THE
PINNACLE
WAY

- Where we came from
- Where we're going
- Where you fit in

What's the point?

A few years back when Pinnacle Solutions was founded, Mike and Jimmy had a vision for the company. One of the main priorities for them (unlike other organizations) was making sure the people had a great work environment in order to perform their best work.

In four short years, that vision has been realized. One of the most common remarks for new employees is that the culture is unlike anything they've experienced at previous jobs. With a retention rate over 95% and constant growth, we are pleased that we've been able to keep our unique culture intact. In the time that Pinnacle has had its doors open, the company grew from that first pair of visionaries to a 69-person (and counting) small business.

However, with that kind of growth comes a question. Can we keep up the momentum? Are we making the right hiring choices? Are we bringing the right people on board to ensure the continued success of the organization? Are we communicating the essential cultural aspects of Pinnacle to new employees?

And with that, The Pinnacle Way was born. This guide was created as a way to help new people get a quick peek into the way things are done at Pinnacle. You won't have a manager or leader standing over your shoulder every minute of the day. It's up to you to decide what is the right thing to do when faced with the daily decisions, and we hope this guide helps you to see how to accomplish that in a meaningful way.

This is not a finished work and will be revised as time goes on. If you have an idea or suggestion to make this guide better, please submit it to communications@pinnaclesolutionsinc.com. We would appreciate it!

And now, for your viewing pleasure, I give you The Pinnacle Way.

Table of Contents

Culture, it's what's for dinner

I'm sure you've heard the term "culture" before. You might have even heard it in a work context. But you've never seen or experienced it like this. We firmly believe that our culture is one of our biggest differentiators between us and the competition. We treat our people like, well, people. You're not a number or a faceless entity. If it was boiled down to two words, it would be this:

You. Matter.

And while that might not be some big, flashy strategy filled with unpronounceable words, it's a fact.

You spend a third of every weekday at work. Shouldn't it be as pleasant as possible? Shouldn't you be among people who are friendly and engaging? Shouldn't you have a strong, supportive leadership team there to guide you and your coworkers through the tough times? If you said "yes" to those questions, then you're on the right track.

It's not always sunshine and roses. We work hard. We make things happen. But when it comes down to the line, we do what we can to make sure our people are treated with respect on all levels.

Our core values and what they mean

If you haven't seen them yet, you will. We don't put these things on a plaque in the lobby and forget they exist. Every one of us makes decisions on a daily basis according to these core values:

- Deliver On-Time, Every Time
- Unequivocal Excellence
- Honesty and Integrity Through Open Communications
- Inspire Innovative Solutions that Exceed Expectations
- Operational Efficiency
- Provide a Safe and Enjoyable Work Environment

Let's delve into each of them a little bit.

Deliver On-Time-Every Time: This is the golden rule here at Pinnacle. We focus on the customer (more on that in the next chapter) above all else. Other companies might find late deliveries acceptable, but not us.

Unequivocal Excellence: Be great at what you do. We hire capable people and do everything we can to remove any obstacles that prevent them from doing their very best work. If it sounds simple, that's because it is.

Honesty and Integrity Through Open Communications: We have multiple ways of fulfilling this one. One of the most transparent and impactful is the All Hands Meeting. Once every quarter all Pinnacle employees gather in a conference room or around a telephone and listen in as our

senior leaders give us insights into how the company is doing. They cover our current projects, our pursuits, and our wins/losses over the past months.

Inspire Innovative Solutions that Exceed Expectations: Your people are your best resource for ideas and innovation. We put that to use by utilizing the Big Ideas Database. Every employee has access to the database to add ideas and make suggestions for improving how Pinnacle does business. Everyone has a vote and everyone counts.

Operational Efficiency: The operations team is, more often than not, working behind the scenes to help with the day to day functions of the organization. Each function included in the operations team is kept lean and mean to stay flexible and effective; though not so lean as to affect the service level available from this indispensible team of support staff.

Provide a Safe and Enjoyable Work Environment: Having a safe workplace is a major key to being comfortable enough to do your best work. However, we take it a step further by slipping "enjoyable" in there. Through our monthly social awareness campaigns, companywide newsletters and events, and various contests throughout the year, we work to make Pinnacle a fun and exciting place to work.

