



## Establishing Virtuous Leadership and Culture

*Running a business goes beyond the bottom line.*

■ Leadership is not easy.

Organizations are complex machines with a lot of moving parts. Throwing people into the mix complicates things to an entirely new level. Leaders are charged with a set of seemingly impossible tasks: See the future; set the direction for the company or department; make critical decisions on the fly; grow the business. And do all of this while creating a healthy culture and motivating a team of individuals to work together.

Calling someone a leader implies they have a destination in view and are taking people there. Remember the adage, “People will only remember 6% of what you do, but 100% of how you make them feel.” It’s true for customers and for team members — they want to feel cared for, important, special.

It’s not that the numbers don’t matter. They do. I am a huge fan of score cards. I love efficiency, systems and automation, and I sincerely believe that success is

predicated on embracing common sense with uncommon levels of discipline and persistence. But if you are only disciplined and focused about what you do, you will miss the real purpose of leadership, and your company and your people will not grow.

### The Journey to Become a Virtuous Leader

Recently Booster Spirit Wear and our parent organization, Booster, introduced our company’s new “virtues.” After being in business for 17 years, our vision has never been clearer: Every school funded, every child inspired and every community thriving. Watching people’s lives transformed because of the environment they are in and the team they are a part of is what fuels us!

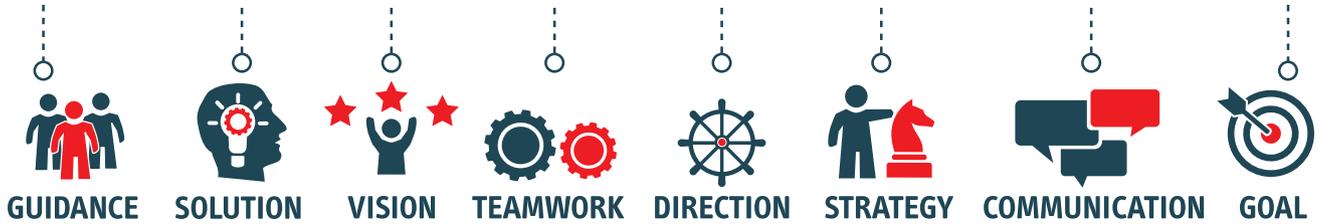
Ultimately, a virtuous leader cultivates an intentional process of self-awareness and personal growth, while applying their knowledge to fight for the highest possible

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By Pete Lovelace, General Manager, Booster Spirit Wear

# LEADERSHIP



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good in the lives of all those they lead. As Andy Crouch declares in his book, “Culture Making,” “For culture to stick, you need cultural icons.” Booster Spirit Wear’s icons are our virtues, and they are:

- **Gratitude:** We express gratitude daily. We live a life of humble optimism, thankful for all we have been given.
- **Wisdom:** We pursue wisdom with a growth mindset. We have a teachable posture and a love of learning. We seek to live holistic lives of integrity, seeking wisdom daily.
- **Care:** We give generously, honoring attention to others. We serve, listen and lead with hospitality. Care means we love our community — they know it and feel it.
- **Courage:** We live and lead with confidence and bravery. We have hope and a bias for action.
- **Grit:** We persevere with resilience knowing that endurance builds character. We take the long view and love a challenge.
- **Celebration:** We love to celebrate the value of others. We take great joy in enthusiastically affirming others’ strengths and accomplishments.

With these virtues serving as our North Star, providing timeless, admirable and aspirational focus, we provide leadership, strategy, structure and tactics to ensure everyone reaches that destination and enjoys the journey!

### Leading Well Requires Support

Most people in the business world have experienced a great deal of “challenge” from our bosses and team members. Challenge is good, but virtuous leadership

requires a high level of support as well. We have 31 standards that define how we serve and care for clients and team members with excellence. Our daily client-care standards meeting is a five-to-10-minute stand-up meeting in which we reinforce and support our team’s efforts to meet the standards. A team member reads the standard and shares a personal story or insight. Then, we praise those individuals who have enlivened this standard over the past few weeks.

