FUNDAMENTALS

by JIM SULLIVAN

9 Ways to Be Brilliant at the Basics of Business
Fundamentals: 9 Ways to Be Brilliant at the Basics of Business

Fundamentals: 9 Ways to Be Brilliant at the Basics details the 9 essential behaviors of successful companies and brands across North America and around the globe.

The book describes over 250 specific strategies and tactics that high-performing leaders and brands use to serve better, sell more, train well, market smarter and build strong cultures. (Fundamentals is available exclusively at Sullivision.com and Amazon.com)

This companion Discussion Guide is a free resource you can use before, after or during reading the book to help apply the insight and ideas detailed in the book.

How to get the most from this Discussion Guide:

If you’re reading the book by yourself:
Review the 11 sections of the Guide. Complete each exercise and answer the questions detailed in each section.

If you’re reading the book as part of a group:
Review the 11 sections of this Guide. Complete each exercise and answer the questions in each section. Discuss each question/exercise with your fellow leaders and agree on the action needed to more fully incorporate that idea or Fundamental into your company or organization.

Ready? Let’s go
How to best apply the content and concepts in this chapter into your organization:

• Assign the Introduction chapter to all your key team members to read.
• Ask them to identify and write down the three key learnings they got from this chapter.
• Have them bring that list to your next meeting.
• Review and discuss the lists together. Agree on which ideas are new to you or your team that you want to implement. Agree on which ones you’re already doing that you must continuously reinforce. Also, define what’s missing in your brand. In other words, prioritize and determine what you need to start doing, stop doing and what you need to continue doing as a team relative to the Fundamentals. Design an action plan and timetable for implementation.

The Introduction chapter describes the Japanese word **shoshin**, which is defined as “having an attitude of openness and eagerness, combined with a lack of preconceptions when studying a subject, even when studying at an advanced level, just as a beginner in that subject would.” How does this concept apply to your company? Discuss it.

• Which Fundamentals are you and your team Habitually Consistent at (p.13)? What are you Habitually Inconsistent at?
• Go to p.18 in the Introduction chapter. Review The four Key Questions smart leaders should ask themselves at the top of the page beginning with: “Do we know which Fundamentals are the critical support beams (load-bearing walls) for my organization?”
• Review the list of Fundamentals on p.19. As a group, identify the key Fundamentals that have defined your company’s culture, brand and sustainability. Discuss how they align with the 9 Fundamentals we identify and explore in the book. Identify current processes or systems you have in place that support your Fundamentals. Are they strong or weak? In what ways? How do you know for sure? Specify what needs to done to make them clear and non-negotiable and agree on who will do what, accompanied with a timetable for completion.

The most successful companies have a foundation of Fundamentals in place, clearly defined and ably-executed, every single day. They know what they stand for. And what they won't stand for.
How to best apply the content and concepts in this chapter into your organization:

This chapter addresses purpose, passion, direction and change

• Assign the Focus chapter to your leaders to read.
• Ask them to identify and write down the three key learnings they got from this chapter.
• Have them bring that list to your next meeting.
• Review and discuss the lists together. Prioritize and determine what you need to start doing, stop doing and what you need to continue doing as a team. Design an action plan and timetable for implementation.

As an individual or group, identify the key Fundamentals that won’t (or shouldn’t) change in your company.

Now identify the current processes or systems you have in place that support and promote change, purpose, passion and direction in your company. Are you strong or weak in these areas? In what ways? How do you know for sure? How would your team members rate you? Specify what needs to change, and how more purpose and passion can be better instilled in your organization.

On page 23, there’s a list of 5 things that Focus is and Focus isn’t. Underneath it is a bullet point to “Be BiFocal.” Follow the suggestions in the first sentence under this point and then discuss as a team.

• Go to page 29 and individually answer the 9 questions there. Now share and discuss your answers with your team.
• Review the list of Key Quotes on Page 30. Which ones have the most relevance to your company or organization? Why? Discuss them with your other team members.

Want some fresh ideas on Focus and Change?

Check out our best-selling DVD 60 Second Lessons in Leadership at Sullivision.com for more great ideas to inspire your team.
How to best apply the content and concepts in this chapter into your organization:

- Assign the Build Strong Teams chapter to your leaders to read.
- Ask them to identify and write down the three key learnings they got from this chapter.
- Have them bring that list to your next meeting.
- Determine which ideas from their list your company would most benefit from implementing. And also determine which ideas would be most harmful to your team if you didn't implement them.

