the biggest safety hazard you face in your job?
- What do you think is the biggest cause of accidents in our workplace?
- Have you ever seen a safety issue and felt hesitant to speak up about it? Why or why not?
- What would you do if you saw your boss or supervisor doing something unsafe?
- Have you ever seen a workplace accident that could have been avoided? What happened and what could have been done to prevent it?
- What's the single biggest thing you can do personally to be more focused on safety?
- How can you be more focused on safety outside of work?

NOTES:

3. BE RELENTLESS ABOUT IMPROVEMENT.



Regularly reevaluate every aspect of your job to find ways to improve. Don't be satisfied with the status quo. "Because we've always done it that way" is not a reason. Guard against complacency. Find ways to get things done better, faster, and more efficiently.



Key teaching points:

- Most people who are "average" think they can't do much better. And yet those who are great tend to see unlimited opportunities to get better.
- Relentlessness about improvement is really about a never-ending cycle of improvement. It's about reevaluating what we're doing over and over and over again to find ways to get better.
- Being relentless about improvement is a mindset. It's a way of looking at the world that sees unlimited opportunity for improvement, no matter how good or bad we may be. We never want to be satisfied with the current state.
- Relentless improvement isn't only about big issues. It's also looking at the little things we do every day and asking how we could make them better, faster, cheaper, safer, or more effective.
- It's important to share what we learn so that others don't have to "reinvent the wheel."



Coaching points for working with staff:

- When rolling out a new initiative, it's a great idea to purposely schedule an evaluation and improvement time for 3 or 6 months out when you get together and explore what's working, what's not, and what you can do differently.
- A great way to help teammates with this Fundamental is to have each person choose at least one thing each quarter or each year that they want to improve. Then help them establish a plan to achieve that improvement and hold them accountable to that plan. Over time, you want them to begin to incorporate this way of thinking into everything they do.
- Every process improvement initiative should have built into it an evaluation and improvement step as a standard part of the process. This step gets repeated over and over again, constantly improving the process.



BE RELENTLESS ABOUT IMPROVEMENT.

- A great practice is to every 6 months ask your team, “What processes do we do now that you think are ineffective?” Sometimes there are processes that once served a purpose but are no longer necessary. Some processes need to be improved. Some processes may still be needed but people don’t understand the reasons behind them. Just as importantly, you’re demonstrating a mentality of continuous improvement and an intolerance for doing things just “because we’ve always done it that way.”
- Another great way to teach this principle is to build a debrief session into every activity. For example, once a project is complete, we can ask a teammate(s), what was one element that was performed particularly well and where could they have improved? Then have them identify their plan for how to improve on that element for the next project.
- While things like suggestion boxes can be a good way to encourage the contribution of ideas for improvement, they sometimes become ideas with no ownership or action. It would be even better to help people take more ownership for what they *themselves* can improve. Consider having them make suggestions for things *they* can improve and offer assistance or resources to help make those improvements a reality.



Questions to help spur conversation:

- Take 2 minutes and write down as many things as you can think of that you could do better about your job. Have everyone read at least one from his or her list. See who came up with the most items and celebrate this.
- Name one thing you’ve improved at in the past year. Did that just happen with experience or did you have a plan to make it happen?
- Name one thing we could do to create more of a culture of relentless improvement.
- Why do you think continuous improvement is so important to success?
- Name one process that we’ve improved at least 3 times. What else could we do to improve it even more?

NOTES:

4. PRACTICE BLAMELESS PROBLEM-SOLVING.



Demonstrate a relentless solution focus, rather than pointing fingers or dwelling on problems. Identify lessons learned and use those lessons to improve ourselves and our processes so we don't make the same mistake twice. Get smarter with every mistake. Learn from every experience.



Key teaching points:

- When people get blamed, they usually make excuses and become defensive. This distracts them from solving the problem, as well as from learning from the situation.
- In blame-filled environments, people learn not to take risks. For them, the cost of a mistake isn't worth the risk.
- When a mistake happens, we want to first focus on solving the problem. At that point, nothing else matters, certainly not whose fault it was.
- Once the problem is solved, it's important to go back and do an autopsy to determine the cause of the issue so that we can learn from the situation.
- A step that is frequently missed is to adopt changes to our processes that incorporate what we just learned, and that reduce the likelihood of the mistake happening again.



Coaching points for working with staff:

- Blameless problem-solving is not incompatible with holding people accountable. The key is to focus on where the system or process broke down, *not* whose fault it was. Help the teammate to see what led to the error and what needs to be done from a process standpoint to prevent this from happening again.
- When discussing a mistake with a teammate, it's important to pay attention to your language and tone. Most people will feel attacked and become defensive, even when you don't intend it. You can reduce this by approaching situations with a spirit of genuine curiosity and from a coaching perspective. Remember that the goal is for the person to learn from the situation. It's not simply to reprimand.



PRACTICE BLAMELESS PROBLEM-SOLVING.



Questions to help spur conversation:

- What's your typical first response when you make a mistake?
- How do you usually feel when someone blames you for an error?
- What do you think the impact on our organization is when people point fingers and blame each other?
- What do you think the impact on our organization would be if there was less blame?
- How can we practice blameless problem-solving at the same time as holding people accountable?
- How can we make sure we learn from every mistake?
- What do you think is the best thing to do when you see someone make a mistake?

NOTES:

5. BE PREPARED.



Be organized and plan your work for maximum efficiency. Have all the tools necessary before starting your work. Be thoughtful about your schedule, and have a game plan for your workday. Know the priorities and work on them first.



Key teaching points:

- Being organized enables us to get more done in less time with higher quality.
- It's important to start each day with a clear plan of what needs to be accomplished and what's most important.
- If we don't prioritize, we tend to get the easy things out of the way, instead of the important things. This often creates a false sense of productivity.
- Good planning and organization can allow us to more successfully handle the unexpected.
- The more experience we have, the more we ought to be able to anticipate what's likely to happen and either prepare for it, or in some cases, prevent it.
- When unexpected issues arise, it doesn't have to knock us out of our plan for the day. Instead, we should decide where the new issues should be prioritized in the context of what else we have on our plate, and then continue to work on our priorities.
- Last minute craziness causes stress for everyone involved and can so often be reduced or avoided by looking ahead and being proactive.
- Being organized and prepared reduces stress and allows us to better balance work with our personal life.



Coaching points for working with staff:

- A simple technique to help teammates who struggle with this area is to ask them to show you their prioritized work plan for the day each morning. This will force them to actually have a plan and will give you a chance to provide feedback. This can continue for as long as appropriate until they've established the habit.



BE PREPARED.

- It can also be helpful to check in at the end of the day to see what was accomplished and to identify any distractions that prevented a teammate from accomplishing the most important tasks for the day.



Questions to help spur conversation:

- Think of the most productive day you've had recently. What did you do to stay on task and get so much done?
- Name two things you can do to be better organized.
- Name one thing you're going to do this week to be better prepared.
- Do you start each day with a plan? Why or why not?
- Do you start each week with a plan? Why or why not?
- Why do you think having a *prioritized* work plan is better than a simple list of things to do?
- What system do you use to organize and keep track of the things you need to accomplish? Name one thing you can improve about it.
- How can being more proactive reduce the number of errors we make?
- How does looking ahead reduce stress?