### Leaders Help Others Identify Growth Areas

Virtuous leadership is not just about being the best cheerleader or pep-talker. It also requires the willingness to have those difficult conversations when your friend, family or colleague needs to hear the truth. It’s tough to step up and challenge those we lead. But in the end, which approach creates breakthrough and strengthens culture? Letting a team member walk, unchecked, down the road to pain and disaster, or risking relational harmony for the sake of their long-term development and well-being? With this in mind, our leaders host weekly one-on-one meetings with each team member. The meetings follow a similar structure. We start with these simple questions: 1) What are you most excited about right now? 2) What do you wish you could spend more time on? 3) What’s most challenging? 4) Anything bugging you? 5) What can I help you with?

These questions, driven by our virtues, help create a conversation around weekly performance. Additionally, we look at their goals dashboard, which shows their weekly goals for our lead performance measures. Finally, we spend the last five minutes ensuring there is clarity, alignment and commitment around anything decided during the meeting.

## Leaders Help Others Raise Their Level of Competency

After we have given praise, had the difficult conversations, and identified areas of character growth, the next step is to determine which skill set will most effectively help others expand their capacity for leadership and influence.

Virtuous leaders don't simply talk a good game, they actually get results. Character comes first and competency follows. We all need help focusing.

Here is one question you, as a leader, need to keep in mind as you are leading those around you: If this person could only increase one skill set, what would it be? We build this process into our annual reviews and provide every team member some type of stretch assignment designed to develop a competency with which they are struggling. Team members are expected to come up with a plan for accomplishing this assignment and the milestone and accomplishments are tracked through our HR system.

## Leaders Affirm What You Do and Who You Are

Our company's leadership believes that the virtuous cycle ends with celebration, and our culture reflects that. When we celebrate victories, achievements and breakthroughs, we not only acknowledge what we did, but who we are! When celebration happens regularly, we feel grateful to be seen and known, and that brings us back to the start of the virtuous cycle, gratitude!

As a culture, we have become inclined to celebrate the success of our favorite teams with more enthusiasm than we celebrate our own progress, milestones, achievements and each other. Imagine if you could bring that same level of enthusiasm, energy, passion and purpose to your team. The truth is, you can, and it can make a major impact where it really matters. In fact, we do!

At Booster, celebration looks like winning a professional sports championship. It doesn't matter if we are celebrating one person's personal accomplishment of earning their citizenship after years of struggle, or a team's achievement of exceeding all their annual goals — the celebration is unique, memorable and personal. Confetti cannons and music are always present. There are words of affirmation and encouragement shared about the person, there is usually some type of monetary incentive included, and often we invite personal friends and

family members to be present. Why do we go through all this trouble? Simply put, celebration creates connection. It harnesses the power of anticipation. Sure, the moment will come and go, but the feelings, connection, camaraderie and shared experience can create memories that last a lifetime.

I got to orchestrate one of the coolest celebrations in August. We have a young lady named Maria on our team. Maria, a single mom of two, runs our Quality Control division. She embodies all of our virtues, and for the last six years, she has been quietly pursuing U.S. citizenship. She took the day off to sit for her exam, and that evening we got word she passed. Immediately, my team sprang into action. We printed out a 3-by-8-foot banner with the American flag on it. We had the entire company sign it and write messages of appreciation and congratulations. We ordered a cake, balloons and confetti cannons. We had patriotic music on standby. The next morning, we greeted her with a wave of American pride that is usually only reserved for military and government leaders. It was amazing, and then we spent 15 minutes affirming her for her courage and grit to pursue the American Dream!

It all boils down to this simple idea from Danny Meyer, the CEO of Union Square Hospitality Group: "Business, like life, is all about how you make people feel. It's that simple, and it's that hard." Nothing I have shared here is rocket science. If you want to put in the extra effort to frame it around vision/mission/values you can, but at a minimum, remember that all human beings desire these four things: to be known, to be loved, to be seen and to belong. Put that first, and everything else falls into place — and you'll start your own virtuous cycle to lift up and influence those around you!

*After 12 years in the hospitality industry managing luxury resorts for The Ritz-Carlton and other premier brands, Pete Lovelace made a career change to better align his priorities and passions in life. In summer 2017, Pete became General Manager of Booster Spirit Wear, a custom apparel business serving schools and communities. Pete and his team are obsessed with providing outrageously good client care and prices their clients feel great about. The company has exceeded 6 million in annual sales in just five years, and is committed to enhancing the lives of their team, partners, clients and their communities to radically change the industry!*

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