

Book Discussion Guide

Overview

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

The book details over 250 specific strategies and tactics that high-performing leaders and brands use to serve better, sell more, train well, market smarter and develop stronger in-store 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 (especially) during reading the book to help apply the insight and ideas detailed in *the book*. This Guide is a great tool if you're reading Fundamentals as part of a Leadership Book Club.

How to get the most from this Discussion Guide:

1: If you're reading the book by yourself:

Review the 11 sections of this Book Discussion Guide. Complete each exercise and answer the questions detailed in each section.



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2: If you're reading the book as part of a group:

Review the 11 sections of this Discussion Guide. Complete each exercise and answer the questions in each section. As a group, discuss your answers to each question with your fellow leaders and agree on which specific actions or options will help the team more fully incorporate and apply those idea or Fundamentals into your daily behavior. Ready? Let's go.



FUNDAMENTALS™

1st Chapter: **Introduction**

Suggestions on how to best apply the content and concepts in this chapter into your teams:

- Read the Introduction chapter.
- Identify and write down *three key learnings* you got from this chapter.
- Bring that list of key learnings to your next team meeting of fellow readers.
- Review and discuss your key learnings lists together. As a group agree on which ideas are most important to implement and which ideas you're already doing that you could improve upon. In other words, determine what you need to *start doing*, *stop doing* and what you need to *continue doing* as a team relative to applying the *Fundamentals*. Design an action plan and timetable for implementation. As we like to say, never get bored with the basics.

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 leadership mentality? Discuss it.

Which Fundamental strategies and tactics are you and your team Habitually Consistent at? What are you Habitually *Inconsistent* at?

Go to page 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?*

Now answer the next three questions.

Review the list of Fundamentals on page 19. As a group, identify the key *Fundamentals* that have defined your company's culture, brand, success 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 be done to make them clear and non-negotiable. and agree on who will do what, accompanied with a timetable for completion.

Key Learnings from the chapter: The most successful companies have a foundation of Fundamentals in place, clearly defined and consistently executed, every single day. They know what they stand for. And what they won't stand for.

Fundamental # 1: **FOCUS**

Ways to apply the content and concepts in this chapter into your organization:

This chapter addresses purpose, passion, direction and change

- Read the Focus chapter.
- Identify and write down the three key learnings you got from this chapter.
- Bring that list to your next Book Club or manager 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 in terms of consistency? Specify what needs to change, and how more purpose and passion can be better applied to our people and process. Be sure to agree on who will do what, accompanied by a specific timetable for completion.
- 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.

Key Learnings from this Chapter:

- *Passion inspires. So bring it. Every shift.*
- *Have a clear focus, purpose and clear direction. Be sure to reinforce it with your team daily.*
- *Embrace change. Failure is not fatal, but failure to change might be.*

Fundamental #2: **Build Strong Teams**

Ways to apply the content and concepts in this chapter into your organization:

- Read the Build Strong Teams chapter.
- Identify and write down the three key learnings you got from this chapter.
- Bring that list to your next Book Club or manager meeting.
- Determine which ideas from the list your company would be the most beneficial to implement and which ideas would be most harmful if you *don'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 was not the right fit for your team? What happened?
- With your Book Club 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 for improving the team.
- 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 be 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 most 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.***

Fundamental #3: **Serve Better**

Ways to apply the content and concepts in this chapter into your organization:

- Read the Serve Better chapter.
- Identify and write down the three key learnings you got from this chapter.
- Bring that list to your next Book Club or manager 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.
- Assess the way you treat your *internal* customers service-wise on a scale of 1-10. Where are you currently strong in external customer service and where do you need to improve? How—specifically--will you execute that improvement?
- What companies or organizations do you admire service-wise? What do they specifically do that you like? *Where's the gap between where you currently are and what they consistently do?* Discuss how you can bridge that gap.
- 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?
- 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 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 want 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 & eliminate the shortcomings. Assign timetables for implementation.

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.***

Fundamental #4: **Sell More**

Ways to apply the content and concepts in this chapter into your organization:

- Read this chapter and identify the three key learnings you got from the reading. Bring your list to the next Book Club or Manager meeting to discuss.
- 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.
- 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?
- As a group, identify what your sales goals are for the next quarter (or year). Assess current performance against those goals to date. What will make you better?
- 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. Discuss and capture the 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.
- 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.***

Fundamental #5: **Spend Less**

Ways to apply the content and concepts in this chapter into your organization:

- ❑ Read this chapter and identify the three key learnings you got from the reading. Bring your list to the next Book Club or Manager meeting to discuss.
- ❑ Determine which cost-savings-related training or processes you need to start doing, which you need to continue doing, and which you need to stop doing.
- ❑ 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 unit or store. Collectively brainstorm ways to 1) educate the hourly crew on a recurring basis about cost control 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. Don't forget to stress that selling more is a critical way to spend less.

