

The Book of Norman

“How to survive and thrive @ work & life”

by

Norm Tarowsky (9/1/2020)

A collection of thoughts, concepts, ideas, common sense, experience and best practices; accumulated during my education, military service and 50 years of working in the high-tech industry. Much of it learned the hard way; by trial and error and making mistakes (and hopefully learning from them), as well as having lived and worked in Silicon Valley, Singapore, England and Germany.

This information is targeted for those currently attending school, starting or considering changing their careers and as a supplement to their formal education and is based on the knowledge and insights gained in my 80+ years of life and work.

Much of this material is not traditionally taught in schools and I hope you will find it interesting, helpful and useful. It can be used to create a class, viewed in individual sections or as a self-guided reference aide.

It will be available in digital format (as Word and PDF documents) at no cost (free, zero, nada, zilch, nichts) to anyone who wants it. My goal is to share what I learned to help those starting their journey!

NormT

If you have any questions or comments feel free to contact me at:

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Norm's Guide to understanding work & life

page

i.	Cover & Purpose	1
ii.	Table of contents.	2
I.	Who is Norm?	3
II.	Advice from an old man to his younger self.	4-6
III.	Expectations!	7-8
IV.	Steps in going forward:	9-11
	a. Organize & Organization	
	b. Goals & Objectives	
	c. Change	
	d. Planning (go slow to go fast)	
V.	Roles (where do we fit?).	12-16
VI.	Communication (the glue and the grease).	17-18
VII.	The "Role of Management":	19-22
	a. (PDCL – Plan, Do, Check and Lead)	
	b. Feedback and Control	
	c. Leadership (what is it?)	
VIII.	Teams & teamwork (life in the digital age).	23-24
IX.	Problem Solving.	25-26
X.	Decision Making.	27-29
XI.	Data, information, intelligence and trends (in a complex era).	30-33
XII.	Congruence / Alignment (Job description, evaluation, rewards)	34-36
XIII.	Never forget your "humanity"!	37
XIV.	Some key take-aways.	38
XV.	Thanks, (I didn't do this all alone; I had a lot of help).	39

I. “Who is this Norm guy and what has this to do with me?”

I have had a lot of varied and relevant life and work experiences that you might find useful, helpful and constructive and try to express my thoughts concisely using a common sense approach. I worked in the high-tech Industry for half a century holding positions in Research & Development, Manufacturing, Quality & Reliability and Marketing. Earned a B.S. in Engineering Physics from NYU and an MBA from Santa Clara University.

I served in the military for 3 years and was stationed in Germany. After school worked as a Product Development Engineer for General Dynamics Astronautics in San Diego and at Fairchild Semiconductor and Hewlett Packard in Silicon Valley.

Held high level management positions at both Fairchild and HP and ran overseas factories in Southeast Asia and Europe and lived in Singapore and London. My last assignment was teaching and training “Management Development” classes for the HP Component Group ‘s worldwide management team.

In my 80+ years, I have seen a lot, done a lot, lived and worked in a lot of different places and was able to observe the workplace from multiple functional areas and from varied management levels. I feel fortunate to have lived in the best of times (the second half of the 20th century) and in the best of places (America and the Silicon Valley area) and with Hewlett Packard (for over 30 years).

My goal is to share some key “learnings” from my experiences. If you find them useful, feel free to pass them on. I would be honored!

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'Norm Tarowsky', written in a cursive style.

Norm Tarowsky

July 2020

II. Advice from an old man to his younger self:

“Keys to navigate this weird and wonderful world”

Nobody bothered to ask what I thought about this, maybe they just don't know my e-mail address or just haven't gotten around to it yet so I thought I should get ahead of the game and tell them anyway.

If I could go back in time (say about 70 years), what would I tell the 12-year-old Norm, a 7th grader in Brooklyn, New York about how to prepare for the life ahead? What are the “8” most important skills, capabilities or characteristics that would be needed to lead a successful, productive and rewarding time on this earth?

1) Approach life with a positive attitude:

- Not as a wild-eyed optimist or a cynic but with open mindedness and the expectation of success.
- Have a “can do” approach to whatever issues you face.
- Expand your horizons, it is a big and mysterious world out there.

2) Be AWARE, learn to understand “what” is going on around you and try to figure out “why”; and if you don't know, find out.

- Most things have a cause and effect relationship.
- Some might be random events and it is important to know that too.
- Be observant and open to accepting new information.
- Expand your vision and scope of knowledge in varied and different fields. Learn to think “outside the box”.
- Learn to identify trends, inter-relationships and anomalies.

3) Learn to make the best of every situation:

- You can't always control what happens but you can recognize the situation and make the best of what exists.
- If what exists is not what you want, change it; don't just accept it.
- Never stop learning and expanding your horizons.

4) You can't do it all by yourself; You will need others.

- you will need to learn how to work with others to accomplish your goals and objectives.
- Develop those interface skills and learn to work in a group.
- Surround yourself with those who value knowledge, honesty and humanity.
- You may not be the smartest/strongest/fastest person in the room but you will want them on your team.

5) Know where you are going:

- Always have a goal or objective you want to accomplish or achieve.
- Have a plan on how to get there, you may need to change it often but it will still give you a direction to go in.
- Don't be afraid to change if it makes sense.
- It is OK to try new things; some randomness is good but if you don't know where you are going you will never know when and if you get there.
- Break the change into smaller pieces, but get started.
- Avoid "analysis paralysis". Do something.

6) Learn to “really” listen:

- Be inquisitive, never stop searching and learning.
- Read and Listen between the lines, what are they really saying or meaning and sometimes what is “not said” is more important than what is said.
- Learn to ask meaningful questions; “WHY” is a powerful tool.
- You may think you have all the answers (YOU DON’T and never will)
- You learn a lot more by listening than talking.

7) Personal Integrity is more important than fame and wealth. Be a “mensch” (A Yiddish term) for being a “good” and “upstanding” person. Honesty, fairness and humanity, is what really matters in life.

8) Develop a sense of humor, be able to laugh at yourself and with others. A good laugh or a good cry can help restore your balance and perspective.

