UnleashU

Knowledge is Power. We Share Both.

Owners Manual

v2.0

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For too long IT has been focused on technology, not people. Too focused on working for technology. UnleashU (ULU) wants to change that; we believe technology should work for us.

To get there, ULU embraces a counter-intuitive approach to culture. Some may call us strange and unusual; and that's OK by us. This document is about that culture.

Like all great companies, we strive to hire the best and we value integrity, excellence, respect, commitment to learning, and collaboration. We love grit and determination. And if you have a little chip on your shoulder and something to prove? You'll fit in.

What is special about ULU, though, is how much we:

- encourage employees to "own it" via independent decision-making by employees
- commit to learning & share information openly, broadly, and deliberately
- are extraordinarily candid with each other & provide real-time feedback
- seek to find the right people for our bus and keep them
- own it and unleash potential

Our ultimate goal is unleashing potential. To get there, we need great people working together to Own It. With this approach, we will become a more flexible, fun, stimulating, creative, collaborative, and successful organization.

ULU Values

Below are our organizational values, the specific behaviors and skills we care about most. The more these values sound like you, and describe people you want to work with, the more likely you will thrive at ULU.

Make A Commitment, Keep A Commitment

- You set clear, agreed upon expectations
- You do what you say you were going to do
- You provide updates
- You manage expectations
- You Own your deliverables and your misses

Progress Over Perfection

- You listen well and seek to understand before reacting
- You maintain calm poise in stressful situations to draw out the clearest thinking
- You identify root causes, and get beyond treating symptoms
- You focus on moving forward, not being perfect. You capture progress, learning and context In The Flow rather than waiting for the perfect time.
- You are good at using data to inform your intuition
- You make decisions based on the long term, not near term

ULU Values

Natural Curiosity, Learning & Share The Knowledge Love

- You learn rapidly, eagerly, and willingly. You expect to encounter things you don't know and use the resources around you to learn, apply and share what you discover in the flow of real work.
- You contribute outside of your specialty
- You seek connections that others miss
- You seek to understand our customers, and how we serve them
- You seek alternate perspectives
- You make time to help colleagues
- You keep us nimble by simplifying the complex and making hard work easier work. You notice unnecessary friction and look for opportunities to improve the way the work gets done.
- You commit to creating, using and sharing organizational knowledge. You capture knowledge In The Flow, while the decisions, context, lessons and discoveries are still fresh, so others can benefit from the journey.

Own It & Radical Transparency

- You say what you think, when it's in the best interest of ULU, even if it is uncomfortable
- You make tough decisions without agonizing
- You take smart risks and are open to possible failure
- You question actions inconsistent with our values
- You provide candid, helpful, timely feedback to colleagues that seeks to build them up, not tear them down
- You admit mistakes freely and openly
- You understand the responsibilities of your position and work with curiosity and courage to meet them.
- Own It Doesn't Mean Alone It

ULU Values

Meet People Where They Are

- You care intensely about our success and our Customers' success
- You are tenacious and optimistic
- You are always trying to 'find a way'
- You find ways to coach, guide and help others based on their reality, not yours

Accept, Adapt and Overcome

- You accept reality for what it is
- You adjust your thinking and tactics based on current realities
- You are open-minded in search of great ideas
- You challenge preconceived beliefs and view points in your way
- You re-conceptualize issues to discover solutions to hard problems
- You notice repetitive, manual or unnecessarily difficult work and ask, "Should this be this hard?" rather than accepting friction as a permanent part of the work.
- You refuse to be quick-to-quit

ULU Values

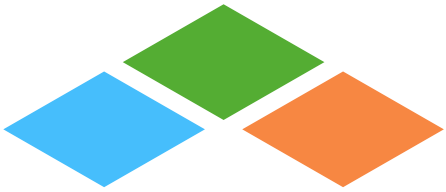
It's easy to write values; it's harder to live them. We want everyone to help each other live the values and hold each other responsible for being the right people on the bus.

We work hard to get people to give each other professional, constructive feedback - up, down and across the organization - on a continual basis. People frequently ask others, "What could I be doing better?" and themselves, "What feedback have I not yet shared?"

We believe we will learn faster and be better if we can make giving and receiving feedback less stressful and a more normal part of work life.

Feedback is a continuous part of how we communicate and work with one another versus an occasional formal exercise. We build trust by being selfless in giving feedback to our colleagues, even if it is uncomfortable to do so. Feedback helps us to avoid sustained misunderstandings. Feedback is more easily exchanged if there is a strong underlying relationship and trust between people. We actively help people learn how to do this at ULU through coaching and modeling the behaviors we want to see in every employee.

