

PERSONNEL NOTEBOOK

For Your Most Important Resource—The Human Resource

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THE GOLDEN RULE

We're all looking for answers — in our business, our job, our family, and in every other area of our life. We want to find the formula that will guarantee our success and help us to be happy. We're seeking that standard or rule that we can use as a beacon to guide us.

Many of you are following such a beacon unconsciously. It may be an unstated fundamental principle or moral code based on your experiences and values. Whether it's actually written or even stated out loud, you may be following that beacon. It becomes your basis for making decisions and managing your life.

In some cases, this beacon is based on how you choose to treat or relate to others. It can be a policy of honesty or a mistrust of strangers.

In other cases, the beacon may be based on codes of conduct for yourself; a drive to persistence, to never give up, or a personal policy to listen more than you speak. Or, your beacon may be on a much higher plane, based on mankind's needs. Maybe your life management style is to leave everyone and everything better than you found it.

If you can get in touch with your guiding standard and identify it in words, it becomes your personal Golden Rule.

Examining the Golden Rules of successful leaders to see what beacons or standards they follow is worth your time. You may find the thoughts that agree with your own or even the words to identify your Golden Rule.

Business 2.0, a business division of CNN, conducted interviews with successful leaders seeking to identify their guiding standards. Here are the Golden Rules that some of our most admired and successful leaders follow.

“Surround Yourself with People Smarter Than You”

Chris Albrecht CEO, Home Box Office, says, Do this and be comfortable with it. One smart guy is never as good as a lot of smart guys. Someone is better at something than you are.

“Make Hiring a Top Priority”

Steve Balmer CEO, Microsoft, explains, “At one time, I did all of the recruiting and interviewing for Microsoft. I still

invest a significant amount of my time ensuring that we hire the right people.” Learn what you need, learn to find people who have that, and learn how to attract them to your company. Your product only gives you an edge; your people determine if and when you succeed.

“If You Think You Can’t, You’re Right”

Carol Bartz CEO, Autodesk, says, “I’m often in the position of persuading people to do what I want, but they don’t want to do it. So first I have to hear all the ‘I can’t’s,’ those limitations they carry in their minds. The more they explain, the more convinced they are that they can’t do it.” That’s when I ask how much they *can* do. Whatever is left, we either resolve or identify the best steps to take from there. Sometimes, we find that it can’t be done. But that’s really rare.

“Make Your Customers Your Sales Force”

Marc Benioff CE, Salesforce.com, adds, “Why have a few hundred salespeople when you can have a few hundred thousand — especially when they’re not on the payroll?” Take care of your customers. Reward them for sticking with you. Make doing business with you good for them, easy, and even enjoyable. Give customers a chance to talk about their success working with you. You want to reach that tipping point where it starts its own engine and keeps on running.

“The Customer Should Always Be Happy”

John Chambers CEO, Cisco Systems, says, I focus almost fanatically, sometimes to a fault, on customer success.

When you’re helping them, they want to help you do it.

“Don’t Be Interesting, Be Interested”

Jim Collins management consultant and author of *Built To Last* and *Good To Great*, adds, if you want to have an interesting dinner conversation, be interested in those who came. If you want to have interesting things to write about, be interested in the things you see, read and hear. If you want to meet interesting people, be interested in the people you meet. Be more focused on your customer than on yourself.

“He Who Says It Does It”

Simon Cooper President and COO, Ritz-Carlton, says, “One of the key assets I look for in a team or a leader is a bias for action.” Great ideas are useless unless commitment and execution take over. The one with the idea, the belief, is the one to get it done. “No one is more apathetic than in the pursuit of another person’s objective.”

“Get Out From Behind Your Desk”

Jim Goodnight CEO, SAS, explains, “It’s all too easy to get into a rut reading e-mail and going to meetings. That’s not a productive way of doing business.” Visit your employees on the job. Talk about what they do and their ideas, as well as your vision. Circulate. Visit your customers. Talk about their problems and their long-range plans. Break that stifling mode.

“Learn to Give Back”

Michael Graves architect and designer, adds, “Your mission must include

something besides making more money.” That’s an honorable and necessary focus, but you must make a contribution to society. When you go, people should know that the world is a better place because you were here.