III. Expectations:

Humans are wonderful creatures, we have the ability to sense (see, hear, feel, smell and taste) the world around us. We have built in instincts that operate without having to consciously activate them. We not only have the ability to think, reason and learn but also to remember and then communicate to those around us.

We have learned to avoid pain and danger and seek those things that give us pleasure and satisfaction. One of the most basic needs that drives us, is to be “accepted”, allowed to be part of a family, an organization or group that provides safety and security. We are social animals and feel comfortable when we are part of something bigger than ourselves.

We are both individuals and group members and so need to understand how to behave and act in ways that satisfy our internal needs and those of the group’s. This requires us to know and understand “what” are the things that give us personal satisfaction and meet the group’s rules, regulations and standards.

We need to know “what is expected of us” and “what we expect of ourselves”! To do this we need to know what “role” we play and what behaviors and actions will meet those expectations. We need to satisfy our own guidelines as well as the larger group’s standards. Like it or not; we will be judged on how well we meet them, they may not be fair or even achievable BUT we will be evaluated against them.

For each role there will be a set of “expectations” we set for ourselves or will be set by the larger group (family, organization, company) and how well we meet these will determine our level of acceptance.

If we know what is expected of us can do what is necessary to meet those objectives. If we don’t know what they are we will fail. So, it is critical to identify what they are and how they will be evaluated or measured. If there is not congruence between what we are expected to do, what we think we should do, what others believe we should do and what we actually do, this will eventually lead to trouble and disappointment.

So, what can you do:

- 1) Know what is expected of you:
 - a. What do you expect of yourself?
 - b. "Ask" others (family members, co-workers, bosses) what they expect. What and How do they see your role?
 - c. Are these formal or informal in nature?

- 2) Evaluate and modify:
 - a. Are the expectations reasonable or even achievable? If NOT, you need to get them re-set or make changes to the situation or you will fail.
 - b. Are they negotiable? If YES, be a part of the negotiation.
 - c. How will they be evaluated, measured, judged and by whom? In the case of performance evaluations be a part of the goals and objective setting process.

- 3) If there is a major mismatch between your personal and group expectations, this can be very problematic. You might need to change your group membership relationship and either modify your personal expectations or find a group better aligned to them.

In order to meet or exceed expectations and achieve your goals they must be achievable and aligned to your needs. You will be measured on how well you meet these expectations.

Knowledge is power and your best friend, use it wisely!

IV. Steps in going forward:

Organize / Organization, Objectives, Change, Planning

Most people feel more comfortable when things are orderly, structured, familiar and named or labeled. They like the “status quo” (“existing state of affairs” or “as is”) and are uncomfortable with “change” or making things different or with unfamiliar situations and surroundings. They prefer simplicity over complexity and often “fear” the unknown.

It is important to understand where people are coming from and “how” they see the world around them when you are in a position that requires their acceptance, support and cooperation. It is also important to remember that not everyone re-acts the same way you do and that people and situations can and will change over time.

Organize and Organization:

To “Organize” means to place (put) items into a structured and categorized framework. We put things that we identify as “alike” into buckets and give it a name. This is done to simplify life, make it easier to find things and deal with them. We do it when we create music playlists or sort tools or household items. These groupings or groups are part of how we deal with life: if we come across something that is new, we try to see if it fits into one of our existing groups and if not, we create a new one.

An “Organization” is basically a group or bunch of groups that are combined to meet a common objective. It could be a club, a team, a company, a nation state (a country) or a religious movement. It comes in various sizes and degrees of complexity and structures and are formed to achieve something we as individuals cannot do on our own.

The size, shape and complexity will depend on what (and how) we are trying to do. For example, a football team will have owners, coaches, players and various supporting members. The players will be further divided into offense and

defense and then lineman and backs and then again into center, guards, tackles, ends, running backs, receivers and a quarterback.

I use this example to show that every type of organization will have structure (be organized) depending on tasks and what needs to be done and they all need to work together to be successful.

Objectives:

An “Objective” is basically a “result”, something you want to obtain, accomplish or achieve; a place you want to “get to”; the end result of your actions taking you to a place you want to be.

It can be many things: fame, fortune, recognition, joy, salvation, survival or whatever the organization chooses. It is the driving force and the reason for the existence of the group in the first place.

What happens when we as individuals (or as part of a group) find ourselves in a place we don’t want to be or unable to achieve our goals and objectives? What do we need to do? we must “change something”!

“Change”:

Change is scary, it makes us uncomfortable, the outcome and future appear uncertain and unpredictable. We often fear the worst will occur and therefore most change will be met with resistance and often reluctance.

But, if we “do nothing”, nothing will change and we are right back to where we started. If we don’t like where we are, there is no choice (whether it is you as an individual or the company), things need to change! How do we do it?

This is a double problem; taking a new course of action and how to address the issue of resistance to change. It will be important to communicate the necessity and reasons for making a change and the benefits and results expected as well as how these changes will impact those affected. In a later article I will address communications in more detail.

The answer is easy, if you know where you are and where you want to be, “make a plan”. What needs to be done and “how” to do it! It can be simple with just a few key action items or one that is more complex and intricate with multiple steps and decision points. It is a “roadmap”, a set of actions that need to be done to get where you want to go.

Planning:

If you have no plan (or a poor one) it is like random motions, if you are lucky you might get to where you want to go (but most likely not) and with a lot of wasted time, energy and resources along the way.

Take the time to create a plan considering what resources (tools, equipment, money, people, skill sets) will be needed, what path to choose and decisions are involved and when and where you need to check to see if you are on track.

This may take time and effort and seem to slow you down (go slow), think carefully, it can save you from making bad decisions, going off on tangents or hitting dead ends and having to start over); by avoiding these you will end up “going faster” in the long run. Go slow to go fast!

Plans may have to change as new information or situations come up but having well thought out plans will take you a long way in getting you and the organization to meet your objectives and get you to where you want to be.

When faced with multiple choices on what to work on and in what order. A good way to think about this, is by ranking them (the issues, problems, projects) by importance (how critical) and by how easy or hard it will be to get them accomplished.