NOTES:

6. BE WILLING TO JUMP IN THE WATER.



Be willing to do whatever it takes to accomplish the job . . . plus a little bit more. Whether it's starting early, staying late, or doing something that's not in your job description, it's the extra mile that separates the ordinary from the extraordinary.



Key teaching points:

- Average people do the minimum amount necessary to get by. Extraordinary people always find a way to do more.
- It's not enough to simply "work on" the problem or put things "in motion." The point is to do whatever it takes to actually solve the problem.
- No matter how far we've gone to solve a problem or address an issue, there's almost always at least one more thing we could do or one more step we could take to make it even better.
- "It's not my job" is not an acceptable excuse. Don't let a job description limit how far you go to solve a problem.
- That one extra step is often the one that blows away customers and causes them to tell stories about the memorable experience we created for them or the lengths we went to solve their problem. That's where the opportunity lies to really make a difference.



Coaching points for working with staff:

- A great way to get teammates to more consistently realize the opportunities that exist to do more is to ask them, "What's one more thing you can do here to go further or to amaze the customer?" Just asking that question all the time will spur your teammates' creativity and condition them to think that way themselves.
- Be careful about how your job descriptions are written. Too often, they limit people's thinking by outlining the tasks or functions that a teammate is expected to do. This can cause them to think "inside the box" rather than outside the box. Instead, it's better to describe their responsibilities in terms of deliverables (e.g., doing whatever is necessary to solve customer problems).



BE WILLING TO JUMP IN THE WATER.



Questions to help spur conversation:

- What do you think it means to “be willing to jump in the water”?
- Why do we often *not* “jump in the water” and go the extra mile?
- What’s the best story you can remember of a time when you went the extra mile? What happened and what did you learn from the situation?
- Can you think of a time when someone went the extra mile for you? How did it impact your view of that person or that company?
- How do you motivate yourself to dig deep, to do more than the minimum necessary?
- Are there times you think we *shouldn’t* go the extra mile? Why or why not? How do we decide when we should or shouldn’t?

NOTES:

7. HONOR COMMITMENTS.



Be on time for all phone calls, appointments, meetings, and promises. *If you're not 15 minutes early, you're late.* If a commitment can't be fulfilled, notify others early and agree on a new deliverable to be honored. Do what you say you're going to do, when you say you're going to do it.



Key teaching points:

- Honoring less than 100% of our commitments is as good as honoring none of them because people don't know whether or not they truly can rely on us.
- Honoring commitments is one of the most important ways to build trust and create strong relationships. In fact, it's often a good idea to make commitments to customers just so that you can honor them and quickly build a reputation as someone who always does what you say.
- While we're rarely in control of "fulfilling" commitments because we rely on others, we're always in control of "honoring" our commitments.
- When a commitment can't be fulfilled, it's critical that we engage with the other person at the *earliest possible point* to let them know and to make appropriate arrangements or new commitments. Often, early notification allows them to make necessary adjustments since others may be affected by the missed commitment.
- The biggest reason most people struggle with honoring commitments is not lack of intention or desire. It's usually lack of rigor about deciding what we can or should commit to. We say "yes" too easily.
- Appointments and meetings are forms of commitments, and being on time for them is an important part of honoring the commitment.



Coaching points for working with staff:

- People who are notoriously bad with honoring commitments usually struggle with two things:
 1. They make unrealistic commitments.
 2. They have poor organization skills and lose track of commitments they made.
- For those who struggle with unrealistic commitments, you might require that they always get back to people before making a commitment. In other words, rather than saying "yes" on the spot, they can say, "Let me look into your question and call you back this afternoon to tell you want I/we can commit to."



HONOR COMMITMENTS.

- For those where poor organizational skills are the primary problem, you might create a log sheet where they must enter every commitment they make and have them keep it sorted by due date. Depending on the situation and person, you might even have them review the log sheet with you at the end of each day or week.



Questions to help spur conversation:

- Who's the best person you know when it comes to honoring commitments? What's it like to work with them?
- Who's the worst person you know when it comes to honoring commitments? What's it like to work with them? How does this issue affect your relationship with them? How does it affect your trust in them? How does it affect your desire to work with them?
- Why do you think most people struggle with honoring commitments?
- Is it possible to "honor" a commitment that wasn't "fulfilled"? What do you think the difference is?
- How do you think it would affect our company's performance if every commitment was always honored? What's the most important single step *you* could take toward achieving this goal?
- What will you do this week to improve your performance on honoring your commitments?

NOTES:

8. GET CLEAR ON EXPECTATIONS.



Create clarity and avoid misunderstandings by discussing expectations upfront. Set expectations for others and ask when you're not clear on what they expect of you. End all meetings with clarity about action items, responsibilities, and due dates.



Key teaching points:

- We judge situations not by what happened, but rather by how it compared to what we *expected* to happen.
- If you don't know what the other person is expecting, you're just "rolling the dice" and hoping you meet the expectation.
- It's important to set *and* ask for expectations. "I'll have this to you by tomorrow. Does that work for you?" or "By when do you need this?"
- It's critical in every conversation to be clear about exactly what's expected. This is true in all our communications, internally and externally.
- Virtually every misunderstanding has at its core a miscommunication about expectations. One person expected something different than the other person did.
- It's been said that "when you want to influence action, what counts is what's heard, not what you said." You may think you've been clear, but unless you check with the other person to find out what they heard, or what their understanding is, you may still have a disconnect about the expectations.
- This Fundamental is closely related to the notion of honoring commitments (Fundamental #7). Honoring commitments begins with having a crystal clear understanding and agreement about expectations.
- A big part of delivering extraordinary customer service is to do the unexpected. If you're not clear about just what's expected, it's hard to determine what might go beyond those expectations.
- Sometimes it can feel like it slows things down to have to be crystal clear about expectations and confirm that others are on the same page; but it ultimately speeds things up by avoiding the wasted time, energy, and frustration that usually accompany misunderstandings about expectations.



GET CLEAR ON EXPECTATIONS.



Coaching points for working with staff:

- When working with teammates on this Fundamental, be particularly mindful of our language, as a big cause for misunderstanding about expectations is the sloppiness of our language. Vague statements such as, “when you get a chance” or “as soon as you can” or “it shouldn’t take long” all lead to confusion because they can mean very different things to different people. Set the example by being clear and specific in your language and teach your people to do the same.
- Watch out for places where expectations may be set by one person but not communicated to others in your organization. Consider having a place in your customer documentation for expectations to be spelled out clearly for all to see.



Questions to help spur conversation:

- Think of the last misunderstanding you had with someone at work or home. What role did differing expectations play in the misunderstanding?
- How do you think our language contributes to misunderstandings about expectations?
- When dealing with a vendor or supplier, how can you ask about expectations without coming across as being pushy or demanding?
- Can you think of a situation where customer expectations were known by one person in our organization but not by others who needed to know? What happened? How could this be avoided in the future?
- How do you think this Fundamental relates to honoring commitments?

NOTES:

9. DELIVER RESULTS.



While we appreciate effort, we reward and celebrate *results*. Follow-up on everything and take responsibility to ensure that tasks get completed. Set high goals, use measurements to track your progress, and hold yourself accountable for achieving those results.