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!**

Getting things done requires 2 basic components

1. Defining what "done" means (the outcome)
2. Detailing what "doing" looks like (the action)



Example: **GROW TRAFFIC. GROW BEVERAGE SALES. IMPROVE LABOR PRODUCTIVITY**



Fundamental # 6: **Always Be Marketing**

Ways to apply the content and concepts in this chapter into your organization:

- ❑ Read this chapter and identify the three key learnings you got from the reading. Bring your list to the next Book Club or Manager meeting to discuss.
- ❑ 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?
- ❑ Look at the two charts detailed on page 117. Plug in your own numbers in 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.
- ❑ Go to the Sullivision.com home page and download the checklist called *101 Ways to Better Connect Your Business to Your Community*. 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.*

Training should focus on **doing** rather than on **knowing**—and, in particular, on bringing everyone’s skills closer to the level of the best performers in a given area.

Leaders must give due consideration to **why** and **how** people learn, not just **what** they’ll learn.
Understand the architecture of learning




Fundamental #7: **Out-Teach the Competition**

Ways to apply the content and concepts in this chapter into your organization:

- ❑ Read this chapter and identify the three key learnings you got from the reading. Bring your list to the next Book Club or Manager meeting to discuss.
- ❑ Determine what you need to start doing, stop doing, and continue doing relative to Training strategies and tactics. Assess your current—and future--obstacles to execution and detail a plan to overcome them.
- ❑ As a group, determine what your three greatest training gaps are. What specific group(s) of team members are most in need of that training? How do you know?
- ❑ 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 and development on a daily basis.

Key Learnings from this Chapter:

- **Cared-for people care for people.**
- **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.**



Service is your invisible product. It's free. Heap it on every customer.

Quote from our bestselling Books, available at Amazon

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The advertisement features a blue background with white text. On the right side, there are two book covers: 'Multi-Unit Leader Ship' by Jim Sullivan and 'Fundamentals'. Below the books, a quote is attributed to 'our bestselling Books, available at Amazon'. At the bottom center, the Sullivanvision.com logo is displayed in a stylized font.

Fundamental #8: **Lead Smart**

Ways to apply the content and concepts in this chapter into your organization:

- ❑ Read this chapter and identify the three key learnings you got from the reading. Bring your list to the next Book Club or Manager meeting to discuss.
- ❑ Determine what you need to start doing, stop doing, and continue doing relative to Leading Smarter. Assess your current—and future--obstacles to execution and detail a plan to overcome them.
- ❑ As a group, honestly detail the specific 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?
- ❑ 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?
- ❑ 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 ideas 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.

You don't fail by making mistakes. You fail by taking too long to find out about them. -Russ Umphenour

Key Learnings from this Chapter:

- **Take control of what takes your time (and attention).**
- **A lack of routine causes more problems than poor choices.
Routines turn desired behavior into default behavior.**
- **Leadership and learning are indispensable to one another.**

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Fundamental #9: **Execute**

Ways to apply the content and concepts in this chapter into your organization:

Don't ask "What's most important?" Ask: "If every other area of our operations remains at its current level of performance, what are the one or two areas where change would have the greatest impact?"

- ❑ Read this chapter and identify the three key learnings you got from the reading. Bring your list to the next Book Club or Manager meeting to discuss.
- ❑ Determine what you need to start doing, stop doing, and continue doing relative to Execute better. Assess your current—and future—obstacles to execution and detail a plan to overcome them.
- ❑ 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 teams.
- ❑ 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.

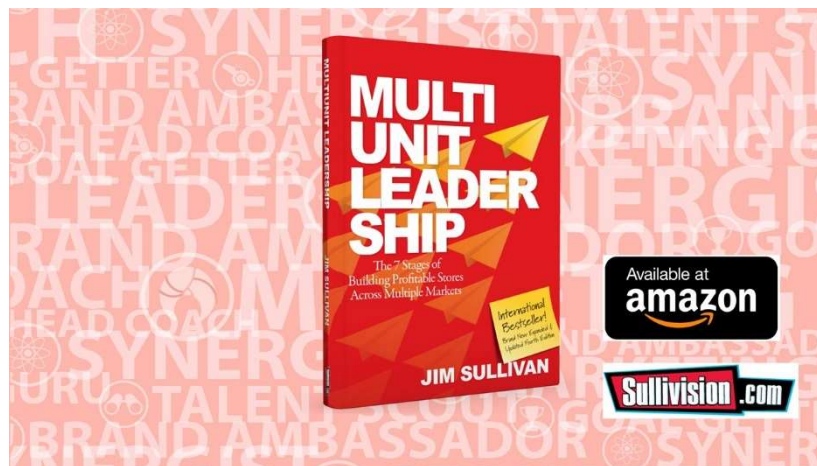
Key Learning from the chapter: Since you can't really know on which day success will occur, you have to be ready every single day.

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Final Chapter: *The End. Of the Beginning*

- ❑ 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 following 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 and follow author Jim Sullivan daily on LinkedIn and Twitter @Sullivision.com. Check out our other bestseller called *Multiunit Leadership* at Amazon in print, audio, ebook and Spanish versions.*



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Execution: Accountability & Alignment Plan

Name: _____ Date: _____



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:
 - 1.
 - 2.

5. What 3 things do I need to do first in the next 7 days?
 - 1.
 - 2.
 - 3.

6. Three things that are likely obstacles to implementing what I need to change/do:
 - 1.
 - 2.
 - 3.

7. 30 days from now, 3 things I'll be doing differently than I did 30 days ago:
 - 1.
 - 2.
 - 3.

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



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