If it is important and easy, (do it first); If it is important and hard, (get it started, but it will need a real plan); if it is less important and easy (do it as time permits) and if it is hard and unimportant (don’t waste your time).

V. Roles (where do we fit?):

*“All the world’s a stage and all the men and women merely players”
from “As You Like It” by Bill Shakespeare (almost a contemporary)*

Unlike characters in a play that are required to follow a script, stage directions and a predetermined course of action; we have the ability to make changes, follow new and different paths and become our own authors, producers, directors and actors.

As we travel through life, we often ask ourselves: “where do I fit”? What role will I play? How will it all turn out? There are so many choices and questions and so little guidance and so few answers.

In previous sections we touched on expectations, organizations, objectives, change and planning. As an individual or part of a group we have a “role” to play based on what duties and responsibilities are assigned to that role or what is expected of it.

Now it is our stage, the curtain is going up and the spotlight is on.

“it’s showtime”

1) know yourself and be honest about it:

The starting point is to know your own strengths, weaknesses, skills, capabilities, temperament, capacity to learn and willingness to change if necessary. Don’t be fooled by the reflection in the mirror, it is what’s inside that counts. If you are honest with yourself and flexible you will be better able to leverage your good points and fix or upgrade your negatives.

2) Life is not fair:

We do not live in a perfect world and not all those around us play by the rules. Unfortunately, we will find bosses, co-workers and people we deal with will try to take advantage of the situation, lie, cheat, steal and just basically be unethical, but they are the minority and most people will be fair and can be trusted. Be aware of the bad actors and deal with them accordingly and remember, they can't be trusted.

We are not treated equally nor starting from the same place. There are racial, economic, status and class biases as well as nepotism, cronyism, sexism and the "good old boys club" that will be encountered. It is wrong (and maybe, some day we may get rid of it) but it exists and we need to be aware of it.

3) We are all different:

Although we are all "Denisovans", What anthropologists now call us Homo-Sapiens or modern humans, (except for my Brother-in-Law who claims he is mostly Neanderthal and who am I to disagree with him): that doesn't mean we are all the same.

Each person has their own set of abilities; some may be stronger or weaker, faster or slower, taller or shorter, smarter or not as smart, be driven or laid back.

We have different talents (musically, mechanically, technically or scholarly) and each person will need to determine their own "role" in life. The most "successful" will be the one's who figure out what is the best fit between what they like and enjoy, matches their personality and skill set and provides sustenance to their needs and desires.

4) It is necessary to have a strong foundation or base:

Like any structure, to be able to withstand outside forces and stresses it must have a solid base or it will collapse or fall apart. I believe this means having strong fundamentals in the areas of knowledge, skills and character.

Having a broad knowledge base (whether from schools or experience or self-acquired) helps to see the “big-picture) and relationships between different aspects of what you are trying to accomplish. How things are inter-related and what else is out there that could be useful. Often the issues we deal with are multi-faceted like electro-mechanical devices or bio-chemical reactions and most future positions will be a mixture of software, mechanization, computer knowledge and interpersonal relationships.

Whatever area you are in will require fundamental skills sets specific to that area and at a much higher level than the average person has. It may be in a trade profession (plumbing, electrician) or design (architecture) or the medical field (doctor, nurse, lab- tech) whatever it is, it will need specialized skills that requires learning, practice (experience) and competence.

What I mean by character focuses on “trust”. Will others trust you to do what is expected, to keep your word, to have their back, to be able to count on you? Almost everything we do involves interfacing, dealing with others and it is a two-way street. We depend on each other in so many ways and it starts with you.

5) Don't expect others to read your mind.

One of the mistakes we make in dealing with others is to assume they know what we want or need and we get upset when they don't do what we expect. We get so tied up in our own activities (as they do with theirs) that we don't bother to clarify or define or tell them what is needed. When it doesn't happen, it can cause friction and the “role” relationship is affected.

6) Advocates and mentors are very important.

You can't learn everything from a book (even mine) and it helps to be able to “model” yourself after someone you admire or like. If you find someone (either at work, school or in life), see if they would be willing to “mentor” you, to share experiences or advice.

Most people would be honored to be asked and it is always better to have someone to share thoughts and ideas with and get their feedback or perspectives than do it all by yourself.

An “advocate” is someone who is “on your side”, will “point out” (promote, advertise) your accomplishments, successes and capabilities to others. It could be your boss or a co-worker; someone that appreciates your worth and is willing to share it with others. It helps to have someone like that since “self-promotion” can be a put off or have negative consequences.

7) Know (learn) what opportunities are out there.

It never hurts to keep your eyes open for new opportunities (jobs, positions), they generally won't come looking for you. Even if you are happy or satisfied with your current situation, it may provide ideas about further knowledge or skills to learn that will make you more valuable and be better prepared if you want to make a change in the future.

8) Does anything fit?

You may find the perfect fit, a position that gives you everything you are looking for and you are perfectly suited and prepared for. GO FOR IT!

Most of the time not everything is in place, either you are missing some capabilities or the position doesn't have everything you were looking for.

If the issue is, you are lacking some capabilities, can you acquire them while working? Or before taking the position?

If the problem is the job description or content, can it be modified?

Are there other possible positions you are interested in?

Remember, things can change, they are not set in stone and last forever. Over the course of a lifetime most people will change their positions about every 3 to 4 years and you will need to learn new skills about every few years even in the same position.

Knowledge in most fields and especially in the technical and scientific areas is doubling about every 18 months. Hang on to your hats.

Change is accelerating and no one today can tell you what will happen tomorrow. What we do know is people in the future will need:

“flexibility” and the **“ability to learn”!**

VI. Communication (the glue and the grease):

Simply put, it is the transfer of information. It is the driving force in today's knowledge-based society and ultimately will determine who survives and who doesn't. Every step (and click) and every action we take is being captured (collected) and utilized by Corporations and Nation states to sell us something or control our activities. "Knowledge is the new gold" and whoever controls it will be king.

Companies have learned long ago that being able to pass information quickly and easily throughout the organization makes them more efficient and effective. The "good" companies recognized that communication is a "many-way" street, top-down, bottom-up, and side-to-side.