In this chapter we introduce the idea of “Hire Tough, Manage Easy” (p 34). What do you think this concept means? Can you think of an example in your own experience where you hired someone who not the right fit for your team? What happened?

As a team, go through the “Life Raft” Exercise detailed in this chapter. Have each person identify their deadwood. Decide what you will do about them (groom em or broom em?) and agree on a timetable.

It’s easy to say: “Hire Only the Best.” It’s challenging to execute. Identify the Top 5 Obstacles you’re likely to encounter if you commit to only allowing A or B players onto to your team. Now brainstorm ways to overcome or eliminate those obstacles. (Or simply apply the list of ideas on page 43/44!)

- On page 40, there’s a great list of five ways to build high-performing teams. Which of these do you think your company is doing well and which could you do better at?
- What’s the number one reason that store-level leaders don’t hold their people accountable? See page 42.
- On page 57 there’s a list of 12 questions that The Gallup Organization compiled that evaluates how engaged and motivated team members are. How many of those questions would your team say “Yes” to?

Key Learnings from this chapter:

- Make hiring THE Most Important Decision.
- If you aren’t admired by your employees, you’ll never be admired by your customers.
- Don’t spend all your time trying to turn below-average performers into “average.” Performers. Create an environment in which low performance is simply NOT an option.
- All work is team work.
How to best apply the content and concepts in this chapter into your organization:

- Assign this chapter to every leader and ask them to identify and write down three key learnings from the chapter.
- Discuss the list at your next meeting and agree which ideas could be integrated into your current service processes and culture.

What companies or organizations do you look up to service-wise? What do they specifically do that you admire? Where’s the gap between where you currently are and what they consistently do? Discuss how you can bridge that gap.

Map your company’s customer touchpoints at the store level as detailed in the examples on pages 80-83. Determine which team members interact with your customers at each moment-of-truth. Identify the ideal behavior and outcome and contrast it with current behaviors. Assess the gap between “what-is” and “what-could-be” and agree on the steps to get you where you need to go (along with the potential obstacles you may face along the way.)

As a group detail your service strengths and challenge areas. Agree on ways to enhance the strengths and eliminate the shortcomings. Assign roles and delineate timetables for implementation.

- Assess the way you treat your internal customers service-wise on a scale of 1-10. Would they rank it the same way?
- Where are you currently strong in external customer service and where do you need to improve? How—specifically—will you execute that improvement?
- Review the list of Best Service Practices on pages 69-79. Which of these ideas does your company or organization already execute? Which ones do you think you should be doing?

Key Learnings from this chapter:

- Remember: you don’t get better at service “in general,” you get better at service in specific.
- Service is the Invisible Product.
- Goal: Every Customer Leaves Happy.

Additional Resources:

Want great quotes on service and leadership for your phone, pad or tablet? Download our iFundamentals app FREE at iTunes or Android Market. One App. Endless Inspiration.

Want a copy of the best book we’ve ever read about improving service and increasing sales in a full-service restaurant? Get Tim Kirkland’s best-selling book, The Renegade Server at Amazon or Sullivision.com
How to best apply the content and concepts in this chapter into your organization:

- Assign this chapter to every leader and have them identify the three key learnings they got from the reading. Have them bring their list to your next meeting.
- Determine which sales-related training or processes you need to start doing, which you need to continue doing, and which you need to stop doing.

As a group, identify what your sales goals are for the next quarter (or year). Assess current performance against those goals to date.

Each person in the meeting should take 6 minutes and write down all the ways they can think of to raise sales at the store level. Be specific. Collect and post everyone’s ideas.

Now have everyone take 6 more minutes and list all the obstacles they can think of to achieving those sales. Collect and post the obstacle list next to the sales idea list. Discuss ways to maximize the sales and minimize (or eliminate) the obstacles. Determine what kind of training and behavior is necessary to achieve the transformation. Assign roles and a timetable to the Maximize Sales/Minimize Hurdles project.

