

# Introduction to Apex's Corporate Culture

How to Be Successful at Apex

Version 2.6.2



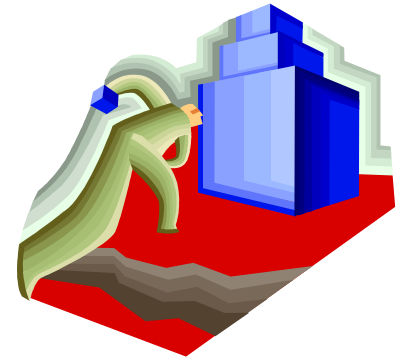
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*Hi, I'm Philip Chen, founder and President of Apex Computer Systems. I'd like to take a brief moment to congratulate you on joining Apex. I hope that your tenure here at Apex will be memorable and greatly beneficial.*

*Apex is a very special company that's in the middle of a tremendous growth period, fueled by the common values and goals that make up our corporate culture. In the following presentation, I would like to share our culture with you, to help you be successful at Apex, and for Apex to be successful because of you.*

*If you have any questions regarding Apexian culture, please let me know as soon as possible.*

# WHY I STARTED APEX



- My credo: “Good people win. I live to prove it.”
- My passion: To lead a group of good people to accomplish great deeds and enjoy success, even while living life to the fullest
- Apex is my platform to make this possible

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*As the founder of Apex, I would like to share with you the reasons I started this business.*

*We've all heard the phrase "Good guys finish last." I've always hated that, because it implies:*

- Good guys are not successful*
- Successful guys are not good*

*My lifelong passion is to prove otherwise. I not only believe that good guys do win, but also that they can lead a fulfilling life. I think that in order to do this, good guys need to work together as a team, and be willing to be highly adaptable – the path may take hard work, but in the end, everyone can enjoy success and have fun along the way.*

*This is my dream, and I see Apex as a way of making it all possible. Over the past 23 years, Apex has grown from a one-man shop to more than 200 employees, working together.*

# MY VISION



- To create a company that will last for hundreds of years
- To create a culture where any employee might have a chance to become Apex's CEO
- To create an environment where everyone, from owners to employees and customers, will be tightly interconnected, producing individual and mutual benefits
- To give employees the opportunities to grow personally and financially

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*I know it may seem strange, but I want Apex to be a long lasting institution – I want it to be around for hundreds of years, if not longer. I don't want this company to stay in my family. Rather, I would like to see Apex promote from within, where any Apexian might have an opportunity to run the company one day.*

*In my view, you, our customers, and Apex are parts of a tightly coupled triad. These are the three core priorities, and Apex's longevity will only happen if and only if we can be successful in keeping these relationships tight.*

*Over time, Apex has developed a culture with strong principles that I truly believe can make a person successful here or anywhere.*