No matter where you are in an organization, you want to know what is going on, what is expected of you, what needs to be done, who is doing what, where are we going next and a myriad of other questions depending on the situation. You also want your voice heard and inputs acknowledged, accepted and evaluated.

Not only will it make you feel a part of the organization but it may make things better all around. We want to be included and part of the information flow; it makes us feel needed and wanted. This goes for every aspect of life; not just in the workplace but in everything we do.

Organizations promote and publish their "vision statement" and goals and objectives, job descriptions and performance evaluations are used to pass on information. Many places have newsletters or websites to get the "word" out, group meetings are created to allow everyone to participate.

There are many different ways to communicate: verbally, in writing, messaging, drawings, sketches, documents, pictures and with non-verbal signals (a shrug or a raised eyebrow). The key is to transfer the real "meaning" of the message and have it clearly understood by everyone.

Messages can be misunderstood, misinterpreted or misconstrued and this can cause friction and problems unless clarified. The most critical part is the one

on one communication between you and those around you. You with your boss, you and your team or co-workers, you and others in your group and even you with yourself. A large share of the problems we face is due to the lack of good communication

Good communication links everyone together and get everyone pulling in the same direction; it smooths out the bumps and friction. Bad or incomplete communication causes problems and can gum up the works. It is both a binding force and a lubricant to make things flow easier and faster. It is the glue and the grease.

VII. The “Role” of Management: *PDCL – Plan, Do, Check and Lead*

Management is:

“Ensuring that a plan (or process) exists, is being followed and the expected results (objectives) are being achieved, if not, fix it!”

Obviously, there is a lot more going on that needs to be explored and there are various levels of management in most organizations but the basics are the same. Some people believe it is merely to “oversee” what is going on, monitor it from a distance and point the way once in a while. I reject that view.

I feel it needs to be a “hands on” approach where management is an integral part of the team, providing guidance, support, leadership and accepting responsibility and ownership of the actions and results.

PLAN:

So, what do I mean by “planning”? It is making sure that all the resources (personnel, space, equipment, skills, materials, supply chains, communication networks) that are needed will be available. That an organization structure is in place. That the roadmap (plan) or processes needed exist and are understood and being followed.

I personally believe that the most important role a manager can play is in the selection and hiring of the right people for the tasks required. It may take time and effort but it is worth it to have competent, knowledgeable, trainable people with good work ethics and interpersonal skills. Choose the wrong people and you will continually have problems and issues that will keep you from being successful.

DO / ACT:

When I say “DO” or act; I mean making sure things happen (not just talked about or discussed). The plan is being implemented; the process is being followed. People are doing what they are supposed to be doing. Progress is being made and whatever the product or service that is desired is on track or being delivered.

The manager is the coach, cheerleader and if needed be willing to step in and be a player. Like the Orchestra Conductor, they set the tempo and pace, bring the instruments in and out with exact precision and control the loudness (volume) and do it all seamlessly as a single integrated unit.

CHECK:

To “check” means that at strategic points in the process, we measure and get “feedback” to see if things are going according to plan. Are we where we want them to be? Is what we are doing getting us where we expect to be? Are we on track or behind or ahead of schedule?

If we wait until the very end to check, it may be too late to do anything about it. The product may not work as expected. We may not meet our time objectives. It is important to make sure we check at key intervals so if anything is wrong or we are behind schedule there is a chance to recover and get back on track.

We need to ensure we are starting with the correct materials (do they meet specification?), if they don’t, the end result will be wrong. If things are done in the wrong order they may not fit together or the final result won’t work. By checking it allows us to take corrective actions; to fix the problems or modify the plans.

If there is a problem, the manager is the one who needs to take ownership and make sure the appropriate resources are available to resolve the problem and to communicate to those involved what is going on and any changes being made.

LEAD:

Leadership is hard to define but easy to identify when we see it in action. It isn't a title, or a place on the organization chart, it can't be anointed or proclaimed (it must be earned). It is not "charisma" or "showmanship"; it is a mindset and actions one takes that others say qualifies you for the role.

We know it when we see it, you can sense or feel who has it. Abraham Lincoln had it, Franklin Delano Roosevelt had it, Winston Churchill had it, Jack Kennedy had it, Martin Luther King had it. That ability to inspire, to project confidence, to evoke images of what could be and speak truth. These men were considered true Icons of leadership and we can all learn from them.

In business, it is someone who steps up, takes charge, provides direction and communicates with clarity, believability and is trusted by the group; they make things work. Not everyone can or wants to be a leader but they are critical and necessary and we can all appreciate good leadership when it exists.

MANAGEMENT:

Means "Ensuring that a plan (or process) exists, is being followed and the expected results (objectives) are being achieved and if not, get it fixed!". Being a good manager is not easy, it takes a lot of time and effort, a willingness to accept responsibility, to see the big picture, give credit (where credit is due) and get things done! Remember "WE" is more important than "I".

Managers should:

- Hire the best people, even if they are smarter than you.
- Hire people who have strengths in their weaknesses.
- Do what is best (good) for your people (they come first), even if it makes your life harder.
- Give people the credit and recognition they deserve and celebrate their ideas and successes.
- Always be fair and considerate (some day they may be your boss).

A side note:

Groups are made up of a variety of people who have their own lives, thoughts, feelings, priorities, goals and careers; they need to be treated as individuals and not just part of the group as a whole.

There is a term (WIFM) “What’s in it for me” and to be truly engaged each person needs to know what’s “in it for them”, before they can really be part of the group.

There is a concept called the “pareto” principle; also called the 80/20 rule. What it basically says is that a small percentage of the population will have the largest impact. For example, 20% of the group will do 80% of the work, or 20% of the population will have 80% of the wealth. The ratio or percentage may change but the concept is still valid. There is not equal contribution to success or failure and that must be recognized.

Being a manager is likened to “herding cats” a very difficult task, but it can be very satisfying if you can get them together and go where you want them to go, “a feline cattle drive” but be wary of a stampede!

There is a difference between leadership and management. Not all leaders are good managers and conversely, not all managers are good leaders and the roles they are asked to play may be driven by different objectives.