Key teaching points:

- Many people like to talk the language of *effort* rather than the language of *results*. They talk about how hard they tried, how many hours they worked, how many calls they made, rather than the results they achieved.
- At the end of the day, we get paid to get things done, not simply to work on them. This means that we have to be certain the work is completed to the customer's satisfaction. We're not finished until we can verify that the customer regards it as complete.
- We live in an interdependent world where resolving most issues requires multiple people each playing a role. We make promises to customers on behalf of people who make promises to us and so on. Only through rigorous follow-up can we ensure that everything that was *supposed* to get done actually *does* get done.
- Metrics are an important part of being results-oriented. Having a specific goal and monitoring progress toward that goal regularly helps to drive the right behaviors.
- Data is not for judgment. It's *your* information to help *you* understand how you're doing and how you can improve. Own your numbers.
- Part of delivering results is getting issues *resolved* and not just making progress on them or moving the ball forward some more.



Coaching points for working with staff:

- Be on the lookout for ways in which your reward or performance review system may be inadvertently promoting effort over results. Are you tracking issues "worked on" or issues resolved? Prospect calls or sales made? While it's useful to track the activities that lead to results, it's the ultimate results where we need to focus most.
- Some teammates often regard measurement systems as unfair judgments of their work. It can be very powerful to have teammates collect and report on their own data and how they're using it to improve, rather than you giving them their data. When they own the data, they see it as a tool rather than as a judgment.



DELIVER RESULTS.

- Some teammates who struggle with this issue don't understand that following-up is part of the job. Others understand, but don't have the organizational systems and processes in place that are necessary to ensure that everything is followed-up. The best thing you can do is to help them create a tickler system for logging a follow-up for every activity and then tracking its completion.



Questions to help spur conversation:

- What measurements do you track to understand how you're doing? How do you use those measurements to improve your performance?
- Do you think all goals should be measured? Why or why not?
- How do you keep a focus on results when not everyone has ultimate control over some of their results?
- Why is it so important to follow-up on everything? Shouldn't we be able to rely on others to do what they said they'd do?
- What systems have you created or do you use to keep track of follow-ups?
- How do you keep squarely focused on results, without losing the human element of business?
- Why do you think this Fundamental "made the list"?
- Name one thing you can do this week to be more focused on delivering results.

NOTES:

10. BE A FANATIC ABOUT RESPONSE TIME.



Respond to questions and concerns quickly, whether it's in person, on the phone, or by e-mail. This includes simply acknowledging that we got the question and we're "on it," as well as keeping those involved continuously updated on the status of outstanding issues.

Key teaching points:

- Getting back to people quickly is an important part of delivering memorable service and setting us apart from competitors. Most people have become accustomed to poor response time, so it's not difficult to stand out.
- It's important to acknowledge someone's call or e-mail, just to let them know you're "on it" and to set a clear expectation about the expected response time. Otherwise, they often feel like things disappeared in a "black hole."
- When working on an issue, it makes a huge difference to keep the other person in the loop by periodically updating them on the status. This also helps them to feel confident, to know that it's important to you, and to know that you're handling it.
- You don't want a customer to call you to ask about the status of an outstanding issue. This makes them feel like they need to follow up in order to get anything done. Be proactive and get to them first.
- While the customer knows you have other problems to solve and other customers to deal with, always make them feel like they're your most important priority. *Never* talk about how many other things you have to do.
- Being a "fanatic" means making fast response time a huge priority.



Coaching points for working with staff:

- In situations where a teammate needs improvement in this area, it may be necessary to establish specific response time expectations for different types of issues.
- You might consider a short-term "game" or contest around the fastest response time with the winner getting some small award, or even a company-wide game or contest where everyone shares in an award (could be as simple as a pizza party) when the whole company or department beats the goal.



BE A FANATIC ABOUT RESPONSE TIME.



Questions to help spur conversation:

- Can you think of a time when you made a request from someone and you never heard back from him/her? How did that make you feel? How did it impact your view of the vendor (or person) and/or your desire to work with them again?
- Can you describe a time when a person or vendor got back to you faster than you were expecting? What happened and how did that make you feel about them?
- Can you describe a time when you had to follow-up with a person or vendor multiple times just to find out where things stood on your issue? How did you feel?
- Who's your favorite person or vendor for response time, and what do they do that sets them apart?
- What keeps you from being as fanatical about response time as you'd like, and what can you do about it?
- Name two things you can do to improve how quickly you respond.
- Name one thing you will do this week to improve your performance on this Fundamental.

NOTES:

11. LISTEN GENEROUSLY.



Listening is more than simply “not speaking.” Give others your undivided attention. Be present and engaged. Minimize the distractions and let go of the need to agree or disagree. Suspend your judgment and be curious to know more, rather than jumping to conclusions. Above all, listen to *understand*.



Key teaching points:

- Listening is a skill that takes practice, just like any other skill.
- We often have so many things going on in our brains that we aren't really listening. For example, we're often anticipating what we're going to say next, or thinking we know what the person is going to say, or judging whether or not we agree, all of which block our focus on just listening.
- The key is to focus purely on fully understanding what the other person is trying to communicate.
- Replicating (restating in your own words) is a great way to make sure you're connecting with the speaker. It also forces us to pay closer attention.
- Listening “generously” is more than just being neutral. It's looking for the most positive interpretation of what someone is saying.
- We have more power to influence others by our listening than we do with speaking.
- When trying to be a more generous listener, it's important to reduce or eliminate distractions. Turn away from the computer or phone, put down what you're working on, and just focus on what's being said.
- If we can't give our undivided attention at the moment, it's better to set a specific time with the speaker when we can listen more fully, rather than just half-listen.
- It's also important for the speaker to *feel* heard. We convey this with our body language, eye contact, nods, replicating, etc.
- Generous listening often feels like it slows things down, but it's a case of slowing down to speed up. We ultimately gain greater speed when we fully understand each other.



LISTEN GENEROUSLY.



Coaching points for working with staff:

- Replicating, or repeating back in your own words what you thought you heard, is one of the best skill development techniques for generous listening. When working with teammates, it can be helpful to ask them to repeat back what they just heard (whether it's you speaking or another person). This is a good test as to whether they really listened well enough to fully understand.
- Many people are so eager to speak that they don't let the other person complete what they're saying. It's often helpful to remind people, in the moment, to stop and allow the person to finish their thought and make sure it's understood fully before responding in any way.



Questions to help spur conversation:

- Why do you think generous listening is so hard for most of us?
- What gets in the way of your ability to listen generously?
- Name one thing you can do to work on your listening.
- How can you best handle a situation where someone comes to you and wants to talk when you're in the middle of seventeen different things?
- Name two things you can do to minimize distractions when you're listening.
- Can you name someone who is a really good listener? How does their listening impact you?
- How does it impact you when you don't feel heard?
- What are some of the impacts on the company of poor listening?
- How do you think it would affect our company if we were all more generous listeners?

NOTES:

12. SPEAK STRAIGHT.



Speak honestly in a way that helps to make progress. Say what you mean, and be willing to ask questions, share ideas, or raise issues that may cause conflict when it's necessary for team success. Be courageous enough to say what needs to be said. Honor the absent by addressing issues directly with those who are involved or affected.



