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GO FROM GOOD TO GREAT

Transform both your business and your life with these **nine simple guidelines** on commitment.

By: [DOUG CAIN]



I can recite many reasons we have been so successful at Lake Truck Lines and Lake Oilfield Services. The predominant reason that stands out has been an unwavering commitment to all that we are and all that we do. I

started thinking about what commitment means to me and to us and as a corporation, and how it allows to us to stand alone at Lake when others may waffle in their goals. Everything I hear and see around

me here at the office, from the phones ringing, the chattering and the soft laughter from my staff outside my door to the accolades that line my wall and the equipment in the truck yard – these are just a few things that exist today because of a commitment. Here are a few of my guidelines on commitment and how a simple declaration has transformed my life and our business. It is what I personally subscribe to and try to reach out and share with others.

First and foremost: commitment to your company, your values and those things that make you unique. We live by our company values daily in how we prove our honor and integrity each day through every relationship we enter into. I have found that some-

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times, the things that cost the most on Monday are honor and integrity, and it takes until Friday to find out they pay the highest dividends. Sometimes when it seems our odds have increased, we must try harder and run faster. I assure you the reward of perseverance will pay off.

Second: commitment to the vision. You have to know where you are going and then be honest enough with yourself to know where you stand now. We are completely reorganizing the Lake corporation with the help of Peter Braeuler and Renaissance Executive Forums/Gazelles. They are having us use “Mastering the Rockefeller Habits” as one of the tools.

One of the things it taught me is that you must have your 20-year goals and then live your business life 90 days at a time. Sometimes it takes courage

to have the raw honesty to define where you are. I know where we are headed at Lake, and I have an honest grip on where we are now.

Third: commitment to the next goal. You have to define your steps. I always ask my managers, “What is your next step?” I am surprised to find out that many times, they are unsure, but after a few minutes of discussion, they determine that the next step is as simple as a phone call or a letter. You always have to know what your next step is – otherwise, the overall goal can be too daunting.

Fourth: commitment to the daily schedule. We do something at Lake called the Top Five and the Top One of Five. We do this every day, and we never start on the second project until the Top One of Five is complete. At times, my top one is based upon expediency, and sometimes I put it at the top because it is the least favorite thing I have to do.

Procrastination is a productivity killer, and I will not allow it to creep into this environment. One day turns into three, two days into a week, a week into a month ... you get the idea. Each day has the potential to be a “start” date for a new project. Many people say I get more done in a day than most get done in a month. Most of my success is due to this simple technique.

Fifth: commitment to the plan – Keep It Simple, Stupid (KISS). Success in a plan is not determined by number of pages of verbiage or cool-looking graphs. It is about the ability to implement each step of the plan completely and on schedule. Keep it simple, folks. Success is defined by accomplishments – not intentions.

Sixth: commitment to your clients. Each day, we treat our clients not as people we work for, but as partners whose interests we look after. Viewing them in this manner allows us to view each relationship in a long-term manner instead of just “how we make a nickel off of them.” That’s why we have Fortune 200 clients who have been with us for decades. As a corporation, we are looking at how we can make them successful each and every day.

Seventh: commitment to our team. Each associate here is not only valuable, but vital. I am not the smartest guy in the room, but I make sure everyone here thinks that about themselves every day. We would not be having 300 percent growth without the smartest, most dedicated people in the business. I will stack the team of Lake Truck Lines up against the largest competitors we have any day. My thanks to my staff because they make me look good every day I sit in this chair.

Eighth: commitment to the future. As a corporation, we live our lives in these 90-day compartments, but we must look to our vision every day. Long before we hit it big with success at Lake, I talked about being successful and visualized what it would be like to reach my goals. I constantly strive toward that true north.

Ninth: commit to commitment. This is what makes us, as a corporation, strive to go from good to great. Nothing here is done halfway – it’s done full out. From answering the phone (always on the first ring), to making a sales call, to taking out the trash, we at Lake show a commitment to our commitment by striving for excellence in all that we do.

We have a number of “Cainisms” here at the cooperation that I use. “It may not be your fault, but it is your responsibility.” This is one of my favorite sayings, and I live by that credo each and every day. It reminds us that each person here is responsible, and we truly interact as a team. Commitment to being the very best is shown in another favorite of mine: “Good is always the enemy of great” (thanks to Jess Stephens).

This list took 30 years to compile. It is not complete yet, but it is a model of “Cain’s Commitment Truths,” and it is something we, as a team at Lake, strive for each and every day. The fact of the matter is: Keeping it simple and doing it consistently will make you successful, no matter what you commit to.

Until next time ...

For more information, contact Doug Cain at douglascaïn@laketrucklines.com or 210-626-1329.