There is also a difference between leading and leadership; at times we may lead (take charge) but the role of leadership is bestowed by the group or organization not assumed by the individual.

VIII. Teams & teamwork (life in the digital age):

A team is a “group that works together” to achieve a common goal or objective. The operative words are works and together. Their tasks may be similar (as on an assembly line) or different (although inter-related) but are designed to achieve their stated objectives.

The world of business has radically changed in the past few years and teams that used to all be in the same place at the same time and be able to physically interact with each other, have evolved and adapted to the new global business models.

We now see teams working in varied (and often remote) locations and in different time zones, work simultaneously on the same products and services. Meetings that used to be held in a room with a lot of face to face contacts, have been replaced by digital formats and software (like Zoom) that allows interactions from any location at any time, around the world.

“Teamwork” refers to “how” the people within a team interact with each other, how they work together to accomplish their tasks. This too has become more complex as the team members themselves may come from a variety of different backgrounds, nationalities, cultures, ethnicity, languages and work and educational experiences.

These differences may even exist in a team working in the same location. The ability to perform effectively depends on how well the members and managers are able to handle (adapt, explain, train, communicate, educate) their interactions while taking into account these differences.

No matter what kind of team you are involved with; getting people to work together smoothly is hard enough under the simplest of situation. Now, we need to take into account all these new aspects. The first step is to recognize and understand that they exist and can cause complications and take appropriate actions to overcome them.

Some things to consider:

- Everyone should know what role they and others play on the team.
- Everyone needs to know what the end result they are striving for is; what is the goal or objective they are working toward?
- There is a real person on the other end of the message, the phone call or the computer image and they have feelings and are dealing with their own situations.
- Sharing backgrounds and pictures puts a human “face” to a name.
- It is important to understand what people mean, not just what they say. Communications between different cultures and those who speak different languages can be misunderstood or misinterpreted and may need more clarification.
- It is probably better to over-communicate than under-communicate.
- Most people want to be acknowledged and appreciated, a thank you goes a long way.
- When the team is successful, everyone wins and when the team fails, everyone fails.
- The “role” of the team may change (i.e. from creating to implementation or support), this needs to be communicated, monitored and carefully controlled.
- Teams needs to evolve over time, as situations change the team needs to adapt.
- Everyone has a “customer”; every interaction and every interface have a customer at each end and at both sides.

In many organizations there can be both a “formal” and an “informal” structure. You need to understand the dynamics of how they work and where the “power” and “ability” to get things done resides and be able to work with both structures.

Often, we need to interface and work with people in different teams, groups or organization s; these contacts and relationships can be extremely valuable to help you achieve your current and future goals.

IX. Problem Solving: *“A quick guide”*

Problem Solving is something we all face frequently as we go through life. What is the best way to go about it, is the issue? A note about my background; I have a Degree in Engineering Physics, which is basically an “oxymoron”, since Physics is based on absolutes and perfection (laws that must apply all the time) and engineering is about approximations and it is OK to be good enough. So, I am essentially schizophrenic when I approach problems (which hat should I wear).

Before I get into a process, here are a few things to think about:

- When you first hear about a problem or issue the information you are given is generally inaccurate, certainly incomplete and often misleading.
- So, don't jump to a conclusion or solution until you fill in the blanks. If you jump to a solution too early you will spend a lot of time, energy and money defending your choice rather than fixing the problem.
- The problem may look very different when viewed from a different perspective, try to “see” it from varied points of view.
- Not every problem needs to be solved; sometimes we learn to live with it.
- Not every problem can be solved.
- Is it really your problem to solve or should someone else own it?
- “Physical” (or what I call “thing”) problems can often wait a while; sometimes they just go away.
- “People” problems need to be addressed early because they generally fester and get worse as time goes on.

I have found that having a general “process” to follow leads to a quicker and better ultimate solution (even though we all like to jump ahead and get the answer), it may be better to go slow.

Below is a process (some simple steps) you may find useful:

- 1) Decide if this is your problem to solve, if not pass it on to the right person.
- 2) Determine if the problem needs to be solved; how bad is it. If not ignore it.
- 3) Gather as much information about the problem, make sure you are working on the “real issue”. Not everything is as it seems at first. You might end up solving the wrong problem.
- 4) Determine the magnitude (how bad is it) and what timing is required (How long do you have to fix it; does it require immediate attention?)
- 5) Determine what resources (tools, equipment, help, expertise will be needed).
- 6) Plan and execute your FIX!
- 7) “Check” to make sure the problem is fixed; If NOT, you may have to repeat the process.
- 8) Communicate to those who need to know that it is fixed.
- 9) Make sure to thank those who helped (you may need them again).

Like any process, some of the steps may be done very quickly and if not needed skipped, but make sure you give it some thought. Problem solving is something we all do and will face throughout our lives and these simple steps may save you time, energy and stress as well as achieving better results.

X. Decision Making: *“it’s not so hard”*

Making a decision is basically choosing (picking) a path or direction to follow or choosing between alternative options or actions. In everyday life we; we are constantly making choices like what to eat, what to wear, what show to watch; most of these decisions are inconsequential and we don’t spend a lot of time worrying about them. We recognize they have little impact on our lives so don’t waste a lot of time or energy over them.

There are other decisions that have a much larger impact on your future. They can be financial (buying a house or a car) or a change of direction, a life event i.e. which school, where to live, what job to take or maybe even who to marry or live with. These choices require spending a lot of time and energy over. It makes sense to choose carefully and weighing the alternatives before deciding.

Some key questions to ask yourself:

- 1) Am I ready to, want to or need to make a decision now?
- 2) Do I know what outcomes, characteristics, properties, attributes I want to obtain?
- 3) What do I need, have to have (a must) as a result of the decision?
- 4) What do I want and how much do I want it? If I don’t get it, will it affect my choice?
- 5) Are there other meaningful alternatives I should look for and evaluate?
- 6) How important is it that I choose now, can it or should it wait?
- 7) Do I actually have a choice? Sometimes, we don’t have a choice, there are no other options.
- 8) How good, is good enough? Not everything needs to be perfect.
- 9) Before making a decision ask yourself: “What do you know” versus “What do you believe”; a very important distinction.