“Only the Paranoid Survive”

Andy Grove former Chairman/CEO, INTEL, says, “If Murphy’s Law (anything that can go wrong, will go wrong) means *anything*, then paranoia can be an advantage.” I look for, and expect, the problems I feel will come *before* they get here. For example, I know that health care is getting way too expensive. But in trying to fix it, I also know that it is just about the most inefficient industry in America. They have never taken advantage of digital technology, which is already basic in almost every industry. Paranoia says that that’s going to hinder all attempts to do a big fix.

“Once a Day, Take Some Beach Time”

Mirelle Gulliano, CEO/President, Cliquot; and author *French Women Don’t Get Fat*, explains, “We live in a world of burnout. Even the mighty among us can take just so many burnouts. You’ll be a better worker, a better colleague, and a better person if you take 20 to 30 minutes every day for yourself. Don’t feel guilty about doing your own thing during that time. I take my beach time every morning. I have a glass of water, I take a walk along Bank Street to the Hudson River. It’s cheap, it good exercise, and it’s usually the best time of my whole day. I call it my French Zen.”

“Believe in Something Bigger Than Yourself”

Carlos M. Gutierrez U.S. Secretary of Commerce; former Chairman/CEO, Kellogg, says, “If people see that you are only looking out for your own best interests, they won’t follow you. You must believe in doing good for those you serve. My father, who was the first great leader I observed, used to say, ‘Tell me what you brag about, and I’ll tell you what you lack.’”

“You Can’t Cheat an Honest Man”

Phil Hellmuth, Poker World champion, says, “What we do as poker players is to read people. People lie to us; they try to bluff us constantly. So we get used to sorting out all the BS. When con men pitch me, I can see that they’re not as good at it as poker players are. You just cannot cheat an honest man. I don’t know exactly why, but it’s certainly true for me.” Remember, if you cheat someone, they’ll remember it for 15 or 20 years. It’ll be pretty hard to cheat them again.

“Thou Shall Not Covet Thy Competitor’s Success”

Geraldine Laybourne Chairman and CEO, Oxygen Media, explains, Like most television networks, I used to watch what the other networks were doing. If they came up with a “Desperate Housewives,” we had to match that. But the look-alikes never amount to a whole lot. So I’m no longer distracted by, or focused on, their successes. But I do always have an eye on the competition. I look to see where the holes are. Where are they vulnerable? Where are their mistakes? What is being left undone? “I’ve built the business by looking at the

conventional wisdom and going exactly the opposite way.”

“Don’t Trust, Just Verify”

Steven D. Levitt coauthor, *Freakonomics*, says, “So much of what we hear turns out to be false on closer scrutiny — whether it’s an expert’s advice, what you read in the paper, or what your mother used to tell you. If it’s important, take the time to figure out for yourself whether it’s really true.”

“There’s Something Bad in Everything Good and Something Good in Everything Bad”

Michael Lewis author of *Liars Poker, Moneyball, Coach: Lessons in The Game Of Life*, says, Its not perfection we’re looking for. Perfect is the enemy of good.

“Get Face Time with the Customer”

Anne Mulcahy Chairman/CEO, XEROX, adds, “This was a Golden Rule from Xerox’s founder, Joe Wilson, and it’s become mine. As I see it, if you forget about the customer, nothing much else matters. My mantra around here is to ensure that the customer is connected to everything we do. It’s why every single leader at Xerox is assigned a specific customer account to cover. I make hundreds of customer calls each year, hearing firsthand from our customers about their relationships with Xerox. This invariably changes my perspective on the toughest of business decisions.”

“Treat Your Customers Like They Own You, Because They Do”

Mark Cuban co-founder, HDNet; owner, Dallas Mavericks, says, The current focus is almost totally on employees. That’s worthwhile. But never forget that this is all about the customer. Their needs, their problems, even their whims, must be your primary focus. The best products and the best service are so important, but they don’t mean much if you no longer have the customer.

“Listen First, Speak Last”

Peter Drucker management consultant and business guru.

Nuff said.

Maybe somewhere in this selection of guidelines you will find the thought or the connection that helps you find your code, your beacon. Express it in your own words, and it becomes your Golden Rule.

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