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*W*e can't do really big things every day. If we're really serious about walking the talk all the time, we have to focus on the small stuff.

*Let the journey begin.*

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# DEVELOP AND MAINTAIN TECHNICAL KNOWLEDGE

*“Knowledge is the only instrument of production that is not subject to diminishing returns.”*

J.M. Clark

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- 1** Dedicate a minimum of two hours per week to enhancing your technical knowledge. Consider activities such as reading, observing, listening, and doing. The key here is *dedicated* time and focus.
- 2** Divide and conquer. Work as a team to stay abreast of technology advancements. For example: 1) Divide the reading of trade and professional journals among your work group and request they highlight key information prior to passing the publication on to others; 2) Ask others to share key learning from all workshops, seminars, and conferences they attend.
- 3** Volunteer for projects that will likely increase your knowledge, skills, marketability, and value to the organization.
- 4** Actively participate in one or more professional associations. Most groups offer newsletters or journals, monthly meetings, and opportunities to network with others in your profession. These groups provide a great opportunity to keep up with new developments, usually for a reasonable membership fee.

# ADOPT AN ORIENTATION TO ACTION AND RESULTS

*“Don’t wait for someone else to make all the calls.”*

Willie LaRue (fictional character)

*WALK THE TALK ... And Get The Results You Want*

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- 5 Focus on results-oriented processes and outcomes that add value to the organization, rather than on staying busy activities and events that merely consume time.
- 6 Create a list of desired results (End States) when planning tasks and projects. By evaluating potential activities against this list, you’ll maintain focus and increase your chances of achieving the results you want.
- 7 Go on a Work Safari once a week: Hunt for an important task that needs to be done ... and do it. Then place it in an imaginary trophy case. You’ll soon develop a reputation as a great hunter.
- 8 Tackle important tasks first, even though they may be ones you’d least like to do. Save the fun work as a reward for handling the tougher issues.

# EXPECT TOP PERFORMANCE

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*“Not failure, but low aim, is crime”*

James Russell Lowell

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- 9 Be conscious of the self-fulfilling prophecy: When you expect something to happen (positive or negative), you unconsciously act in a manner which makes it more likely to occur.
  
- 10 Involve your team in setting standards that are achievable, but also require them to stretch their knowledge and skills. Avoid settling for mediocre or sub-par work. Remember that regardless of what you say, it is the performance you're willing to accept that becomes your true standard.
  
- 11 Think of each member of your work group as a high jumper. Celebrate the reaching of new heights ... then “raise the bar” together. But don't forget, as you're raising the bar, so is your competition.
  
- 12 Make sure you walk the talk – earn the right to hold others to high standards by meeting them yourself.

# COMMIT TO QUALITY AND CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

*“There’s always room for improvement – it’s the biggest room in the house.”*

Louise Heath Leber

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- 13** Adopt the 10% Rule – set a personal goal to improve everything you’re involved in by merely ten percent. Small improvements add up quickly.
  
- 14** Focus on people as well as processes. Keep in mind that quality is ultimately a matter of individual performance. It happens one day at a time, one person at a time.
  
- 15** Recognize and reward those who make improvements to products, processes, and services. Remember: What gets celebrated gets repeated.
  
- 16** Sponsor a Quality Art Show. Ask each person to contribute a visual representation of what quality and continuous improvement means/looks like to them. Then display the “works of art” in a common area. This creative exercise is a fun way to involve everyone in reinforcing the quality message.

# BE CUSTOMER DRIVEN

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*“It’s not the employer who pays the wages. Employers only handle the money. It’s the customer who pays the wages.”*

Henry Ford

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- 17** Adopt the following mind-set: a) Everyone you interact with is either an internal or external customer; and b) If your customers ever stop needing you, so will your organization.
  
- 18** Tell horror stories. Share personal examples of receiving poor service along with the impact it had on both the customer and the service provider. Discuss what could have turned them into success stories.
  
- 19** Deliver what the customer actually wants rather than what you think they ought to have. If you’re not sure what they want, ask!
  
- 20** Build business partnerships with your customers by under-promising, over-delivering, and following-up to ensure they are satisfied. Solicit their input on how your products and services can be improved.

# COMMIT TO SELF-DEVELOPMENT

*"I don't think much of a man who is not wiser today than he was yesterday."*

Abraham Lincoln

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- 21** Become a Continuous Learning Machine. Set a personal goal to learn something new about your job, your organization, or your professional discipline every week.
  
- 22** Encourage others to pursue self-development activities. Make time and resources available for them to enhance their job skills.
  
- 23** Learn by teaching. Volunteer as an instructor for organizational training programs. You'll not only develop in-depth knowledge about subjects you prepare to teach, you'll also be able to help others develop and grow.
  
- 24** Look beyond your profession. Consider pursuing developmental activities that have nothing to do with your job, but can help you grow as a person. You'll probably be surprised to find that unrelated learning can positively impact your job performance.

# MAKE TIMELY AND VALUE-DRIVEN DECISIONS

*“The true purpose of our value statements is to guide both our behaviors and our decisions.”*

Bill Elby (fictional CEO)

*WALK THE TALK ... And Get The Results You Want*

- 25 Avoid the decision making extremes: Knee-Jerk Reactions (acting too quickly without considering alternatives or all the facts) and Paralysis of Analysis (stalling a decision with too much analysis and research). Remember that no decision is a “no” decision.
- 26 Involve those who must implement decisions in the decision-making process. Consider the ideas and opinions of those who do the work, because they frequently know best and have a great deal to contribute. In addition, they’ll be more likely to support decisions they help make.
- 27 Become an In-Sync-Erator. Ensure your decisions are in sync with organizational values *before* you implement them. If there’s a conflict, pursue alternatives that are a better match with stated values.
- 28 When announcing a decision, always explain the reason for it as well as the process used to arrive at it.