# Apex's Mission

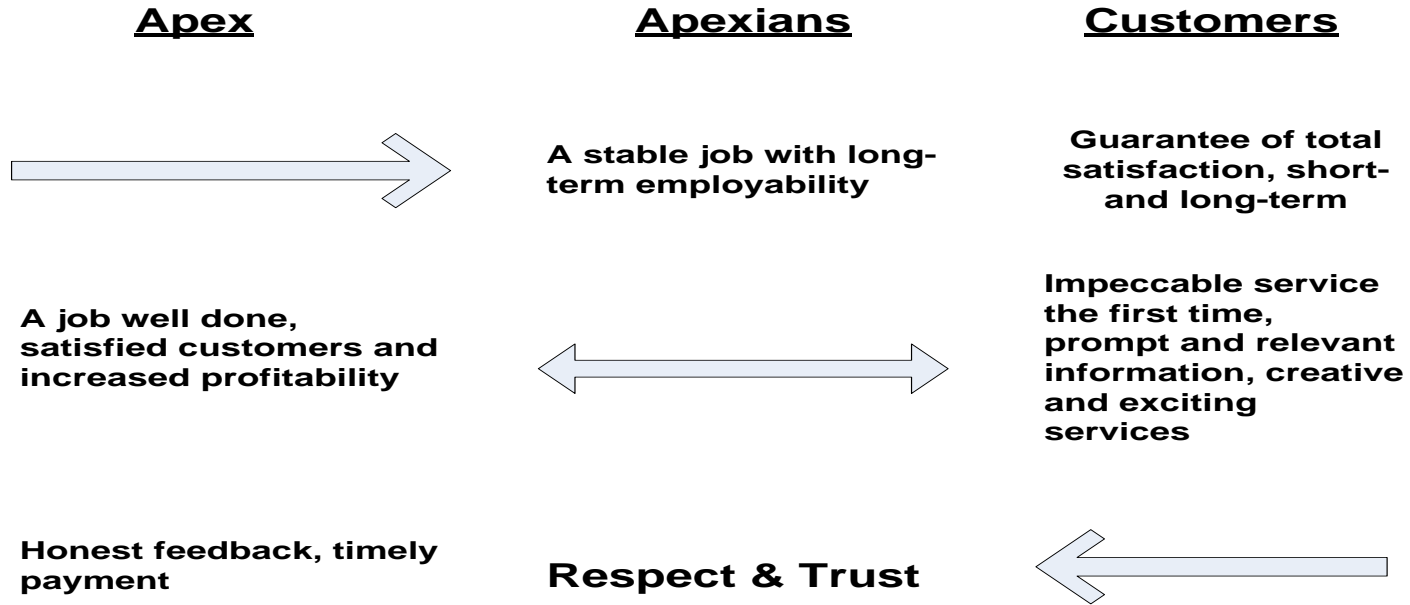
- To be a leading IT services organization domestically and globally
- Our business model is to enable our customers to be successful through our IT services, and Apex gets equitable return from our customers based on the successes of our employees

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- *As a profit oriented business, Apex's business model is to provide IT services to enable our customers to be successful in their business pursuits, and we are paid equitably. We believe that this absolute commitment of our unwavering support begins with our management extending to our own employees.*

*Apex wants to give back to the community because we employ people from the community and we make profits from the community. It is our commitment to help our community be successful.*

# VALUE PROPOSITION



- This is how I see you, Apex, and our customers interacting. With each of us providing the right service and effort, all of us benefit.

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# APEXIANS IN ACTION

- **The Principle of O/Z (One Operation/Zero Defects):** Plan your tasks thoroughly before starting, so that it will be done right the first time
- **The Principle of Responsibility:** An Apexian is responsible for providing effective, thorough, and creative solutions to customers so that they are fully satisfied and are never left hanging
- **The Principle of Excitement:** Always make sure the customer is excited about your performance, so much so that they will actively recommend Apex to others



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*The Principles of O/Z, Responsibility, and Excitement are at the center of Apexian culture. The way I see it, there are three stages to any task – preparation, execution, and follow-up.*

*During the preparation phase, it is an Apexian's responsibility to plan everything, down to the most minute details necessary, so when it's time to execute, it can be done flawlessly. This preparation can be mental or written, casual or formal – the key is the planning, not the method.*

*Of course, during execution, changes may happen and new situations arise which are beyond the scope of planning. That is where the Principle of Responsibility becomes important. A Responsible Apexian will assess the situation, apprise our clients of current events, and devise a creative solution to the problem. We do not tell our customers "It isn't my job" or "It's somebody else's fault" or "I don't have time." Because an Apexian has taken on the job, the buck stops with him or her – our customers are depending on us to finish it on schedule.*

*Finally, after the work is done, ask the customer, sincerely, "Is there anything else I can do for you?" This gives customers the warm fuzzies, and wins us a lot of goodwill, because it shows that we are genuinely interested in making them appreciate our service.*

*These three principles should not be taken lightly – they have been developed over time and experience to help us provide better service and increase customer satisfaction– they have served us very well.*

