

**CULTURE OF CARE CHRONICLES:
TRANSFORM YOUR BUSINESS**

CULTURE OF CARE



PURPOSE

RECIPROCITY

COURAGE

EMPATHY

Culture of Care Chronicles: Transform your Business

In the fast-paced world of business, where competition can sometimes overshadow compassion, it's easy to let business strategy take precedence over culture. As Peter Drucker said, however, "Culture eats strategy for breakfast." At Vigilant we take these words to heart and invest heavily in creating a Culture of Care. It has become a way of life and a key driver of our success. In this whitepaper, we will delve into the profound impact of cultivating a Culture of Care and the pillars that give it life.

Others Before Self: A Guiding Light

Our commitment to cultivating a Culture of Care was born from our core value – "Others Before Self." This value is not a slogan. It is the driving force behind every decision we make. We've been in business a long time, since 1960, and yet have only in the past 10 years consciously articulated and held ourselves accountable to this core value and culture. In doing so we have experienced a transformation that has rippled through every facet of our organization. From hiring and firing decisions to financial performance, member (i.e. customer) retention and staff direction setting – the impact of a Culture of Care is undeniable.

Joy and Reward in the Workplace

For many of us, part of this impact has been greater joy in and reward from our work. Our purpose in cultivating a Culture of Care is to authentically serve others knowing that our attitudes and behaviors are driving contributors to creating such a culture. We strive to put others' success before our own. We maintain our caring values, with "Others Before Self" at the core, even when making difficult personnel and business decisions (*especially* when making difficult personnel and business decisions). The dividends this pays in creating a more effective, productive, and enjoyable organization are immeasurable.

A Deeper Motivation

Vigilant's Culture of Care is not merely a strategic move; it's a heartfelt commitment rooted in something deeper than business. If we're living the Culture of Care correctly, it is impossible to separate our deeper beliefs from the way we behave towards others.



Pillars to Stimulate Thought

In this whitepaper we will unravel the four key pillars that have guided us in cultivating a Culture of Care at Vigilant. We do so with the hope our experience may be helpful to you as you explore and cultivate your own culture. The goal is to encourage thought and discussion, not provide a tactical step-by-step guide. The pillars are:

- Embracing a caring mindset;
- Practicing mindful caring;
- Going beyond the ordinary; and
- Sustaining a Culture of Care in the messy real world.

In a world that often glorifies cutthroat competition and getting ahead at any cost, we stand tall in embracing compassion and care in business to the same degree as sound strategies, high performance standards, and tangible results. We invite you to read on as we explore each pillar leading to a workplace where care is not just a concept but a reality.

Embracing a Caring Mindset: Pillar 1

An overview

Embracing a caring mindset to cultivate a Culture of Care begins with consciously thinking and acting in ways that prioritize others. It means being willing and able to put others first in everything you do. This coupled with humble competence builds a caring culture. It is important to invest in being self-aware, confident, and caring, especially in situations that may make it difficult to maintain caring. Continuously improving your competence, and hence your contribution, is fundamental to cultivating a Culture of Care.

Caring Cultures are Built One Person at A Time

A Culture of Care is built one person and one action at a time. Every interaction either builds or diminishes a Culture of Care. Strive to approach everything from the perspective of “Is this consistent with serving others? Is this consistent with caring values? Did I do the extra for someone that is truly caring?”

Financial Health is Fundamental

Maintaining a financially healthy and strong organization is crucial. Humility-based competence provides a foundation for the confidence needed to be caring. Recognize the connection between caring and job performance. Sometimes tough business decisions must be made for financial stability, even if they impact individuals, to sustain the overall caring culture. When people feel continuously cared for, they will devote incredible time and energy to achieving great business results.

Reciprocity

Trusting your team is the foundation for the confidence needed to be caring. Trust your team to be good at their jobs (as you are good at your job), care for the organization, and make appropriate decisions. Hold them accountable when this does not occur. Caring and confidence are first cousins; it is impossible to demonstrate the courage and vulnerability required for true care without confidence.

Truth, Courage and Accountability

The most caring thing we can do for our people and organization is to tell the truth with love in our heart. To demonstrate genuine care, we must possess the confidence to make bold decisions and demonstrate vulnerability, during good times and bad. Serving the organization means holding yourself and others accountable for less-than-ideal attitudes and behaviors. It is an obligation inherent in serving others and maintaining a healthy, viable business.

In a nutshell, embracing a care mindset includes:

- Investing in self-awareness;
- Recognizing the impact of every action;
- Prioritizing competence – yours and others; and
- Making the hard decisions to serve through financial viability.
- Trusting our teams; and
- Holding all (including ourselves) accountable with courage and confidence.



Embracing a caring mindset is the first pillar of cultivating a Culture of Care. It's about fostering an environment where individuals prioritize others, recognizing the impact of every action. The road to a caring culture is paved with intentional choices.

Practicing Mindful Caring: Pillar 2

An Overview

The foundation of practicing mindful caring to cultivate a Culture of Care lies in consciously and systematically building the knowledge and skills required for a caring existence. It demands an investment in being truly "present" with others, mastering the art of attentive listening and empathy. To be a role model for caring leadership, it's crucial to

understand how we respond to stressors that challenge our caring mindset.