Key teaching points:

- Speaking straight is always honest, but done in a way that helps us move forward.
- Speaking straight is not simply dumping your bucket in the name of honesty. It requires us to be thoughtful in how we communicate so that our message can most easily be heard and that we can make progress.
- Most people avoid straight conversations because they fear conflict.
- When we avoid having a straight conversation, we allow frustration and resentment to build.
- It's often unfair to the other person when we allow a problem to go unaddressed. Since they don't know it's a problem, they have no opportunity to resolve it.
- When we get a pit in our stomach thinking about a conversation, it's a pretty good indication that it's a conversation that needs to take place.
- Speaking straight requires the courage to say what we mean, even when it may run counter to prevailing thought, when it might cause conflict, or when it might be uncomfortable. When people don't speak straight, the cost to the organization can be huge.
- A big part of speaking straight is the responsibility we have to go directly to those who are involved or affected and work out our issues, rather than telling our boss to tell their boss to tell them.
- Organizations that speak straight don't have fewer problems than others. They just solve them faster.
- Speaking straight is not just permissible. It's a requirement.



SPEAK STRAIGHT.



Coaching points for working with staff:

- When a teammate has an issue with a co-worker, it's critical that you direct them to resolve or clean up the issue directly with the other person, rather than expect you to resolve it for them. It's most helpful if you give them coaching on how to do this, perhaps even including some role-playing. If we simply send them off to have a difficult conversation and it doesn't go well, they may be reluctant to ever try it again.
- To ensure that difficult conversations actually do take place, it can be helpful to hold the teammate accountable by asking what day they're going to have the conversation and promising to check in to see how it went.
- For many teammates, the hardest part of having a difficult conversation is not knowing how to start it. A great technique is to begin the conversation by acknowledging its difficulty. For example, "This is a really hard thing for me to do, but I want to share something with you," or, "I feel really uncomfortable about this, but . . ." or, "I don't want you to take this the wrong way, but I need to be straight with you." By acknowledging our discomfort upfront, we reduce the likelihood that the other person will take it the wrong way.



Questions to help spur conversation:

- What keeps you from having straight, honest conversations?
- What do you think is the cost to the organization of not having straight conversations?
- Have you ever been in a meeting and disagreed with the direction that was being discussed, but kept your mouth shut? What kept you from speaking up?
- What's the difference between "speaking straight" and "dumping"?
- If someone needed to have a straight conversation with you, how would you want him to approach you?
- What are some ways you might start a difficult conversation to ease the process and increase the receptivity?

NOTES:

13. TAKE OWNERSHIP.



Take personal responsibility for making things happen. Respond to every situation by looking for how we *can* do it, rather than explaining why it can't be done. Be resourceful and show initiative. Don't make excuses or wait for others to solve the problem. See issues through to their completion.



Key teaching points:

- An important aspect of this Fundamental is the emphasis on getting things *done* rather than simply *working* on them.
- When we start by looking for how we *can* do something, it frequently sparks our creativity and we see possibilities. We become more resourceful because we're trying to find a way to solve a problem. Conversely, when we simply rely on the rules or the "normal" way of doing things, we see only limitations and we shut down our creative mind.
- A simple technique for spurring our resourcefulness is to ask, "How would we solve this problem if there was a \$10 million award for getting it done?" It's amazing how resourceful we can be when the stakes are high enough.
- Taking ownership also means taking ultimate responsibility for the solution, even when others need to be involved. This includes following up on issues until we're absolutely certain everything is complete.
- There are always plenty of excuses available to reasonably explain why we couldn't do something. But taking ownership is about relentlessly finding a way, and not giving up so easily.



Coaching points for working with staff:

- The most common challenges teammates have with this Fundamental are not being resourceful enough (stopping too soon) and not following issues through to completion.
- The best way to help someone who isn't being resourceful enough is to ask them questions to spur ideas about next steps, rather than telling them what to do next. "Who else might be able to help you with this?" "Who else might have seen a problem like this before?" "What information are you missing that keeps you from having a complete picture?" The goal is to get teammates to think more creatively for themselves. Telling them what to do next just creates dependency and limits their learning and skill development.



TAKE OWNERSHIP.

- When working with teammates on seeing issues through to completion, it's best to help them realize the gap between working on the issue and seeing that it's complete. Ask questions such as, "How do you know if this has been finished?" "Have you checked the system to see that the issue is done?" "Have you followed up with the customer to see that their problem has been resolved?"



Questions to help spur conversation:

- Have you ever had a vendor simply give you the "party line" or the "rules" ("That's just our policy . . .") rather than *really* try to solve your problem? How did that make you feel?
- Have you ever had someone truly go to bat for you rather than just take the easy way out and lean on "company policy"? How did that make you feel about them and their company?
- How do you balance having clear operating procedures with encouraging people to take ownership and be creative problem-solvers?
- What rules do we have in our company that restrict your ability to take more ownership and better solve problems for our customers?
- Think of the person you know who best exemplifies taking ownership and the person who most frequently "passes the buck." Why the difference? Is it the person, the role, or the company?

NOTES:

14. SHOW MEANINGFUL APPRECIATION.



Recognizing people doing things right is more effective than pointing out when they do things wrong. Regularly extend *meaningful* acknowledgment and appreciation — in all directions throughout our organization.



Key teaching points:

- Most people feel more energized, motivated, and uplifted when they're given meaningful acknowledgment and appreciation.
- It's important that we distinguish *meaningful* from *meaningless* appreciation. Meaningless appreciation (the culture of everyone wins a trophy) is counterproductive. It promotes mediocrity rather than high performance.
- Meaningful acknowledgment and appreciation have 4 components:
 - It's always honest
 - It's timely
 - It's specific
 - It tells the impact of what was done
- The more specific you are in what you're acknowledging, the more likely the person is to understand and repeat that behavior.
- Meaningful acknowledgment and appreciation should happen in all directions – peer to peer, manager to direct report, direct report to manager.
- It's important to learn how to gracefully receive acknowledgment with a simple "Thank you." Dismissing it diminishes the person who made the effort to offer it in the first place.
- There's no room for victimhood here. If you're not getting the kind or amount of appreciation you need, it's your responsibility to speak up and ask for what you need.



Coaching points for working with staff:

- It's important to understand how each person likes to be acknowledged. Some love to be acknowledged in front of their peers, while others shrink from this and prefer a one-on-one conversation or handwritten notes. Know your people.



SHOW MEANINGFUL APPRECIATION.

- A good suggestion to create an environment of acknowledgment is to start each meeting with a brief acknowledgment. Be sure to demonstrate all 4 components to make it as rich as possible and to show how it's done. Once you've established this, it can be effective to rotate the person giving the acknowledgment so that everyone is learning and participating, and acknowledgment isn't seen as the sole responsibility of management.



Questions to help spur conversation:

- Do you prefer to be acknowledged publicly or privately and why?
- What do you think is the impact when everyone is broadly acknowledged (everyone wins a trophy)?
- Have you ever worked in an environment where there was a lot of acknowledgment? How did it affect you?
- Have you ever been in an environment where there wasn't much acknowledgment? How did it affect you?
- Why do you think it's so hard for many people to gracefully accept an acknowledgment?
- How might it affect the person giving the acknowledgment when you dismiss it as if it were nothing?
- What can you do if you're not getting the kind or amount of acknowledgment you need?
- What do you think is the most important part of making acknowledgment meaningful?