- Re-read The Garbage Burger Story on pages 89-90. Can you think of a similar example in your own company of an engaging salesperson versus an “order-taker”? What happens if we employ both?
- Review the charts (Fig. 3 and Fig. 4) on pages 91 and 92. Plug in your own numbers. How much more do you stand to gain (or lose) in incremental sales over the next year?
- Review the list of the common obstacles to raising sales at the store level on page 95. Which of these are your team members guilty of? What could you do to eliminate these obstacles?

Key Learnings from this chapter:

- What if we train our team members to sell and they leave? What if we don’t and they stay?
- You can have the best product in the world but if you can’t sell it, you’ve still got it.
- To sell is to serve.

Want some fresh ideas on building sales? Check out our 3 best-selling DVDs:

*Jumpstart: The Art of the Pre-Shift Meeting, The Shift: How to Plan It, Lead It, Make It Pay 60 Second Lessons in Leadership*

Visit our store at Sullivision.com for more great ideas on how to improve sales.
Ways to apply the content and concepts in this chapter into your organization:

• Assign this chapter to every leader and have them identify the three key learnings they got from the reading.
• Have them bring their list to your next meeting to discuss. List and prioritize the most-mentioned key tactics.

Review the detailed list of cost-saving practices on pages 106-111. Discuss which of these fundamental cost-control tactics or processes you already have in place. Identify what you’re doing—and what you’re not currently doing that you should be doing to better streamline costs. As a team, agree on a plan and timetable for implementation of the new tactics (or a re-introduction of the “old” ones that you’ve failed to follow-through on).

As a group agree on what your 3 biggest costs are in each department (or store). Collectively brainstorm ways to 1) educate the hourly crew on a recurring basis about the costs and 2) show them ways to lower those costs markedly over the next 30, 60, and 90 days. Detail and apply an action plan incorporating specific tactics, strategies and a timeline. Measure and adjust as necessary every 30 days.

Key Learnings from this chapter:

• Profitability comes not just from sales, but cost control too.
• Don’t run out of month at the end of your money!

Additional Resources:

Show your team how to think like an owner relative to “watching our waste.” Go to Sullivision.com and order our best-selling posters: What You Get Paid For and if you’re a foodservice company, The Restaurant Industry Profit on the Dollar poster.
Ways to apply the content and concepts in this chapter into your organization:

• Assign this chapter to every leader and have them identify the three key learnings they got from the reading.

• Have them bring their list to your next meeting to discuss. List and prioritize the most-mentioned key tactics.

Determine what you need to start doing, stop doing, and continue doing relative to Local Store Marketing strategies and tactics. Assess your current—and future—obstacles to execution and detail a plan to overcome them.

As a group, identify each under-exploited potential customer base within the 1-3 mile radius of each store.

Review the 5 core strategies to increase revenue on the top of page 116. What is your company specifically doing in each category to maximize revenue?

Take a look at the two charts detailed on page 117. Plug in your own companies numbers in to the first three columns and then assess the results revealed in the fourth column.

• As a team, or an individual, answer the twelve questions detailed on page 121 under “Be self-competitive” relative to your company, brand or organization.

Send an email to Fundamentals@Sulliviison.com and request a free PDF copy of the ebook checklist referred to on page 126 next to the Deeper Dive icon called 101 Ways to Better Connect Your Business to Your Community. Review the list with your team and assess how your company is doing relative to each of these areas. What are you already doing from the list? What do you need to start doing from the list? Identify the areas of opportunity the list uncovers for your business.

Key Learnings from this chapter:

• The two Laws of Marketing: Be different to be remembered. Be better to be bought. –Mike Altshuler

• The Fundamentals of marketing aren’t hard to understand, but they’re challenging to do.

Additional Resources:
Enter the keyword “Marketing” into the search box at our website to find more insight related to this critical Fundamental. Also, check out our best-selling DVDs 60 Second Lessons in Leadership in our online store at Sullivision.com.
Ways to apply the content and concepts in this chapter into your organization:

• Assign this chapter to every leader and have them identify the three key things they want to remember about Out-Teaching the Competition.
• Combine everyone’s list and discuss at your next meeting.
• As a group, determine what your three greatest training needs are.

Review the “First, Second, Third” bullet points on pages 130-131. How would you rate your company or organization relevant to those three Adult Learning basics?