# APEXIANS ARE A TEAM

- We are Farmers, not Wolves – Each Apexian has his/her individual responsibilities, but we all help each other in times of need
- Apexians' priorities are – his/her well-being, family, community, country, and Apex, in that order



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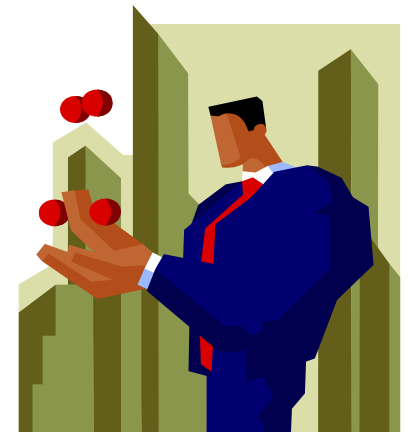
*As with any company, I expect that we all work together as a team. Equally important, though, is how the team works. There are two very successful team models: Farmers and Wolves. Many companies choose to go the Wolf route, where each individual may be extremely talented, and their goal is individual success and survival. As a team, a pack of Wolves can be very efficient and effective hunting for their next meal, but the alpha wolf rules through force, and will be torn to pieces at the slightest sign of weakness. Wolves tend to guard their own backs carefully, lest they be eaten.*

*On the other hand, I'd like Apexians to behave like Farmers. Farmers are a co-operative of individuals, where each one has his or her own responsibility – somebody tills the land, somebody sows seeds, somebody harvests the crops, and somebody guards the fields. Each one is dedicated to the survival of the Farm, and when one of their own needs to go home and take care of emergencies and events, the others pitch in and help out. Each Farmer is looking out to help others.*

*I like the Farmer model, because I believe cooperation is essential to everyone's long term success. In our normal work environment, our first priority is to take care of individual responsibilities. In times of need, though, our priorities shift – you need to take care of yourself first. Without physical and mental health, no one can do an excellent job. Our families, which are really the reason why we work, need your time as well. Beyond that, so does your community and country. That does not mean an Apexian drops his work and leaves when other needs become important, but you need to reach out to your fellow workers for help, because everybody will need support at one time or another.*

# THE INDIVIDUAL APEXIAN

- **Intentionality** – Let your intentions shape your actions and results
- **Authenticity** – Always be truthful. No hidden agendas, please
- **Transparency** – You are always free to share thoughts with one another



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*Apexians should strive to keep these three behaviors central to their day-to-day behaviors:*

*Intentionality – This goes beyond “meaning well” – you make good on your plans, show results.*

*Authenticity – Always tell the truth, and say it straight. No hints, no innuendos, please.*

*Transparency – Share your natural feelings: happiness, anger, fear, and sadness. People around you need to know what’s going on, so time and effort aren’t spent trying to figure you out. We don’t beat around the bush, and neither should you. Of course, this is meant in the most constructive sense – the primary goal of transparency is to make win/win scenarios more likely.*

# REQUEST AND PROMISE – Determining an acceptable course of action

- When a fellow Apexian makes a request of you, it is your duty to come to a mutually acceptable arrangement. When asked, you and other requestees have three options:
- **Yes:** I will have this done by the requested time with the appropriate solution.
- **No:** There are factors that preclude me from fulfilling your request. I will be happy to explain my reasoning and am aware of what the tradeoffs would be.
- **Counteroffer:** I have a different solution or procedure that might accomplish similar results. How do you feel about this?