NOTES:

15. HAVE EACH OTHERS' BACKS.



It's not about you. Don't let your own ego or personal agenda get in the way of doing what's best for the team. Be there for each other and be willing to step into another role or help a co-worker when that's what's required for success. Help each other to succeed.



Key teaching points:

- The most common cause of dysfunction in organizations is ego – people worrying about who looks good or who looks bad or political positioning instead of doing what's best for the team.
- When people set aside their ego, they let go of the need to defend their point of view, because their ego and self-worth aren't so personally invested in the idea. This gives a team much greater intellectual freedom to explore ideas and find the best solution.
- Having each others' backs involves going beyond just your job function. It's seeing where others need help and being willing to step in to assist.
- It's important to realize that what each of us does affects other people and downstream processes, and that we need to do things that set others up for success.
- Having each others' backs means you put the team's agenda ahead of your own.
- Everyone on our team plays a role in our success. We each contribute to the whole in a different, yet vital way.
- Sharing your knowledge, coaching, and mentoring are all aspects of looking out for each other and the team.
- Winning and losing as a team is the opposite of thinking in silos. Instead of complaining about other departments, competing with them, or denigrating them, we support them and look for ways to work together for the good of the enterprise.



Coaching points for working with staff:

- Often teammates are not even aware that their ego is getting in the way in a given situation. A simple question to ask is, "Is that what's best for *you*, or is that what's best for the team and our customers?" This can often help people to see the issue with more clarity.
- Where appropriate, it can be useful to have people spend time in other departments to better appreciate what they do and the interconnectedness of the various parts of the organization.



HAVE EACH OTHERS' BACKS.

- Be on the lookout for ways in which your incentive program may inadvertently be creating a silo mentality. Consider creating bonus programs that have some component of overall organizational performance.



Questions to help spur conversation:

- Why do you think setting aside your ego or personal agenda is so important to organizational success?
- Think of a place you worked before where egos were rampant. How did that affect performance? How did it affect you?
- Who in our organization do you think best exhibits a team mentality? What do they do that makes you say that?
- Give one recent example of where two departments worked together for the good of the customer and the organization.
- Name two things we can do to increase cooperation between units or departments.
- What work practices do we have that may inadvertently be hindering team cooperation?
- What's one thing you can do this week to better understand how your work impacts other departments?

NOTES:

16. BE A FANATIC ABOUT ACCURACY AND PRECISION.



Pay attention to the details. Missing just one detail can have an enormous impact on a job. The goal is to get things *right*, not simply to get them done. Double-check your work. Get the details right the first time.



Key teaching points:

- There are endless details in our business. And yet, missing one detail in our processes could not only lead to an unhappy customer, but could cause quality and safety issues, hurt our reputation, and affect future business.
- Proofreading is a vital part of paying attention to the details. With the volume of work that each of us does, it's nearly impossible to get everything right the first time through. That's why we need to proofread and double-check everything carefully.
- Following-up to make sure that every detail has been handled is critical. If we request information, we need to follow-up to see that everything has been received and accounted for in order to ensure that everything runs smoothly for the customer.
- Being a fanatic about accuracy and precision requires good organization skills. The better organized you are, the less likely it is that a detail gets overlooked.
- Look for opportunities to “mistake-proof” work by using simple tools like checklists, signoffs, color coding, labeling, etc.
- Be on the lookout for places in which you may have created goals or incentives that prioritize speed over accuracy and precision. Are you simply getting the behavior you've asked for?
- Like many Fundamentals, this is not an “either or” issue. Getting the details right the first time doesn't mean speed isn't important. It *is* important, but not at the expense of quality.
- While we need to understand the “big picture” and the customer's needs and objectives, it's the details that ultimately will determine whether we delivered as promised.



Coaching points for working with staff:

- The best way to ensure that people focus on accuracy and precision is to create a double-checking system for all important tasks. Having a peer review process with a sign-off can help to ensure that at least two sets of eyes see every key document.



BE A FANATIC ABOUT ACCURACY AND PRECISION.

- One of the simplest, yet most effective, ways to ensure that the details are covered is to create checklists for each step in a process. The checklist helps us to make sure that every detail has been accounted for and that nothing has been missed.
- Most teammates who struggle with this issue mistakenly think that speed is the biggest priority. They think they're doing what you want by getting as much done as possible. It's imperative that you align your goals and incentives with this Fundamental. You can't evaluate people on speed alone and expect them to get the details right the first time.



Questions to help spur conversation:

- If you don't consider yourself to be much of a "detail person," how can you still make sure that the details are handled and are correct?
- Do you think people can learn to be better at details and precision, or is it simply the way you're "wired"?
- Why do you think we included this one among our Fundamentals?
- Can you think of a time when you missed a key detail? What happened and what did you learn?
- What systems or processes do you use to make sure that all the details are handled correctly?
- How do you think being organized relates to your ability to get the details right?
- What role do you think proofreading plays in this Fundamental? How else can you use "double checking" to ensure the details are right the first time?
- How does follow-up relate to getting the details right?

NOTES:

17. ASSUME POSITIVE INTENT.



Work from the assumption that people are good, fair, and honest, and that the intent behind their actions is positive. Set aside your own judgments and preconceived notions. Give people the benefit of the doubt.



Key teaching points:

- We generally will see whatever we're looking for. If we believe people are good, we'll see the best in them. If we believe people are bad, we'll see that instead.
- Our perspective influences our interactions, relationships, and our results:
 - If we begin a conversation from the perspective that the other person is trying to cheat us or take advantage of us, the chances of a positive interaction are dramatically reduced.
 - If we begin a conversation from the perspective that the other person has a positive intent and that they're good, fair, and honest, we're far more likely to create mutually acceptable results.
- Our presumptions and expectations about others affect their behavior. When our interactions are based upon the presumption that the other person is good, fair, and honest, the other person is more likely to act this way.
- Working from the assumption that people are good, fair, and honest is a starting point. It doesn't preclude the possibility that some people prove they simply can't be trusted.
- When we trust people, it actually puts a greater burden of responsibility on them than when we don't trust them. Extending trust tends to cause people to be more trustworthy.
- Giving people the benefit of the doubt causes us to be more curious and to find out more of the story. It's easier, but intellectually lazier, to simply figure that everyone is out to get us.
- Working from the assumption that people's intent is positive usually leads to a happier and more cheerful life than going through life being cynical and doubting.



Coaching points for working with staff:

- It's easy for teammates to get caught up convincing themselves that the customer or supplier is trying to cheat them. It can be helpful to ask a simple question like, "If we were to assume this person is a good, fair, and honest person, how might we approach this situation differently?"



ASSUME POSITIVE INTENT.

- Remember that, as a manager or supervisor, you set the example for your team. Pay particular attention to the way in which you respond to situations and the assumptions you start from, as this will have more influence on your people than anything else you do.
- So long as a teammate is employed with Pheifer Brothers, we must have a presumption of good will and good intent with all interactions. Teammates often need to be reminded of this principle, especially when you hear a teammate talking negatively about another co-worker.
- If you hear someone talking *about* a co-worker rather than *to* that co-worker, it's typically a flag that this Fundamental is being violated.