Discuss and devise an action plan for implementing Pre-Shift Meetings (page 138-139) daily as part of your culture and process in each of your stores, salons, branches or units.

There are 24 creative training techniques listed on pages 134-142. Which ones does your company need to start doing, stop doing and continue doing?

Now—and this is always important—discuss what the common hurdles are to the training actually being implemented (well-done is better than well-said).

As a group, determine why these hurdles exist, what’s been tried, why it worked (or didn’t work) and what needs to be done to overcome these obstacles and improve your team’s education on a daily basis.

• What specific group(s) of team members are most in need of that training? How do you know?

Key Learnings from this chapter:

• No Train, No Gain.
• If you’re not learning every day, the competition is gaining on you.
• For every dollar you invest in training you save two dollars in advertising.

Additional Resources:

Go to Sullivision.com and enter the keyword “Training” into the search box to find all of our content related to this Fundamental. If Pre-Shift Meetings are a new concept to your organization (or if you’ve tried them in the past but they didn’t “catch”), invest in our best-selling DVDs called Jumpstart: How to Plan and Execute Revenue-Generating Pre-Shift Meetings ($99 at Sullivision.com) and The Shift: Best Practices to Run a Profitable Shift from Beginning to End. Each DVD is only $99 at Sullivision.com.
Ways to apply the content and concepts in this chapter into your organization:

• Assign this chapter to every leader and have them identify the three key learnings they got from the reading. Have them bring their list to your next meeting.

• Combine their lists and discuss at your next meeting. Determine which ones are most important to integrate into your culture, training, teams and tasks.

As a group, honestly detail the particular challenges you have relative to managing time and priorities. Identify the key obstacles and hurdles that exist in your organization relative to prioritizing and time management. Discuss ways to overcome those obstacles. What tools or resources do you need, what personal discipline might be missing from the team?

Discuss and detail the characteristics of the best leaders and/or teachers your supervisors have had. Decide how to incorporate that behavior into the current leadership group.

Time Management tips are detailed on pages 153-156. As a team, discuss this list and any other best practices related to prioritizing and getting the “Big Rocks” in place first. Now discuss what kind of leadership your hourly teams want and need. Does the behavior you identified as being ideal align with the type of leadership the team desires? If so, set a timetable, measurements and milestones for getting better at those things.

• On pages 148-151 there are 13 Key Qualities of a Leader listed. What other qualities have you observed through experience that might be added to this list?

• Go to Sullivision.com and download the article: Signs of Leadership Imbalance at the Unit Level and assess each store compared to this list.

Key Learnings from this chapter:

• Take control of what takes your time.
• Leadership and learning are indispensable to one another.
• “You don’t fail by making mistakes. You fail by taking too long to find out about them.”
  – Russ Umphenour

Additional Resources:

To learn more creative ways to be a Strong Leader, go to Sullivision.com and check out our best-selling DVD called 60 Second Lessons in Leadership or enter the keyword “Leadership” for related articles on the topic. Also, our FREE iFundamentals mobile phone app contains over 2000 inspirational quotes related to Leadership (and the other 8 Fundamentals too!)
Ways to apply the content and concepts in this chapter into your organization:

- Have your leadership team read the *Execute* chapter.

On page 163, in Figure 8, *The Execution Pyramid* is explained. Consider (and discuss) how well your company incorporates the 3 elements of the pyramid to create Results.

See pages 166-167. Discuss the question “Under what circumstances do managers (or hourly team members) do the wrong thing, even though they know how to do the right thing?” Review the detailed list of 30 reasons. Now add your own experiences to it. Define the best ways to eliminate those obstacles—in both theory and practice.

As a group, discuss recent examples of goals or objectives that weren’t achieved in your organization despite having the best intentions and right tools. What failed? Why? Now discuss a strategy or tactic that was flawlessly executed in your company. Why did it succeed? Examine and discuss the reasons for its success. Apply those ideas.

Continuous Improvement is a key component of Execution. Solicit and record your best leadership practices before The Shift, during the Shift and after The Shift. Be specific. Share this list (and keep adding to it) with all your present and future store managers.