If the decision is very important you need to know what your end goal is. For example, If you are driving a car and come to a fork in the road; which direction should you take? The answer is, "It all depends" on what you are trying to accomplish.

- 1) If you are just taking a leisure ride and don't have a specific destination; it really doesn't make any difference. Any choice is acceptable.
- 2) If you want to enjoy the ride and one sign says "scenic route" and the other says "City center", you may want to choose the scenic route.
- 3) If you have a destination you need to get to and the sign points to that town, that is your choice.
- 4) If neither sign points to the way you need to go, I suggest you get out your map or the GPS or you may not get where you need to go.

My point is, in order to make the best decision possible: you need to understand (know) what your requirements (needs, objectives) are, before going forward.

So, consider this:

- 1) If none of the alternatives meet your needs; keep looking
- 2) If one choice is clearly better than all the others and it gets you what you want; it's obvious, choose that one.
- 3) If more than one alternative clearly meets all your needs and they are very close in your evaluation (flip a coin). These are the hardest choices for people to make and they agonize over the decision and try to split hairs or create 2nd order differentiators to help them decide. It doesn't make a difference; they are equally acceptable. Pick one!
- 4) After making a decision, two things will generally happen:
 - a. Almost immediately after you make the decision, you will suffer "buyers' remorse" and anguish about having made the wrong choice. This feeling will eventually go away.

- b. After a while, you will accept your choice and see the good things about it and see some negatives about the alternative, thereby making your choice a wise move.

In order to make a meaningful evaluation it makes sense to identify the attributes or traits and characterize them as “Musts” and “Wants”. Remember if an alternative does not meet the “must” criteria it needs to be eliminated.

Otherwise it is just a “high want”. Some people try to put weighting factors or split the wants into high and low groups. I have found this generally doesn’t really help very much and makes the process more difficult and not much better.

Big decisions should never be made quickly or under pressure (or be forced); they are too important and have long term implications. Also, most decisions can be changed over time and as your situation changes your needs and desires will change as well.

As they say: the only thing certain is “Death” and “Taxes” and I know some people who don’t pay their taxes so in the long run we just do the best we can and try to make the right choices; nobody is perfect, or so they tell me.

XI. (Data, Information, Intelligence, knowledge) and Trends:

DATA and Information:

We are constantly being bombarded by vast amounts of “Data”, bits and pieces of information (sometimes true, useful and relevant and sometimes not). The problem is to be able to sort, verify and make sense of it all.

By itself, a single piece of information has little value, it must be seen in context of what else is going on around it and how it fits with everything else we know. In the Army I was trained to gather “intelligence” and be able to answer “who, what, why, where, when” to establish some framework. Before we could act, we needed to know what we were dealing with.

If the data was flawed it could easily lead us to make the wrong decisions (as we say today, garbage in = garbage out). We need to gather this information and ensure its veracity and add it to our entire knowledge base so we know what to do about this new piece of information.

Our world is truly complex, it should not be viewed in simplistic black and white terms or rigid geometric shapes. To make matters worse we are being inundated with massive amounts of random unfiltered, unsorted bits of data and information and it’s growing exponentially (dare I say, we are in data overload).

We absorb all this data through filters based on our own backgrounds, experiences, prejudices and points of view. In order to try to make sense of it all, we put them into categories (boxes) that we are comfortable and familiar with (try to make them fit).

There is an old Indian fable about 4 blind men taking a stroll and they sense something on the side of the road. “What is it”? they wondered. So, they approached it:

- The first man touches the trunk and says, “it must a wrinkled snake”,
- The second man grabs the tail and says “it is only a rope”,
- The third man hugs a massive leg and says, “no, it is a tree”,

- The fourth man says, “you are all wrong, it is an elephant”

“How do you know that?” they responded, he answered, “Because, I can smell peanuts on its breath and the “mahout” told me what it was” and be very careful where you step.

From their perspective, without being able to “see” the whole picture (Elephant), they could only assume the part they came in contact with, was the answer.

When we restrict our vision, we don’t get the entire picture and try to fit everything into something we know or are familiar with. This is what we call “thinking inside the box”. We artificially restrict ourselves to the known ways of doing things and don’t consider new and different (novel) approaches.

TRENDS:

Before we consider “trends” we must look at “status quo”, it literally means “the state in which or the existing state of affairs”; that is “what was yesterday, is today and will be tomorrow”. Everything stays the same and nothing changes. That is not the real world, things are always changing and in a state of flux. Our job is to try to make sense of it all.

A Trend is a “general direction in which something is developing or changing” or “change of direction away from the status quo”. A “trend” is when we can observe a pattern and be able to predict a future direction or event.

If we have only one data point, we know a location but have no idea where the next point will be. With two points we might be able to connect them with a straight or a curved line, but not really able to make any reasonable prediction. A third point can give us a clue as to the shape or direction but not really enough.

When we get a large amount of data points, we can not only determine the shape of the curve but feel more comfortable in estimating where future points will occur and that is a trend. Having this information allows us to make plans to be better prepared for the future.

Those people who can determine a trend before anyone else will be able to start earlier and be better prepared to take advantage of likely future events. It is those people who can predict the future by seeing where the trends are going, are the ones that become the titans of industry.

We admire those who can see or figure out where the future is taking us, what those new technologies will allow us to do. What the consumers and marketplaces will want. They are able to “see” trends converge in such a way that they build economic empires.

Not everyone can be a Steve Jobs who not only saw what people wanted and needed (before they did) but when and which technologies were ready to fulfill those needs (The iPod, the iMac, the iPad, the iPhone) or a Jeff Bezos who goes from dominating one industry (Amazon) to being the dominant supplier of Internet Cloud services or Elon Musk with the Tesla (electric car) and Space X (Space shuttle replacement).

What they have in common was the ability to see trends before others and create products using these technologies at just the right time, I call “pure Genius”. They were not the most brilliant scientists (and actually not the nicest people to be around) but what they were able to do is spot trends and combine capabilities from multiple different fields (technologies, industries, Design, marketing, manufacturing, material supply chains) and have them all come together and make them work.