Questions to help spur conversation:

- How do you think your assumptions about other people affect your interpretation of events?
- Do you think your assumptions about other people actually affect what they do? Why or why not?
- How does it affect you when someone says, "I trust you completely here"?
- Do you think your outlook on life affects your health? If so, how?
- If someone has cheated you multiple times, do you still think you should work from the assumption that they're good, fair, and honest? Why or why not?
- Why do you think it's important to give people the benefit of the doubt? How does it affect relationships? Is this just being naïve?

NOTES:

18. INVEST IN RELATIONSHIPS.



Our business is built on trust and trust is built on relationships. Make smart decisions that enhance long-term relationships. Strong relationships enable us to more successfully work through difficult issues and challenging times.



Key teaching points:

- Investing in relationships involves having a long-term perspective. It's taking the time to get to know people personally rather than seeing interactions in a transactional way.
- When we have strong relationships with our customers, they're more likely to work through difficult or thorny issues with us as partners.
- They're also more likely to keep working with us because they value and appreciate the relationship.
- Strong relationships with customers also allow us to know them well enough to better understand and anticipate their needs. We become a trusted advisor, and not just a contractor or supplier.
- A strong relationship with our supplies often means they'll bend over backwards to help us solve a problem or provide a unique solution for a customer.
- When we invest in relationships, we sometimes make decisions about how to handle a situation that may not be to our advantage in the short-term. But we know that it will build the relationship and be to everyone's advantage in the long-term.



Coaching points for working with staff:

- Problem situations with customers often present great opportunities to help teammates appreciate the power and importance of this Fundamental. When working through a sticky customer issue, ask your teammate, "How might we handle this in a way that builds a long-term partnership with this customer?"
- Since building relationships often means learning a lot about other people, you might consider using a customer relationship worksheet that has lots of information to be completed over time (e.g., family info, educational background, hobbies and interests, etc.). You can even create a friendly competition around who can complete the worksheet most fully.



INVEST IN RELATIONSHIPS.



Questions to help spur conversation:

- How does investing in customer relationships help our company?
- How does investing in supplier relationships help our company?
- Name two things we could do to deepen our supplier relationships.
- Think of a recent sticky customer situation. How did our handling of the situation either enhance the long-term relationship or hurt it?
- Why is it important to invest in the relationships we have with each other at work?
- Why do you think we specifically use the word “invest” in this Fundamental? What do you think investing means in this context? What are the actions you’d see if we were truly investing in relationships?
- Pick one customer, supplier, teammate, or other relationship that you’d like to deepen, and name one specific thing you’ll do this week to invest in that relationship.

NOTES:

19. TEACH BY EXAMPLE.



The best way to influence others is through your own example. Walk the talk. Take responsibility, both formally and informally, to coach, guide, teach, and mentor others. *Be the change you want to see.*



Key teaching points:

- Many people like to complain about what others do wrong. It's better to take responsibility for being the best example of what we want to see. We're more likely to influence others by our example than by our complaints.
- This Fundamental requires that we take responsibility for our own behavior, rather than waiting for others to change.
- What we do is often contagious. By choosing to act in ways that are positive, we increase the likelihood that others will do the same. Of course, the same thing is true for negative behaviors.
- Demonstrating a willingness to change and to work on yourself is a powerful model for others to see. We all have things we need to improve, and it helps to see others setting the tone.
- We all have something we've learned that we can teach others.
- Being a mentor, whether formal or not, promotes a sense of teamwork. It creates an environment of inclusion, where people are looking out for each other, rather than an environment of exclusion.
- Being a mentor often benefits the mentor as much or more than the mentee.



Coaching points for working with staff:

- It's not at all unusual to hear a person complain about everything that's wrong with others. It can be tempting to respond by either justifying what others do or minimizing it. Instead, take advantage of the opportunity to encourage the person to be the change they want to see. Ask them what they can do to set a great example.
- Remember the relationship between this Fundamental and #14, Show Meaningful Appreciation. The more we acknowledge examples of people doing the kinds of things we want to see, the more that example is likely to be copied.
- This Fundamental is also closely related to Fundamental #3, Be Relentless About Improvement. Encourage your people to work on themselves to be the best examples they can be. Challenge them to set a great example.



TEACH BY EXAMPLE.

- A great way to get people sharing what they've learned is to have training sessions that are led by teammates. They'll often take pride in presenting and teaching, and they'll own the material even more that way.
- A good practice is to have every department meeting include a 5-minute piece dedicated to the sharing of a best practice. Rotate who's responsible for the sharing each meeting.



Questions to help spur conversation:

- How do you think the example you set affects those around you?
- Why do you think most of us like to complain about others rather than changing things ourselves?
- How can your teammates best support you when you start to complain about others?
- Who was the best mentor you ever had? How did they influence you? What made the relationship work so well?
- Have you ever been a mentor for someone else? How did being a mentor affect you? How did it affect the person you were mentoring?
- What effect do you think mentoring has on teamwork?
- How is this Fundamental related to taking ownership (Fundamental #13)?
- What do you think it means when this Fundamental says, "Be the change you want to see"?
- Name one thing you'll do this week to set a better example for what you want to see.

NOTES:

20. LEARN THE WHY.



In the search for the best solutions, challenge and question what you don't understand. Don't accept anything at "face value" if it doesn't make sense to you. Be curious, ask thoughtful questions, and listen intently to the answers. Dig deeper to go beyond the expected. Ask the extra question.



Key teaching points:

- When we're curious, we're constantly wondering and challenging, not to be disagreeable, but rather to understand better.
- Debate and constructive conflict produce better outcomes, increased ownership, improved organizational alignment, transparency, communication, and a healthier organization.
- If you accept what your customers say without question, without being more curious or "learning the why," you're not adding much value for them.
- There's a tremendous cost to customers and to our own organization when people just "go along" with a decision rather than challenging. It's through challenge that the best ideas are raised, developed, and fine-tuned.
- Curiosity is truly the path to learning. It's the desire to know more that causes us to explore in greater depth.
- Learning useful information and gaining meaningful insight is almost always a function of asking thoughtful, probing questions.
- Most people love to talk and appreciate questions that cause them to think. In fact, answering thought-provoking questions often helps people to clarify their own thinking in ways they may not have done before.



Coaching points for working with staff:

- Often you'll sense from a person's reaction or body language that she doesn't agree or has reservations, despite the fact that she didn't speak up. As a manager, it's important for you to push harder and ask for feedback when you see this. For many people, it's foreign or uncomfortable for them to challenge, so you'll need to teach them. We call this "mining for conflict."



LEARN THE WHY.

- If you're not getting enough constructive debate, ask your teammates to argue the opposite point of view.
- Too often, people stop at the first question and then want to respond. It's important to teach your people to keep from responding too early, and then to ask good follow-up questions. Role-playing is a good way to practice this skill.



