

TRUTHS & TOOLS

30 Years, 5 Lessons

Wildflower turns 30 this November, and somebody recently asked me to name the 30 things it taught me. I couldn't get through the list in one sitting, so here are the first five in the order they came to me, which is probably the order I may have learned them.

One: Appreciate the work people do. I used to think people improved by being coached on what they could do to improve their performance. I was wrong. You get the most out of people by genuinely praising what they do well and the stuff they may be struggling with tends to improve as well.

Two: Ask for help. I'm not responsible for knowing all the answers, and honestly, thinking you must know everything is egocentric. Nobody knows it all and nobody is right all the time!

Three: Ask for help earlier rather than later. The cost of waiting is always higher than the discomfort of asking.

Four: Standards matter, and they are non-negotiable until you find a better way. Then everyone adopts the better way together, and it becomes the new standard everyone follows.

Five: Hard work gets rewarded. I know the definition of "hard work" looks different across generations now, and that's fine. I still believe the early bird catches the worm. It doesn't have to be every single day. However, volunteering to lead projects, offering help or offering to lead when it is not in your job description, showing up first, and staying a little later, more often than not, tend to add up to something positive for you and your team.



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Tool: Building on 30 Years of Lessons – Part 1

Use the questions below to see where each lesson shows up, or doesn't, in how you are leading right now.

Praise Before Critique

- When was the last time you told someone specifically what they are doing well, before you told them what to fix?
- In your organization, is feedback mostly corrective? What would change if the coaching changed to the positive?

Asking for Help, Sooner

- What's something you're currently trying to solve alone that you should have asked for help?
- What makes asking for help feel risky for you and/or in your organization?
- How do you, as the leader, model asking first?

Standards That Hold

- Are your standards written down, taught, measured, and reinforced, or are they just assumed and discussed or enforced after the fact?
- When was the last time a standard changed because someone found a better way and everyone adopted it together?

The Hard Work Test

- How does hard work get rewarded in your organization?
- How can you move out of your own way to create an environment where the team wants to work hard?

A Final Question to Sit With

- Of these five, which one are you living out loud and which one only exists in your head?