The customer is your new boss

We touched on this earlier in the first core value, but we'll expand it here. Our customers are the lifeblood of the company. Yes, we treasure our employees, but without customers we have no work to do! Mike often says, "When you do good work, you get more work." The point is if you are performing well on current projects, not only will those customers look for opportunities to give you more work, it will provide you with a platform of past performance to help pursue new opportunities.

When you do good work, you get more work.
Mike Durant, CEO

And while it's exciting to pursue (and win) new contracts, it's almost always going to take less effort to continue serving a satisfied customer than to actively pursue a new one.

There will inevitably come a time when you have to make a tough decision in your work. It could be related to any number of random events, but your response should be filtered through this phrase: does it benefit the customer? Sometimes tough decisions have to be made, but when filtered through that basic question the right answer will come out more often than not.

And if you're a member of the corporate or operations support staff, that doesn't excuse you from this relentless focus on the customer. We not only have the external customers to think of, we also have the internal customers (other employees) that deserve our time, attention, and effort.

Hand complaints up and praises down

Grumbling. Griping. Grousing. Complaining.

When you (or someone else) is performing the above activities, what is the outcome? At least one person is frustrated. Nothing is accomplished. And the negative attitude spreads like wildfire.

Here's a simple solution. Hand complaints up the chain of command. On the flip side, hand praises down the chain of command.

Be quick to praise and slow to complain. It's a rare situation where that mindset causes a problem!

Neat tip:
When praising someone via email, cc their manager to let them know as well

Another neat thing we've started using is the peer recognition "All of the Above" tool. It allows each of us to recognize our coworkers for being especially helpful, caring, etc. without having to wait for a manager to do it. Receiving a hand-written "thank you" note provides more fulfillment for most people than you would imagine.

Accountability, Autonomy, and Empowerment

Another piece of our culture here is the lack of micromanagement. We empower our people, give them autonomy, and hold them accountable for results. Let's break that down into an easy example: asking questions.

How to ask better questions and get better results:

- Why do we have to go through this change?
- Why can't we find good people?
- When will that guy do his job right?
- Why don't they communicate better?
- Who messed this up?
- When is someone going to train me?
- When are my people going to get their act together?

Any of these questions seem familiar? We've all heard a version of them at some point in time. The theme running through these questions is twofold. First, there's a definite negative connotation. Second, and most importantly, they are structured to place blame and accountability on someone else.

That's *not* a winning plan.

If you're trying to be successful as a leader (and make no mistake about it—everyone is a leader, not just people with big responsibilities or flashy titles), you're going to have to hold people accountable. Letting them ask questions like these is a surefire way to ensure that they never learn *self accountability*.

It doesn't always fit, but the majority of the time questions that begin with "who, when, and why" are potential problems. In the examples above you'll see that play out.

The point is to turn the questions around and find ways to hold yourself accountable for the results. Try starting the questions with "how can I…" or "what can I…" and you'll see that the responsibility immediately shifts from someone else to you.

You're the one in charge of making the change at that point. It's a radically different mindset to ask questions like these. Why? Because you have to care. And you have to be willing to hold yourself and your people accountable for the results. It isn't easy, but it's worth it.

We hire people we can trust, and then we put our trust in them to do their job well.

Where do we go? It's up to you

There's more to this than what you've seen so far, but some of it you'll have to experience for yourself. I leave you with this, a quote from Mike on his leadership beliefs. Remember, this is the guy who has your back on a daily basis:

> " *Trust and empower your people to do their jobs, then stand behind them. Unless they are absolute lowlifes, always, even when they screw up, go to bat for them. However, also call a spade a spade. Supporting your people doesn't mean carrying the deadweight. If there are stellar performers and nonperformers, make it clear that you know the difference and reflect that in mission taskings and performance evaluations… Be dedicated to your people, the mission, and the customer first and foremost, and only then to yourself and your career.*
>
> ***Mike Durant, President and CEO of Pinnacle Solutions***

Now it's your turn to make things happen.