The trick is to look at varied and different fields (i.e. Psychology, Economics, Chemistry, Physics, Metallurgy, marketplaces, demographics, buying habits, industries). The person with the broadest knowledge and inquisitiveness is in the best place to identify new trends.

The signature and perhaps most impactful new product in history was introduced in 2008, the iPhone (smart phone) was the culmination and intersection of many technological advances that all came together to make it possible. Two years earlier and it wouldn't have been possible and a few years later the competition was enormous and fierce.

The smart phone is a phone, a camera, a hand held computer, a media and entertainment center, a connection to the internet and social media apps, A

GPS, an alarm clock, a flashlight, and innumerable other applications. For the smart phone to be possible it required significant advances in all these areas:

- o Reliable Cell phone transmission and download speeds
- o Display definition and touch screen capability
- o High density picture and video capability
- o Super-fast, high-density processing and memory
- o Long life rechargeable batteries
- o Small size to fit into a hand
- o Highly secure
- o Ruggedness, style and reliability

Each of these areas had to have a 10-fold increased capability, come together at the same time, be produced and delivered by the millions (in a very short period of time); an unbelievable feat that truly changed our lives! Thank you, Steve.

XII Congruence and Alignment: (Performance Evaluations and Rewards)

(This section was abstracted from a paper I wrote for one of my MBA classes at Santa Clara University. I feel it is as valid today as it was then).

Sometimes (depending on the company or industry) it seems and feels like we are working and living in very different worlds and environments, with the Company (management) in one and the employees in another. Once in a while they come together, overlap, meet and then separate again.

It is at those intersections that we most need to ensure that both sides are aligned and we have congruent (matching) understanding especially in these following key areas:

- 1) **Job Description**, what role (expectations, goals, objectives, targets) does the company expect the employee to play or accomplish?
 - It is critical that both sides understand and agree on what is expected. This congruence of understanding is meant to define “what the employee does, is what the company expects them to do”.
 - These should NOT be just a “wish list” but a meaningful and realistic set of expectations.
 - There may be times when these targets/expectations are unachievable or unreasonable; it is important to try to have them reviewed and if possible, re-negotiated or re-set. If not, this will create future problems.
 - Having both management and the employee agree on the expectations, will minimize future conflicts and areas of concern.
- 2) The **Performance Evaluation is** a measure of “how well the Company feels the employee is meeting expectations”. Are they below, at or

exceeding them. It is a valuable feedback mechanism and provides the employee an opportunity to make corrective actions if necessary.

- The first hurdle is to get acceptance and reach agreement to the accuracy and fairness of the evaluation. If this isn't done, it will create problems in the future.
- If the evaluation indicates issues or problems, there should be a plan (set of actions) that can improve the situation. It isn't good enough to say "what is going on isn't acceptable"; without a way to correct the problem. But first, there must be recognition and acceptance of the problem.
- Major problems should be dealt with immediately and not wait for a formal P.E. to address the issues.

3) The **Reward System** (compensation, recognition, promotions) is the third area of interface and again it is important for the employees to know and understand what the Company policy is and what to expect; and for the company (management) to know what the employee expects (prefers).

- For example, assume the evaluation exceeds expectations and everyone agrees a "good" reward is in order; if the employee expects greater responsibility, or a title, or a promotion and gets a large pay increase instead; this can be viewed as a negative reward ("I worked very hard to get ahead and all they did was pay me more").
- Conversely, if the employee expected a big raise for doing well and was given "more responsibility and extra work" instead, that can be seen as a negative reward.

- It should be noted, that while everyone likes to get a big raise, the positive effect is generally temporary and should be accompanied with recognition, appreciation to have longer term effects.
- It is important for management to know what their employee's expectations are and for the employees to understand what is possible so the reward system can have the maximum positive impact.

If used correctly these areas of interface can have a positive impact for both the Company and the employees. It requires good communication with emphasis on having congruence and alignment for all areas of the Company.

XII. Never forget your “**humanity**”:

Sometimes we get so involved with what we are doing, we lose sight of the “big picture” and who we are. We get so focused on the moment, the task at hand that we ignore anything else. This “tunnel vision” blocks out the rest of the world and we start acting as if nothing else exists, the only thing that is important is what we are doing.

We become so dedicated to our work (the job, money, a title, finishing the project) that we lose sight of what is really important: our family, our friendships, our physical and mental health and even our “humanity”.

We tend to forget that other people have feelings, concerns and problems they are struggling with. We should not treat them as tools to be used to further our own ends and ambitions. We all want to be treated fairly, equally, with consideration, civility and empathy. When we are so wrapped up in our own cocoon, we lose sight of other’s needs.

Everyone wants to be told the truth to be able to do their job and trust those around them and not have to worry about “backstabbing” or deceit. This is even more critical when the people we are dealing with are no longer “within arm’s reach” and have a different background. The real “golden rule” still applies (“do unto others as you would have them do unto you”) and not (who has the gold rules).

Although work, business, money and success are very important, the ability to look in the mirror and know you have retained your “humanity” is more important. An ounce of “kindness” is much more valuable than a ton of “greed”.

I have known and worked with some of the most brilliant scientists and businessmen in Silicon Valley and many became extremely wealthy and powerful individuals but the ones who cared about others and had what we call “humanity” will be fondly remembered long after the others are forgotten.

XIII. Some key take-aways:

- Don't jump to "conclusions or solutions"; When this happens, people tend to defend their decisions irrespective of the facts.
- Clearly define "the problem" before forging forward or acting.
- Every set of actions can be thought of as a process.
- The world is complex; issues should be looked at from varied points of view.
- Lack of "good" communication is the main cause of confusion and dysfunctional organizations.
- Without customers there is no business. A satisfied customer should be your main "goal" and is your greatest marketing asset.
- Well trained, dedicated, loyal and appreciated employees are your greatest asset.
- Without a destination, you don't know what direction to take or even know when you've arrived.
- Sometimes it is better to go slow to go fast; time spent planning and doing your homework can help you reach your goal more effectively and efficiently.
- It's not a character flaw to ask questions, it might be the fastest way to gain understanding.
- It is a lot easier to reach a destination if everybody involved is going in the same direction. Everyone knows where and why they are going and feels they are included.
- Every journey, begins with the first step. Don't be afraid to take it!