Know and Embrace Your History

At Vigilant, the decision to nurture a Culture of Care was a deliberate response to negative outcomes resulting from its absence. We wanted a better, more positive, and supportive workplace. Our historical commitment to service became the foundation for creating our desired culture of the future. By knowing our history related to caring for and serving others, we were able to build upon it and implement the necessary behavioral changes. If you are inspired to do the same, ask yourself the following questions:

- What experiences and factors in your life promote or diminish caring?
- What values guide your caring instincts, and when is it challenging to uphold them?

Then develop strategies to leverage these caring values, recognizing deviations swiftly, so you can return to practicing mindful caring.

Be Deliberate Regarding Behavior

Practicing a caring mindset requires behaviors that actively support a Culture of Care. Systematically enhance your caring attitudes and skills by consciously serving others—be fully present, listen well, and empathize. Sustaining these skills is more difficult in remote work environments and requires more effort. Regularly evaluate the extent and quality of your caring behavior, devising plans to further enhance it. Self-monitor your progress, personally and collectively, by identifying and acting on opportunities for growth.



Invest in Development/Hire Smart.

Achieving high performance is a dynamic process that requires continuous effort to elevate our skills. Confidence, a natural byproduct of competence, nurtures humility. Seek opportunities to enhance your skills and competencies, enabling you to make a more meaningful contribution to your team, company, and customers. Smart hiring is a crucial competency for creating and sustaining a Culture of Care. Master the art of applying your knowledge, values, and beliefs to screen candidates for caring attitudes and behaviors. Post-hiring, consistently reinforce these values and promptly address any deviations that arise.

Going Beyond the Ordinary: Pillar 3

An Overview

To truly go beyond the ordinary for others, we must first take care of ourselves. It's not selfish; it's self-sustenance. Show yourself the same generosity of spirit you show others. Open the channels for positive and constructive feedback; it's the backbone for growth when offered in a loving, respectful, and genuine way.

Take Care of Yourself to Care for Others

Take care of yourself—physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually—to better serve others. Leading a well-integrated life, both personally and professionally, empowers you to positively serve others. Positiveness becomes a lens through which you view hardships as opportunities for learning and growth. Prioritizing self-care is not at the expense of others but rather the direct opposite. We serve more confidentially and effectively when we are healthy, happy, and strong.

Share and Receive the Gift of Feedback

Overtly support others in their caring endeavors; let them know their efforts are seen and appreciated. Being overtly supportive builds strong interpersonal relationships and reinforces a Culture of Care. Courageously share feedback when you observe non-caring actions, without passing judgment or blame. Be open to feedback regarding your *own* attitudes and behaviors. Have the courage and confidence to admit when you have missed the mark as a testament to your commitment. Going Beyond the Ordinary means actively seeking feedback and responding with grace.

Always Learn and Grow

Admitting you don't have all the answers takes courage. Strive to grow each day, taking steps toward cultivating a Culture of Care that surpasses the ordinary. Recognize that learning often thrives in an environment where individuals with a caring growth mindset inspire and support each other. Recognize and support individual differences and diverse ways of contributing to a caring culture.



Sustaining a Culture of Care in the Messy Real World: Pillar 4

An Overview:

This is where the rubber meets the road in the real, messy world of business. Running a business is no easy feat. It demands mental toughness. It requires the strength to calmly and confidently lead **and** care during the myriad of messy situations that unfold in the real world.

Protect the Culture

In the pursuit of a Culture of Care, we must be willing to make difficult personnel decisions swiftly and with love in our hearts. This may mean:

- Not hiring someone with the exceptional technical skills we desperately need because the person does not exude the values associated with a Culture of Care. Hires that don't align with the culture undermine it and are painful to correct.
- Separating respectfully from someone who is excellent at their job but consistently diminishes the caring culture because we know keeping them will be toxic for the organization.
- Separating from someone who passionately upholds the culture but is unable to successfully meet job requirements. In a caring culture, there is always the duality of cultural alignment and job performance.

Protect Financial Viability

Ensuring the financial health of the organization requires making hard business decisions with appropriate transparency and love. This might mean:

- Closing a business unit that is not contributing sufficiently to financial goals and is unlikely to contribute in the long term. Make every effort to minimize the personal impact but protect the greater good.
- Not hiring additional headcount for a hard-working, stretched-thin team because you don't have the resources to fund the hire.
- Increasing employees' costs for health care benefits because premiums rise above the company's ability to pay and remain healthy.



- Suspending salary increases if the company financials cannot sustain them. Communicate this decision openly, aligning it with a Culture of Care to, again, minimize personal impact while preserving the greater good.

Be Mindful of the Environment

In an era of increasing environmental disruptions, staying grounded in core values is paramount. When faced with these disruptions, stay grounded in your core values and use them as a filter for decision-making. Take a moment to pause, reflect, and breathe before moving forward. Monitor your responses to customers and stakeholders, being a consistent Culture of Care role model in the toughest situations.

Conclusion

In business, culture truly devours strategy for breakfast as Peter Drucker so eloquently put it. The temptation to prioritize competitiveness over compassion, let speed overshadow culture, and glorify cutthroat tactics is ever-present in the relentless pursuit of success. As we conclude our exploration of a Culture of Care, we encourage us all to embrace compassion and care with the same fervor and commitment as we do sound strategies, high-performance standards, and tangible results. A Culture of Care is the secret sauce that transforms businesses from mere entities to thriving, rewarding, productive communities.