Questions to help spur conversation:

- Why do you think it's important to our company to have questioning and debate?
- What do you think is the cost to the company when we don't question in order to learn the why?
- What keeps you from challenging or questioning more?
- What might cause you to hesitate to question a customer or co-worker? How might this impact the value you add?
- Can you think of a decision that was made that you disagreed with, but didn't challenge or question? Why didn't you?
- How can being more curious help you to build a better relationship with your customer?
- What do you think the relationship is between this Fundamental and listening generously (Fundamental #11)?
- What do you think it means to ask questions "with curiosity"?
- Why is it important to ask follow-up questions?

NOTES:

21. TREASURE, PROTECT, AND PROMOTE OUR REPUTATION.



We're all responsible for, and benefit from, the Pheifer image and reputation. Be proud of our heritage and what our founders believed in. Consider how your actions affect our collective reputation, and be an ambassador for the company. Bleed blue.



Key teaching points:

- Our reputation has taken years to build and is one of our most valuable assets.
- A great reputation is the result of the actions of a large number of people over a period of many years.
- As long as it's taken for our reputation to be built, it can be destroyed very quickly by just one or two actions on the part of just one or two people.
- We all benefit from the reputation we've built in many ways: customers are more likely to want to work with us, suppliers are more likely to cooperate with us, and potential teammates are more likely to want to come work for us.
- Remember that we all represent the company both at work and out in the community. Our actions everywhere affect that reputation.



Coaching points for working with staff:

- This Fundamental ties closely to acting with integrity and always doing the right thing (Fundamental #1). When working with teammates on an issue around integrity, it's a great time to remind them of how the decisions we make affect the reputation of the entire company.
- Teammates often forget that our reputation is affected by what they do when not at work as well. This is particularly true when they're driving one of our vehicles or if they wear an ID badge or clothing that has the company logo. It's important to remind people that we all represent the company at all times.



- NOTES:

22. “BRING IT” EVERY DAY.



Have a passion for what we do and be fully engaged. Make the most of each day by approaching every task with energy, focus, purpose, and enthusiasm. Work with a sense of urgency to get things done.



Key teaching points:

- We all have days when we're tired, didn't get enough sleep, don't feel well, or just aren't "feeling it." And yet, we all have a responsibility to each other and to the organization to bring everything we have every day.
- Imagine a Broadway actor or actress or a professional athlete deciding to only give a half effort one day because they just didn't feel that great. The audience wouldn't tolerate that. And we shouldn't tolerate that of our teammates or ourselves either.
- Of course, this Fundamental is easier said than done. We all have outside issues, worries, and distractions to varying degrees. But when we walk in the door, it's "game time." It's up to us to block everything else out and deliver our best each day. That's part of being a professional.
- When we don't "bring it," it can lead to poor quality, poor customer service, and even worse, safety issues.
- Not "bringing it" affects not only us individually, but our teammates as well. For our company to succeed at the highest level, each person has to be counted on to do to his or her part. One weak link in the chain can have an enormous impact.



Coaching points for working with staff:

- Often meetings are less productive because many teammates are distracted and not fully engaged. To increase engagement and focus, start and finish meetings on time, have a written agenda, and forbid cell phones and other similar distractions. Stand-up meetings can also promote greater engagement.
- When outside personal issues prevent a teammate from being "all in," it's often better for all concerned if you send the person home for the day. This gives them the chance to handle outside issues, and also reduces the chances for errors, poor work, or safety issues that could result from being less than fully present.



“BRING IT” EVERY DAY.



Questions to help spur conversation:

- Think of a time that, as a customer, you’ve encountered a person who was totally engaged and enthusiastic about their job. How did it affect your customer experience and the likelihood you’ll do business with that vendor again?
- Think of a time that you’ve worked with a customer service or sales person who seemed totally disengaged and disinterested, as if they were going through the motions. How did it affect your impression of the company and the likelihood you do business with them again?
- How do you think professional performers are able to block out distractions and bring their best every time they’re on stage, given that they face the same personal challenges we all do?
- What do you think the impact on the organization is when a few people don’t bring their best each day? How many different potential effects can you list?
- How does this Fundamental relate to taking pride in your work (Fundamental #23)?
- How can we balance staying sensitive to the very real personal challenges our people face while at the same time maintaining a focus on high performance and achieving results?

NOTES:

23. TAKE PRIDE IN YOUR WORK.



Make quality personal by demonstrating a passion for excellence in everything you touch and everything you do. Have a healthy disdain for mediocrity. Good is not good enough. Always ask yourself, “Is this my best work?”



Key teaching points:

- It's important to emphasize the pride aspect of this Fundamental. While it's true that taking pride in your work leads to positive outcomes (happy customers, happy bosses, promotions, more money, etc.), the primary reason to do quality work isn't because of the outcome. The primary reason is the deeply personal sense of pride we feel in our own work product.
- It's also important to emphasize that we want to do high quality work in everything we do, even if others may not notice. This includes everything from how clutter-free we keep our work, storage, and project sites to our concrete being free from imperfections and uniform in color; from the way we maintain and clean our equipment and tools to how well a project is completed according to the plans or specs. Remember that it's about personal pride.
- Sometimes the quality of our work isn't even seen or won't be noticed. In these cases, such as making sure a form liner perfectly matches up so there aren't seams in the concrete, it's especially important to remember this Fundamental.
- People who have an internal drive and A+ standard around quality usually exhibit this trait in most aspects of their lives, whether they're coaching t-ball, working on a home project, mowing their lawn, or doing something at work. They just like things to be done well. These are the people you want in your organization.
- Quality can be contagious. The more one person or department does quality work, the more peer pressure it puts on everyone else to do quality work themselves.
- Remember that everything we do affects the reputation of the company. That's why it's so important to do high quality work.



Coaching points for working with staff:

- A simple but powerful question to ask someone when he or she has not done quality work is, “Are you proud of what you produced?” or, “Would you be happy with the finished product if it were in your neighborhood?”
- Literally having someone sign his or her work can be a powerful inducement to produce higher quality. It can totally shift their feeling of ownership of their quality.



- What's the biggest obstacle that gets in the way of your ability to do high quality work?
- Why do you think some people take more pride in their work than others?
- Do you think making taking pride in one's work is more of a learned trait or more of a genetic predisposition?
- Where or how did you learn to take pride in the quality of everything you do?
- If you have brothers or sisters, do they take the same pride in their quality that you do? Why or why not?
- How does doing quality work affect the reputation of the company?
- What do you think the impact on quality would be if we all literally signed our work? How could we do something like that in our company?

24. EMBRACE CHANGE AND GROWTH.



What got us here is not the same as what will get us to the next level. Get outside your comfort zone, rather than stubbornly hanging on to old ways of doing things. Be excited by the possibilities that change and growth bring. Be flexible.



Key teaching points:

- Change is the most permanent thing in the world – it's inevitable. Your only options are to embrace or resist it.
- Change and growth can be scary, threatening, and difficult, or they can be energizing, exciting, and uplifting. The change is identical; the only difference is your perspective on the change.
- Change and growth require us to get uncomfortable, rather than always sticking with what we know.
- If we only stay with what we know or where we're comfortable, we never learn and grow. Growth requires us to take risks and go beyond our comfort zone.
- By embracing change and growth, we're able to stay fresh, alert, and prepared for future opportunities.
- We should never change simply for the sake of changing. The change should be well thought-out and planned.