This same belief, that an important activity becomes more valuable when it is incorporated into the work rather than separated from it, is foundational to how we think about learning, documentation, innovation and knowledge creation through our In The Flow Framework.



The Right People On The Bus

The Right People On The Bus is about all of your colleagues living our values; and all of your colleagues holding each other accountable to those values. Our version of the great workplace is not big gyms, fancy offices, or frequent parties. Our version of the great workplace is a collective group of people in pursuit of unleashing potential, learning, improving, having fun and being successful.

To have an entire company comprised of "the right people on the bus" (rather than just a few small groups) is challenging. Unquestionably, we have to hire well. We also have to foster commitment to our values.

One might assume that with "The Right People On The Bus" focus, people are afraid of making mistakes. In fact, it's the opposite. We try all kinds of things and make plenty of mistakes as we search for improvement.

Within ULU, collaboration and trust work well because your colleagues are both exceptionally skilled at what they do, and at working well with others. In describing Natural Curiosity, Learning, & Share The Knowledge Love we say "You make time to help colleagues. You share information openly and proactively." We want new colleagues to feel very welcome and get all the support they need to be effective.

On ULU's "Bus", we have a strict "no a-hole policy." The cost to teamwork is just too high. Our view is that brilliant people are also capable of decent human interactions, and we insist upon that. When highly capable people work together in a collaborative context, they inspire each other to be more creative, more productive, and ultimately more successful as a team than they could be as a collection of individuals.

Succeeding on ULU's "Bus" is about making hard work, easier work. Of course, to be great, most of us have to put in considerable effort, but busy and long hours is not how we measure or talk about a person's contribution.

We care about contribution, not the performance of busyness. Making something unnecessarily difficult, manual or time-consuming is not inherently more valuable. Whenever possible, we seek to reduce the time required to contribute while increasing the value created by that contribution.

Autonomy and Responsibility

There are companies where people ignore trash on the floor in the office, leaving it for someone else to pick it up, and there are companies where people in the office lean down to pick up the trash they see, as they would at home. We try hard to be the latter, a company where everyone feels a sense of responsibility to do the right thing to help the company at every juncture.

Picking up the trash is the metaphor for taking care of problems, small and large, and never thinking "that's not my job." We don't have rules about picking up the real or metaphoric trash. We try to create a sense of "Own It" so that this behavior comes naturally. We believe in it so much that we created a value: "Own It."

Our goal is to inspire people more than manage them, empower them to act in our customers' best interest. We trust our teams to do what they think is best for ULU — giving them lots of autonomy and information in support of their decisions. In turn, this generates a sense of responsibility and self-discipline that drives us to do great work that benefits the company.

We believe that people thrive on being trusted, on autonomy, and on being able to make a difference. So we foster autonomy and empowerment wherever we can.

We work to have a company of self-disciplined people who discover and solve problems without being told to do so.

That autonomy also extends to how each of us incorporates learning, documentation, knowledge sharing and continuous improvement into our work. ULU will provide tools, resources and guardrails, but we expect each individual to develop a personal flow that allows these activities to happen as part of the work rather than waiting for someone else to prescribe every step.

There are a few important exceptions to our Own It philosophy. We are strict about ethical issues and safety issues. Harassment of employees or customers are zero tolerance issues, for example. Some information such as keeping our customers' technology information safe, have strict controls around access.

Some processes are about making hard work, easier work - rather than error avoidance, and we like processes that help us get more done. One such process we do well is effective scheduled meetings. We have a regular cadence of many types of meetings; we strive to start and end on time and have well-prepared agendas. We use these meetings to learn from each other and get more done, rather than to prevent errors or approve decisions.

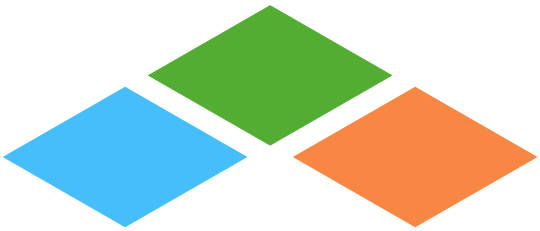
Coaching not Control

We want employees to be great independent decision makers, and to only consult their manager when they are unsure of the right decision. The leader's job at every level is to set clear boundaries and provide insights so that others have the right information to make generally great decisions.

We strive to develop good decision-making muscles everywhere in our company. We pride ourselves on how few, not how many, decisions senior management makes.

