

# Back to Basics

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## Beyond Buzzwords

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I remember a few years ago hearing a very motivational speech by Bo Schembechler, then coach of the University of Michigan's football team. The team, under his leadership, was consistently rated in the top 20 in the country, even before the season started and when he didn't have the "star" talent. When asked why, he responded, "Because everybody knows that at Michigan, the basics are always in place. Everybody gets drilled on blocking and tackling."

I've heard a lot of reference to the "basics" lately. At home I've been talking to my daughters about basic values as they face their teenage years. On our Wayne County School-To-Work Board, we are trying to re-define the "basics" for students to assure their future success in the workplace. In ASC Incorporated, one of our Heritage companies where I have just taken a new special assignment, the focus has been on re-committing to the "basics".

So, what are the basics?

I am sure they might vary, depending on the environment in which you operate. From my perspective, regardless of that environment, certain simple "basics" hold true.

First, we must all operate with a core set of **personal values**. Respect for others, including operating with professionalism and courtesy toward all, tops my list. Next I'd add integrity - doing what you say you are going to do, when you say you will do it. Then there is self-responsibility - taking responsibility for your behavior, your performance, your happiness. Fundamental for me to all these values is motivation driven by love and commitment to others, not driven by ego, insecurity and fear.

The second "basic" for me is **technical competence**. I believe you must be the best you can be at what you do. Whether that "basic" is inventory accuracy, managing people, teaching students, or parenting our children, we are each responsible for making sure we are technically competent and capable to do the job. And, when we are not, that we take responsibility to get help or develop our skills so that we are.

Third is a focus on **customers and quality**. No matter what profession you are in or what product or service you produce, you have a customer. That customer can be a student, an employee, our children, or the buying public. It doesn't matter. That customer, whoever it is, deserves the highest quality product or service you can deliver. High quality, low cost, on-time delivery . . . you define it. But define it with the customer always and every time foremost in your mind. Serving others - our business customer, our students, our children - must be the reason we do what we do.

Last, but not least for me, is a commitment to **personal and profes-**

**sional growth**. To be alive in this world means that we are always changing, and are always affected by changes around us. Our ability to respond to that change in a positive manner is dependent on our ability to grow and continuously learn from all that we are exposed to. If we are too busy hiding from change or avoiding its impact, we will miss the opportunity for growth it puts before us. That opportunity is a gift, another chance to learn and prosper.

Those are my "basics". When I lose sight of them, when I get distracted by all the bells and whistles that are out there, I start feeling myself slip backwards. When I keep my focus on them, success and happiness seem to come my way.

What are the "basics" in your life? I'd love to hear from you. If you would like to share your perspective on this subject, please write to me in care of this paper. Perhaps we can all grow from the experience.

Even if you don't take the opportunity to share them, think about them. Re-commit to them. You'll be the winner in the long run.