

# Eight Simple Steps To People-Building Philosophies

By Bette Price, CMC

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If you believe that people play an integral role in sustaining profitability and establishing a competitive edge, then like other true leaders, you understand the importance of setting a tone throughout your company that demonstrates your people-building philosophies. The tactics you employ to set this tone don't have to be expensive or elaborate. They do have to be genuine and they do have to be consistent. True leaders recognize that it is their responsibility to set this tone from the top and to ensure that people-building philosophies are adhered to at every level throughout the organization. Then they expect leadership at all levels to follow suit. This philosophy encourages people to capitalize on their strengths, it recognizes their contributions both formally and informally, it makes sure that systems and processes are put in place that help to foster continual growth and well being, and it ensures that the leaders themselves model an environment of growth through caring, support and trust. Here are eight simple ways that you can set the tone:

- 1. Give your people the right tools to get the job done.** Paramount to employees having the right tools is training. Training at all levels and at various stages. Incredibly, all too often administrative assistants and support staff are deprived of training, yet they are the one's who implement much of an organization's management policy. Jack Lowe, Chairman and CEO of TDIndustries understands the importance of training for everyone. "We expect everybody in the business to have a minimum of 32 hours in a classroom each year—all of which we pay for. This includes Culture Training, which begins with new hires. "Even new people like working here

and are proud to work here,” Lowe points out. Why is Lowe so committed to training everyone? He just knows it works.

2. **Self-Discover and Coaching Programs.** “The best idea anyone ever had is one they came up with themselves,” says David Novak, Chairman and CEO of Tricon Global Restaurants. That’s why Novak thinks great companies really work on providing self-discovery and coaching programs. Novak has changed all supervisory titles to Coach and coaching and recognition have become an integral part of their role.
3. **Model expectations by leadership.** At The Container Store, Chairman Garrett Boone says its not good enough to talk about the company’s principles and expected performances--leadership has to model them to show them in action. “When I visit a store, there are certain times I work on the floor,” Boone says. “The time that I’m on the sales floor, I want to make sure that I’m doing exactly what we are preaching. It shows everybody that I think that is a really important thing to do, that it’s worth my time doing, and that I hold myself to the same standards to live up to.” Make sure that your words and actions are one in the same.
4. **Do something special.** Mike McCarthy, Chairman of McCarthy Building Companies, encourages everyone to get involved in charitable activities. “One of the reasons I get our people involved is so they get a larger view of who they are,” McCarthy says. “To the extent that you are giving to other people, you feel better about yourself.” McCarthy established a rather unusual program at his company called the McCarthy Emergency Family

Relief Fund. It provides instant money for either employees or someone the employee knows who has encountered a family emergency.

5. **Get rid of blame.** David Walker, the Comptroller General of the United States, says, “You’ve got to make mistakes—no risk, no return, no innovation. The key is to learn from them and try not to repeat them—try not to make dumb mistakes.” Get rid of the blame, increase accountability, and non-accusingly share the learning from the mistakes so everyone can benefit for the future.
6. **Create opportunities.** Leaders help people achieve their own personal success. Bill Matthews, Managing Director of the accounting firm Plante & Moran, believes you should always be looking for your replacement. “That requires taking a sincere interest in people, giving them the freedom to make choices, to encourage and guide them, and just have a caring attitude toward their careers without worrying that they are going to take over my job or show me up.” Worry less about yourself and help others to become more of what they have the talent to become.
7. **Create WOW stories.** At MascoTech near Detroit, Michigan, they make a conscious effort to catch people doing something incredibly right. Then they publish it as a *Wow Story* in the internal newsletter. “People like to be acknowledged for what they do right,” says CEO Frank Hennessey. “They need to know that you know the contributions that they are making.”
8. **Put it in writing—your writing.** Every week in Tim Webster’s staff meeting the CEO of American Italian Pasta has the leadership team write a hand-written note of accolades for good deeds, good performance, and

exceeding expectations. Everyone on the executive leadership team signs it.

Now that's a Wow story!

It doesn't matter what your industry, rather private or public, government, non-profit or educational. All of that is irrelevant. The point is that as a leader, you become more significant in your role when you care enough to recognize and build others at all levels within your organization. If those at the CEO level can do it, so can you. What are you doing today?

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