



# GUIDING PRINCIPLES



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# DEFINING & IMPLEMENTING GUIDING PRINCIPLES

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One of the most powerful ways to ensure your company reflects the culture you envision is through establishing Guiding Principles.

Guiding Principles are **moral values that set a standard for behavior and attitude within a workplace**. Companies establish Guiding Principles to shape their culture and ensure their employees understand what moral behavior they expect.

Follow these important steps through a facilitated session with your leadership team to begin creating your Guiding Principles.

## STEP 1

**Gather Feedback.** Before your session, ask each member of the leadership team to provide you their response to the following questions:

1. What Behaviors and Attitudes do you want to KEEP in the Culture?
2. What Behaviors and Attitudes do you want to CHANGE in the Culture?
3. What Behaviors would cause you to ask someone to leave the Company?

Gather the feedback and consolidate like answers.

Consider: To increase engagement with your organization, consider asking these to the entire organization, and then review with your leadership team (this will reduce the risk of misalignment between leaders and staff).

## STEP 2

**Draft Principles.** Present your findings to the leadership team. As you begin to define your principles, consider these four primary factors:

- Principles are accessible by anyone within the organization.
- Principles should evoke an emotional or visceral reaction.
- Principles should promote the culture you want.
- Principles should be the example of what you are willing to fire someone for, if not followed.

Examples of Guiding Principles can be found on the last page.

Note\* Most organizations develop five to 10 Guiding Principles, with six being the sweet spot.

## STEP 3

**Review & Finalize.** Once drafted, share with key employees (the ones you trust and whose feedback you value most.) Ask them to review the Guiding Principles to ensure they can be understood and that they reflect the ideal culture.

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## STEP 4

**Share.** Beginning with leadership, cascade the principles within the levels of your organization. This may be accomplished through a “Town Hall” where the executive team shares what and why the principles are important, followed by small team meetings.

It is important that you allow team members to ask questions and share their perspectives on the principles—this can expedite the buy-in to the principles of the team, as well as identify potential trust or perception gaps that leadership should address.

### **Considerations for successfully implementing the principles.**

1. In staff meetings, schedule the last five minutes to share one to two Guiding Principles.
2. Periodically reflect and evaluate if the culture is progressing in the right direction.
3. Make it a priority to discuss good & bad examples of the principles in action:
  - How was/wasn't it demonstrated correctly?
  - Why did/ how didn't the behavior support the principle?
  - How could it have been illustrated better?
4. As the leader, hold yourself equally accountable.
  - When did you fail to exemplify the principle? Share this with the team.
5. Evaluate the changes (technologies and generational) within the workplace and assess if your culture is living its principles, by asking these questions:
  - Is the organization aligned in how they work and how they resolve conflicts?
  - Do they hold to the Guiding Principles even in high-pressure situations?
  - Are they hiring and firing based on them?

## EXAMPLES OF GUIDING PRINCIPLES

1. Before taking an action, imagine yourself as the customer.
2. Tough Feedback: Seek it. Share it. Learn from it.
3. Got your back – we are a team willing to go the extra mile for each other.
4. Contribute to the mission today! Don't just keep your chair warm.
5. Don't meet problems with a baseball bat.
6. Raise your hand when you need help - It's a sign of weakness not to do so.
7. You must listen to and respect everyone's opinion, but you do not have to approve of it.