XIV. Thanks (I didn't do this all alone; I had a lot of help)

Some of the ideas and concepts in this booklet I learned while attending classes at Santa Clara University (where I received an MBA) and at work (at HP). The vast majority was gained by "on the job" experience in the Army (193rd Ordnance Detachment) and at General Dynamics, Fairchild semiconductor and Hewlett Packard by observing and paying attention to what was going on around me.

I feel extremely fortunate to have worked at HP, a company that believed in its Employees, Customer Satisfaction, Ethical conduct and being part of the Community. I was there for almost 4 decades and worked for and with literally hundreds of people who taught me the things I am now sharing with you, the readers.

I would especially like to thank two men I reported to for almost a quarter of a century (unfortunately, they are no longer with us) who represented the very best in all of us: decent, honorable, extremely competent, demanding but fair, no nonsense or political games and most of all had humanity. Thank you, Bob Zettler and Paul Sedlewicz;; I learned a lot from you guys.

I would also like to thank two guys I have worked with for almost 60 years, we were business partners (our company never made it out of the garage, but we had a ball trying) and are dear friends and true buddies: Floyd Bishop and Bob Picha; (note: Bob Picha recently passed away, he was 97; lived a long and meaningful life; I will miss him a lot).

I would like to thank my family, who put up with my long hours at work, frequent business trips and dragging them to come live-in far-flung places and disrupting their lives. Most of all, to my wife Dorothy, who for 55 years has kept me in line, made me see the other side of things and acted as a sounding board and my editor. It is surprising just how much you can learn from your spouse, even though they don't think you are listening.

Finally, I would like to thank you, the reader, who took the time to read this booklet. I hope you were able to get something useful or helpful from these pages; they represent a lifetime of experiences (I might add, I loved every minute of it). Feel free to share this booklet with anyone you think it might benefit.

Norm

XV. Comments:

I would like to thank a number of my friends and co-workers for their inputs and observations incorporated into this manual.

Maarten K

When I was still teaching, I spent about one hour on the last day of class doing something similar - giving general advice based on my experiences.

Key points that I made in my advice were:

- Find something you really like doing, become really good at doing it, and figure out you can make a living doing this.
- Do something that makes you happy and contributes rather than something that you do just to make money.
- If you encounter a serious problem, come up with possible solutions to fix it. Do not just spend your time highlighting or complaining about the problem.
- Personal relationships, both formal within a group, and informal, are vitally important. Almost everything we do; we do with other people. Develop a network of people you like to be with. Help each other. Mentor.
- While luck contributes to success (for example, being in the right place at the right time), success is determined overwhelmingly by Hard Work. No matter how smart you are, "smart" is not enough. You must work hard also.

Les N

- Don't forget to prioritize, prioritize and prioritize. Resources will generally be limited so focus on what is most important and do that first.
- There will be times when nobody seems to be responsible or has ownership of an issue or problem: you can ignore it (not good if it affects you), take ownership (if you can) or work to get it addressed by those in charge.

Wow, does your booklet bring back years of memories from our workplace, all those great training and development courses and then trying to apply them to whatever I was doing as an individual contributor or as a manager. Strictly speaking, everything you cover can be applied by not only leaders/managers of work groups be successful but also by individual contributors or even by individuals towards personal(nonwork) objectives. It's a nice summary of philosophy, planning and organization and some of the tools that are helpful for reactive

problem solving as well as forward looking to meet goals and objectives for a successful organization.

Barry E

I think your "Booklet" is absolutely terrific, a well-organized, very fine piece of writing and a repository of great wisdom. It is, of course, several things: a business autobiography; a "how-to" guide book for the corporate executive; and a self-help manual. It ought to be published somewhere somehow in all three of these genres. I think it would make a terrific chapter or section of a book for young executives. Perhaps it could be included in materials used in management courses. My only suggestion for improvement would be to include some case studies in the sections on setting goals or problem-solving or communication or the like, some nuts and bolts kind of experiences to flesh out the lessons being taught.

Bob S

Overall, it is a wonderful and very useful resource. It is an easy read, well organized and summarized. I see so much of our HP culture and the lessons that I learned from you in it.

- * Everyone has a customer - it's not just the end buyer.
- * Ask "Why?" 5 times to get at the source. As my high school math teacher said, "Solving problems is easy, finding the real problem (and its source) is the challenge".
- * Determine "How good is enough". Don't let Perfect is the enemy of ..."
- * In light of human history and the systemic racism in our midst, I think that it's important that everyone recognize that we all have acquired biases and prejudices that affect how we see and interact with others. Each of us needs to be honest with ourselves and not let them define our actions/attitudes.
- * the journey starts with the first step.

Thanks again for creating this very special document. I will pass it on to my kids, which is the highest compliment that I can give.

Gary R

When you said "Hire the best people, even if they are smarter than you". I would suggest "Hire to your weakness".

On putting together teams I had the experience in putting together the team for the formation of the U.S. Employee Service Center (USEC) that after its establishment I had to

reshape the team from folks who liked to invent to folks who liked to run an operation. In other words, your team needs to evolve over time as situations change.

Jim L

Wow! Quite an effort. Very well done.

I really liked your “menche” section. Very important, I believe, to have a personal moral compass while in the career environment. Lots of pressure, I perceive, to “compromise” to attain goals. Each person must determine his/her limit point and adhere to it. Maybe emphasize more throughout?

You properly emphasize “go slow to go fast” in decision making, change management, problem solving, etc. I believe some emphasis on “immediate counter measures” is also important. E.g., stop shipment orders, recalls, stop production orders - when the problem is so severe as to require immediate action, don’t delay!

You also excellently emphasize checking during a project or a problem solution effort to ensure goal accomplishment. I also believe the “PDCA” check step - for continuous process improvement - is important. Once one has completed a change, problem fix, etc - check to identify the next step towards a more perfect product, process, etc.