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*I take commitment very seriously at Apex, but what you do and how you do it is flexible. Part of being an intentional, authentic, and transparent person is clear communication, which is why I believe in a Request and Promise model. Basically, this just means that when one Apexian asks another to do something work-related, they both have the right and responsibility to give (or receive) three possible responses:*

*Yes: I will be able to perform the task that you have requested to your satisfaction.*

*No: I cannot perform the task you have requested, and I will be happy to provide an explanation. I believe my reasoning to be sound, and am aware of the tradeoffs in my decision.*

*Counter Offer: I have a different solution that may achieve the same goal. What are your thoughts?*

*I do not expect this negotiation to end until both parties are satisfied with the others' response, but once the decision has been made, both parties are responsible for their actions. If Yes, then the requestee is expected to finish the task as the requestor expects. If this is not accomplished, the requestee apologizes and renegotiates with the requestor, bearing in mind that there may be some consequences.*

*If the answer is No, then both requestee and requestor are expected to be aware of the potential benefits and consequences and are willing to abide by them.*

*If there are counter-offers, at some point it is expected there will be a Yes or No answer.*

# CONFLICT RESOLUTION FOR APEXIANS

- Any issue has no right or wrong side – only differing emphases or point of view
- If this is a procedural issue, then the process has to be re-engineered
- Look to the Conflict Resolution Model to help find a solution



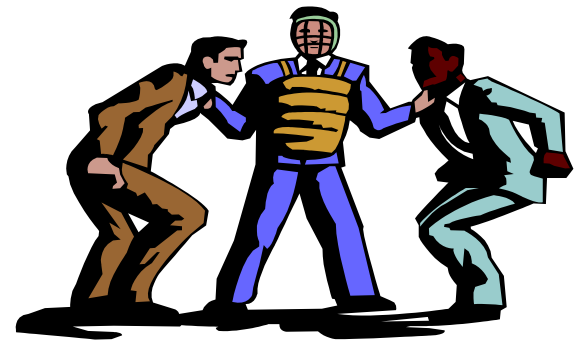
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*Where we're working, we may not agree with each other. Friction, conflicts, and confrontations may happen. However, for the true Apexian, taking ourselves, customers, and Apex into consideration, we should see that there are no right or wrong issues. It could be that we emphasize different areas because of differing responsibilities or points of view. However, we can and will design new processes that can take into account all aspects of the task.*

*One way that might help is the Conflict Resolution Model:*

# CONFLICT RESOLUTION MODEL

- Recognize that all parties are here to do the best for Apex
- Summarize the issues:
  - State your observations
  - Share how it affects you emotionally
  - State your judgment or opinion
  - Ask, “What do you think?”
- Examine all possibilities to resolve the conflict and prevent it from happening again
- Choose the most effective and efficient path
- List out the actions required for the path, and resolve them through the Request/Promise Model



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*First, recognize that everybody here is working for Apex's success. If there are those that disagree with that, then we need to stop and go to the next step immediately.*

*Secondly, we need to work through how these differences are affecting us emotionally and get those feelings out in the open.*

*Thirdly, once we understand where everybody is coming from, then we start to brainstorm for solutions.*

*Fourthly, out of our possible solutions, we pick the one that will provide the best results for all sides involved.*

*Finally, we set up action items and assign them to parties through the Request/Promise Model.*

# CLOSING THOUGHTS

- Read *Good to Great*, by Jim Collins
- Work an honest 40 hours a week, or 2080 hours a year minus vacation, and no more
- Take care of your well being, family, community, spirituality, and country
- Enjoy every moment of your life



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*Good to Great is my Bible for our operation. If you read it, it will help illuminate what we are trying to accomplish in much greater detail.*

*I expect you to work a good 40 hours a week, or 2080 hours a year (minus vacation hours, of course). While you're working, please keep in mind that the goal is to work smarter, not harder. We may work longer hours in the week, but that tells us that we need to find better ways to be more productive. When we still can't finish, only then do we hire more people. But when we add manpower, I don't want to add more people if we're not improving productivity. After all, Apex needs to be profitable to stay in business and you need to have time for yourself, your family, your community, spirit, and country.*

*I want Apex to become the company where good guys win, and everybody's happy. Will this be possible? Maybe, maybe not, but let's have fun doing it.*