As a team, take your quarterly or period sales goals and break them down into incremental shift goals for each day in the upcoming two weeks. Discuss what you’d have to cover in the Pre-Shift Meeting each day to clearly communicate the goals to the staff. Identify how you’ll need to coach the team during the shift to insure you’ll achieve (or exceed) your goals.

An Action Plan for all the Fundamentals: Schedule a leadership meeting to discuss all nine *Fundamentals*. If you have the Deluxe version of the book that includes the disc with the interactive *Fundamentals* Power Point workshop, present that seminar to your team (the disc has step-by-step instructions for each slide). If you don’t have the Power Point workshop, no worries, simply go to Sullivision.com and download the *Fundamentals* Book Club Discussion Guide which mimics the Action Plan at the end of each chapter.

Determine which *Fundamentals* are most important to integrate now into your culture and company. Agree on measurements, milestones and timetables.

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**Key Learnings from this chapter:**

- *Since you can’t really know on which day success will occur, you have to be ready every single day.*

- *“We teach our cadets to fight the fight, not fight the plan. There is a break point where the plan goes in the trash. That’s the skill. The focus is on intent. It’s outcome based.”*  
  
  —Colonel Thomas Kolditz, US Military Academy, West Point
On page 182 we begin with a quote from Jack Welch about the four things to remember about change. Review it. How would you answer the second point relative to your company or organization now, today?

On pages 183-185 we discuss the concept of Backcasting as a way of realistically plotting a successful future for your company. Follow the specific directions on pages 183 and 184 and backcast your own department, store or company.

Look at the last sentence on page 187. Given the urgency of that idea and given the breadth of ideas in the book that you’ve explored via this Discussion Guide what are the most important things you need to do as a company relative to each Fundamental? What’s first? Why? How will you measure results?

Finally, we strongly recommend you fill out the next page (Execution: Accountability & Alignment Plan) as soon as you complete the book and this Discussion Guide. Our research and experience has shown that taking the time to answer the following questions in detail results in greater retention and results. If you do it, then it’s done.

Thanks so much for your support! Please visit us at Sullivision.com to sign up for our FREE monthly Fundamentals Enewsletter (it takes less than 25 seconds) and check out our training catalog of awesome resources at http://store.sullivision.com. And finally, don’t forget you can follow Jim Sullivan daily on Twitter @Sullivision.com and get our FREE mobile app of leadership, service, selling, and marketing quotes called iFundamentals at Android Market or iTunes.
Execution: Accountability & Alignment Plan

1. Three things I need to START doing?

2. Three things I need to STOP doing?

3. Three things I need to CONTINUE doing?

4. Two specific areas where my restaurant could improve in the next 90 days:

5. What 3 things do I need to do first in the next 7 days?

6. Three things that are likely obstacles to implementing what I need to change/do:

7. 30 days from now, 3 things I’ll be doing differently than I did 30 days ago:

8. What behavior will I observe that will confirm our team has indeed improved?
FAQ

What is the best way to apply each Fundamental?
Read each chapter, and then follow the Discussion Guide questions detailed above for each Fundamental.

Can I get customized copies of the Fundamental book for my company? How much does it cost?
Yes you can. Cost will naturally vary depending on the type of customization you’re considering. Any customization done on our end requires a minimum of 500 copy purchase. You can email us at Fundamentals@Sullivision.com for more information.

Where can I find the Fundamentals Workshop in a Box referred to on page 192 of the book?
This box kit will be available in November 2011. It’s a perfect tool for your Training Team to adapt, apply, and customize the principles in the book to your company, brand or organization. The Fundamentals Workshop in a Box kit is a comprehensive learning program based on the content of Fundamentals: 9 Ways to Be Brilliant at the Basics, with additional content and insight that there wasn’t room for in the book. It features a blended learning approach including slides, interactivities, video and fun. It was designed by the author and features:

- A complete slide deck that illuminates and expands each Fundamental in an interactive and fun format (proven effective and used with over 20,000 audience members in the last three years!)
- A comprehensive, step-by-step Leader’s Guide for your training team or facilitator to use, along with interactivities, role-plays, case studies, discussion topics and detailed suggestions on how to customize the content to your team
- A detailed Learner’s Guide for everyone in your class
- Supplementary and complementary DVDs that will illuminate and expand each Fundamental

Does still water run deep?
Yes, but the fishing stinks.