We don't want hands-off management, though. Each leader's role is to coach, set boundaries, provide insights and to be informed of what is happening. But unlike the micro-manager, the goal of knowing those details is not to change certain small decisions, but to learn how to adjust coaching so more decisions are made well.

There are some minor exceptions to "coaching not control," such as an urgent situation in which there is no time to think about proper guardrails and principles, or when a new team member hasn't yet absorbed enough training to be confident, or when it's recognized that the wrong person is in a decision-making role.



How We Work — In The Flow

Our values describe how we expect people to show up. Our In The Flow Framework describes how we believe great work gets done.

Too often, organizations separate valuable activities from the work itself. Employees do the work and then document it. They leave the work to attend training so they can learn how to do the work. They encounter friction and wait for a future meeting, initiative or hackathon to improve it. They discover something useful and then add "create content about that" to a growing list of things to do later.

We believe this creates a second job around the first job.

Instead, we seek to **Learn In The Flow. Document In The Flow. Innovate In The Flow.**

This does not mean adding more responsibilities to everyone's workload. It means designing our personal work so that learning, documentation, improvement and knowledge creation increasingly become outputs of the work we are already doing.

When we encounter something we don't know, we learn the thing while doing the thing. When decisions and lessons matter, we capture them while the context is fresh. When we encounter repetitive or unnecessary friction, we ask whether the work should be this hard and look for ways to improve it. When our work creates knowledge that can help someone else, we seek ways to leave that knowledge behind.

Document the Why, Not Just the What

Documentation is more than recording an answer or listing the steps we took. Its value is in preserving the context that helps someone else understand why the answer makes sense, when it applies, and how to adapt it. When a decision or discovery matters, capture the reasoning, assumptions, constraints, and lessons behind it—not just the final result. Anyone can write "1 + 1 = 2"; useful documentation helps the next person understand why, and use that understanding to move forward. That's how we make knowledge reusable instead of making someone retrace the whole journey.

ULU does not dictate exactly WHAT your personal flow must look like. Different people, roles and problems will require different tools and approaches. We do, however, expect each person to intentionally develop a way of working that supports these behaviors.

The goal is simple: **Work Once. Create More Value.**

High Speed – Low Drag

As companies grow, they often become highly centralized, inflexible, and slow.

Symptoms include:

- Senior management is involved in many small decisions
- There are numerous cross-departmental buy-in meetings to socialize tactics
- Pleasing other internal groups takes precedence over pleasing customers
- The organization is highly coordinated and less prone to error, but slow and frustrating

We avoid this by being high speed – low drag. We spend lots of time debating strategy together, and then trust each other to execute on tactics without prior approvals.

The success of a "High Speed – Low Drag" work environment is dependent upon the collaborative efforts of high performance individuals and effective context.

High Speed – Low Drag also applies to how we design our individual work. We seek to reduce unnecessary swivel, handoffs, duplication and after-the-fact activities by learning, documenting, creating and improving in the flow of work.

The goal is not simply to move faster. It is to reduce contribution time while increasing contribution. If a recurring task takes significant effort, we do not celebrate the effort simply because it was difficult. We ask how the process can be improved, captured and made easier for the next person, or the next time.

Ultimately, the end goal is to grow the business for bigger impact while increasing flexibility and agility. We seek to be High Speed – Low Drag.

Unleashing Potential

We do not seek to preserve our culture — we seek to improve it. Every person who joins us helps to shape and evolve the culture further. We find new ways to Unleash our Potential. Every few years we can feel a real difference in how much more effectively we are operating than in the past. We are learning faster than ever because we have more dedicated people with diverse perspectives trying to find better ways for our talented team to work together more cohesively, nimbly and effectively.

In The Flow helps that improvement compound. When learning, knowledge, documentation and innovation are created as part of doing the work, one person's experience can become organizational capability. The work does not only produce an immediate outcome; whenever possible, it leaves ULU better equipped for the next piece of work.

Summary

As we wrote in the beginning, what is special about ULU is how much we:

- encourage independent decision-making by employees
- commit to learning & share information openly, broadly, and deliberately
- are extraordinarily candid with each other & provide real-time feedback
- seek to find the right people for our bus and keep them
- own it and unleash potential

In The Flow is one of the ways we put those beliefs into practice. We Own the work, learn through it, capture what matters, improve what creates friction and share what we discover so the contribution extends beyond the individual task.

Finally

The path to 'owning it' and unleashing potential rests in this final quote:

Simplify the complex in order to redefine what's possible.