

From the Easier Said than Done Department... **Fifteen Daily Disciplines**

Philip L. Ronning
Vice President
Tiber Group, LLC
Chicago, IL

Observing successful managers reveals many successful rituals performed on a daily basis. These are all deceptively simple and may even seem unimportant or superfluous, but they are all important and quite difficult – otherwise we would all practice them and they wouldn't differentiate the best from the rest. Here are fifteen of the top daily disciplines I have observed:

What to say...

ASSISTANCE: *Ask for help*

Asking for help is surprising difficult because it seems to show weakness and vulnerability. We all have weaknesses and vulnerabilities. Managers who show their need for help bridge the gap between managers and the managed thereby increasing the sense of power within the managed. This enhances employees' responsibility and their involvement in bringing about organizational success.

GRATITUDE: *Say thank you*

Why is it so difficult to say "Thanks?" Like asking for help, saying thank you elevates the other's sense of self and thus diminishes those who show gratitude. The more power one holds herself, the less power she is sharing with others. Power shared is power multiplied. The more powerful the team, the greater the team's accomplishments.

CREDIT: *Say well done*

A step beyond gratitude for effort is giving credit for accomplishments. Again, giving credit is sensed as admitting that someone has done something you could not do – or at least did not do. Here again, the sharing of power through the giving of credit catapults achievement.

COMMUNICATIONS: Talk, talk, talk

Common among managers is the tendency to be too busy to talk. Being busy and being important exacerbates the “we – them” attitude that is so debilitating in organizations. Boosting the amount you communicate regarding business and personal matters has a very unifying effect.

REGRET: *Say I'm Sorry*

You will make mistakes and you will hurt those around you. Admit it when you do and apologize.

What to do...

PROMISES: *Hold yourself accountable*

Holding yourself accountable is fundamental to achievement in anything. Integrity is required for success in management. Keep promises, including those unspoken regarding the code of behavior for the organization and its leaders.

RESPONSIBILITY: *Hold people accountable*

Managers that understand what is important have the ability to make others do what is required, to do what they have said they would do and to behave in acceptable ways. Holding people accountable is not carping nor is it incessant faultfinding. Rather, it is a simple enforcement of organizational integrity.

EMPATHY: *Show you care*

Showing you care about those you lead means being interested in their lives and their jobs. Empathy requires that you demonstrate this interest and an understanding of their lives and their jobs. You can only do this when you interact with them.

VALUES: *Show what matters*

To the extent the organization knows what matters to you – your values – the more likely those values are to be reflected in the performance of the group.

PRIORITIES: *Do the important first*

This simple reminder is difficult because we don't always know what is important. This requires knowledge, judgment, the ability to distinguish the urgent from the important and a regular rethinking of priorities and goals.

What to think about...

EXPECTATIONS: *Know what everyone wants*

When someone fails to live up to our expectations they disappoint us. When we are disappointed in someone our relationship changes. Next time this happens, check whether they really knew what you expected. Chances are they either didn't know what you expected or you were unclear about your expectation. Clarify what you expect and communicate it clearly. Then be sure those around you do the same so you know what they expect of you. If you disappoint those you lead they won't follow.

EQUITY: *Make fairness an issue*

It is the manager's prerogative to define fairness. It is the employee's prerogative to feel unfairly treated. Managing the equity equation means more than defining fairness, it also means constantly refining fairness through interaction. Being aware of the importance of fairness makes it a subject of conversation and reflection.

ASSUMPTIONS: *Challenge all that you think*

A paradigm is a constellation of assumptions that we use to explain the world, particularly that part of the world where we spend most of our time. Because the world changes and because we never have complete information, many of the assumptions we use today are wrong. Finding faulty assumptions and correcting them makes for better managers.

AMBITION: *Be about your purpose*

The best managers have ambition and it is aligned with the organization. Their purpose is to realize their ambition. Know what you want to achieve and build your activities and priorities around it. This will invigorate the organization and its purpose.

ENERGY: Zap, don't sap

Interactions between two people can be described by an energy continuum ranging from positive to negative. In a positive interaction the energy level of each party increases – you *zap* each other. In a negative interaction the energy level declines because you *sap* or drain the other's energy. Surround yourself with people who *zap* you and avoid those who *sap* you. Spend time trying to *ZAP* as many people as you can today.



Build these daily disciplines into your routine and your performance will improve and so will that of those around you.

Philip L. Ronning is Vice President with the Tiber Group, LLC, in Chicago IL. He can be reached at 312/609-9936 or by email at phlr@tiber.com.

Copyright 2003 © American Academy of Medical Administrators. All rights reserved.

The Daily Disciplines Worksheet

Say			
Assistance	“Ask for help”	Whose help do I need?	
Gratitude	“Say thank you”	Whose help have I gotten?	
Credit	“Say well done”	Who has done a good job for me?	
Communications	“Talk, talk, talk”	How can I communicate more?	
Regret	“Say I’m sorry”	Who needs my apology?	
Do			
Promises	“Hold yourself accountable”	What promises do I need to keep?	
Responsibility	“Hold people accountable”	Who has not lived up to their word?	
Empathy	“Show you care”	Who needs my concern?	
Values	“Show what matters”	What’s more important than the end?	
Priorities	“Do the important first”	What is urgent AND important?	
Think			
Expectations	“Know what everyone wants”	What expectations affect me?	
Equity	“Make fairness an issue”	Where are the fairness conflicts?	
Assumptions	“Challenge all that you think”	Where does the world not fit my box?	
Ambition	“Be about your purpose”	How will I know when I’m there?	
Energy	“Zap, don’t sap”	Where are the sources & uses of power?	