Coaching points for working with staff:

- When rolling out a change, it's important to always explain why the change is necessary. This will result in more organizational alignment and you'll get more buy-in.
- When discussing change with a teammate, discuss the change in the context of the benefits of the change to the teammate individually, including how the change can make their jobs easier, or how they can grow personally or professionally. Articulate the benefits to the company as well.
- Change and growth can be scary since they represent the unknown. The better you can articulate the full plan for the change, the more comfortable your team will be.
- A good way to get teammates to shift their perspective on a change is to ask each person to name at least one benefit they can see from the change.



EMBRACE CHANGE AND GROWTH.



Questions to help spur conversation:

- What do you think it means to “embrace” change and growth?
- Why do you think most people are so resistant to change and growth?
- What makes some people better able to embrace change and growth than others?
- How does your attitude about change and growth affect your ability to work with them successfully?
- How does your attitude about change and growth affect your experience of change?
- Name one change that you feared, but which later turned out to be really positive. What did you learn from the experience?
- What does it mean when we say that growth requires us to get out of our comfort zone?
- How does embracing change and growth help our company to stay relevant?
- How do you think it would affect our company if we were resistant to change and growth?

NOTES:

25. BE A PRO.



Your actions make a strong statement about the pride you take in your performance. Act in ways that demonstrate professionalism. The appearance of our worksite makes a similar statement about the quality of our work. Take responsibility to see that our office and worksites are clean, neat, and organized.



Key teaching points:

- Whether they should or shouldn't, people often judge us by our appearance. This is especially true for first impressions.
- If we care enough to look neat and keep our worksite clean, there's a better chance that we also care enough to pay attention to the details and the quality of our work.
- Making sure our appearance is neat, clean, and orderly is also a reflection of the pride we take in our work, our company, and ourselves.
- Dressing neatly is more about the *way* we dress than *what* we wear. Some people can wear a suit and look like a slob, while others can wear jeans and look neat.
- Keeping our office or work environment neat and clean is a responsibility shared by everyone. If you see something, take care of it, rather than assuming someone else will.



Coaching points for working with staff:

- Dress codes can be very tricky to explain and to address. Often we're uncomfortable talking with a teammate about inappropriate dress. It's best to be as direct as possible and as clear as you can about expectations. Have the teammate restate their understanding so you're sure you're both on the same page. Resist the temptation to address an entire group if the issue is really with one person.
- Most teammates will perform to the prevailing standard based on what they see around them. If you want a higher standard than you're seeing, you'll need to be crystal clear about those expectations as well as be a good example yourself.



BE A PRO.



Questions to help spur conversation:

- If you had two contractors come to your home, one dressed professionally, with a clean truck, and their paperwork all in order, and the other looking disheveled, disorganized, and sloppy, which would inspire more confidence in their craftsmanship?
- Do you think the appearance of our office or work environment really matters? Why or why not?
- Think of someone you know who is always dressed meticulously, no matter what they wear. Now think of someone you know who always seems disheveled. What's your general impression of each in terms of their professionalism and/or craftsmanship?
- Is it possible to be clean and neat in a dirty business? If so, how?
- Why do you think this Fundamental made the list?
- Name one thing you will do this week to pay more attention to our appearance.

NOTES:

26. LOOK AHEAD AND ANTICIPATE.



Solve problems *before* they happen by anticipating future issues, planning for contingencies, and addressing them in advance. Work with appropriate lead times. Preventing issues is always better than fixing them.



Key teaching points:

- It's always better to avoid or prevent a problem, rather than have to fix it later.
- The more experience we have, the more we ought to be able to anticipate what's likely to happen and either prepare for it, or in some cases, prevent it.
- Last minute rush work is one of the biggest causes of mistakes, and in some cases, safety issues. Planning ahead can reduce many of these issues.
- Last minute craziness also causes huge stress for everyone involved and can so often be reduced or avoided by looking ahead and being proactive.
- Being proactive with customers is one way to do the unexpected and deliver legendary service.
- Looking ahead and anticipating with customers can also help us to deal with the unexpected. If we can work ahead of schedule instead of last minute, it leaves more room in our schedule for dealing with unexpected emergencies.



Coaching points for working with staff:

- When working with teammates who struggle with this issue, you'll often find that poor organizational skills correlate very strongly with lack of being proactive. The more organized we are, the more we're able to look ahead and anticipate instead of being overwhelmed. You can help your teammates by asking them, "What tasks or appointments do you have coming up next week or next month and what can you be doing today to prepare for them?"
- A good calendar or task management system can also help those teammates who struggle with planning ahead and anticipating. By placing tasks on the calendar weeks or months in advance, we can ensure that we're working on them with plenty of lead-time.



LOOK AHEAD AND ANTICIPATE.



Questions to help spur conversation:

- What systems do you use to think or plan ahead?
- What keeps you from looking ahead?
- How can looking ahead and anticipating reduce the number of errors we make?
- How does being proactive reduce stress?
- Who's the most proactive professional you've ever worked with? How did their being so proactive affect your impression of them? What tools did they use to be more proactive?
- How can you utilize technology as a tool to help you look ahead and anticipate?
- Why do you think it's so important to avoid surprises?
- How can being more proactive enable you to deliver outstanding customer service?

NOTES:

27. ENJOY THE RIDE.



Learn to enjoy and appreciate the important work that you do. Value those you work with and the contributions that you make.



Key teaching points:

- Most of us spend more time each week with our teammates than we do with our families. If you don't mostly like the people you work with and the job that you do, you probably shouldn't be there.
- Most people work harder, accomplish more, and with higher quality when they're enjoying the ride than they do when they're miserable.
- Studies on brain research have actually shown that we're more creative and solve problems better when we're happy and having fun.
- Studies also show that laughter is actually healthy for us on a biological level.
- When we care as much as we do about performing at a high level, we can sometimes take things and ourselves *too* seriously. It's important to keep perspective. Few of us are dealing with issues that are truly life and death each day.
- Championship teams and high performing organizations are almost always more fun. Doing well *is* fun and having fun also leads to doing well.
- Enjoying the ride is contagious. When people are laughing and enjoying themselves, it tends to lighten the mood and it spreads to others.



Coaching points for working with staff:

- It's important as a leader to create an environment that encourages people to be happy and to enjoy the ride. While it's useful to occasionally plan some fun events or group outings, it's equally important to simply laugh and joke around every day.
- Like with most things, your attitude and style as the leader of your group sets the tone for how the group operates. If you're constantly harried, stressed, and in a foul mood, it will rub off on your staff. If you're able to work to a high standard while remaining happy, light-hearted, and joyful, your staff will follow suit. Your team goes as you go.



ENJOY THE RIDE.



Questions to help spur conversation:

- Why do you think we put this Fundamental on the list?
- Think of the highest performing team (work or sports) you've ever been a part of. Did the team have fun?
- Think of the most stressful, uptight team you've ever been a part of. How successful was that team?
- What's the funniest thing that ever happened to you at work?
- What's the most fun place you ever worked? What made it so fun?
- How do you think enjoying the ride impacts performance?
- Do you think it's possible for a team to sustain high performance if its members aren't enjoying the ride?

NOTES:
