On Ninety

WHO WE ARE AND WHY WE'RE HERE

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Welcome!

We're thrilled you want to learn more about Ninety.

We deeply believe each and every one of us is a unique being with a unique set of skills, experiences, interests, goals, and dreams. While we believe there's someone for almost everyone, we know we're not a great fit for everyone, and not everyone is a great fit for us. Consequently, we invest a lot of energy in making sure we're a great fit for you and you for us.

What you're reading will introduce you to our "tribe" (much more to follow on that) and our philosophy for running a great company.

We created this guide to help you better understand us and why we do the things we do. We'll also share with you a few of the concepts, tools, and disciplines we believe can help you assess us, your own company, and any prospective partners.

We hope you find this guide valuable, and we look forward to having a conversation.

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According to many scientists, if we could hop in a time machine and go back 100,000 years ago, we'd arrive at a moment in history when, in addition to *Homo sapiens*, there were several other human-like species, each with long histories and developed cultures. These were collectively referred to as hominins.

Get back in our time machine and travel forward to about 10,000 years ago (3,000 years after the end of the Ice Age), and we'd find that *H. sapiens* are the only human species remaining. What happened during those 90,000 years is debatable, but there's evidence that H. sapiens prevailed because they — we — were the humans with the most socially evolved brains.[1]

More to follow on how this unfolded, but first...

MASLOW'S HIERARCHY OF NEEDS

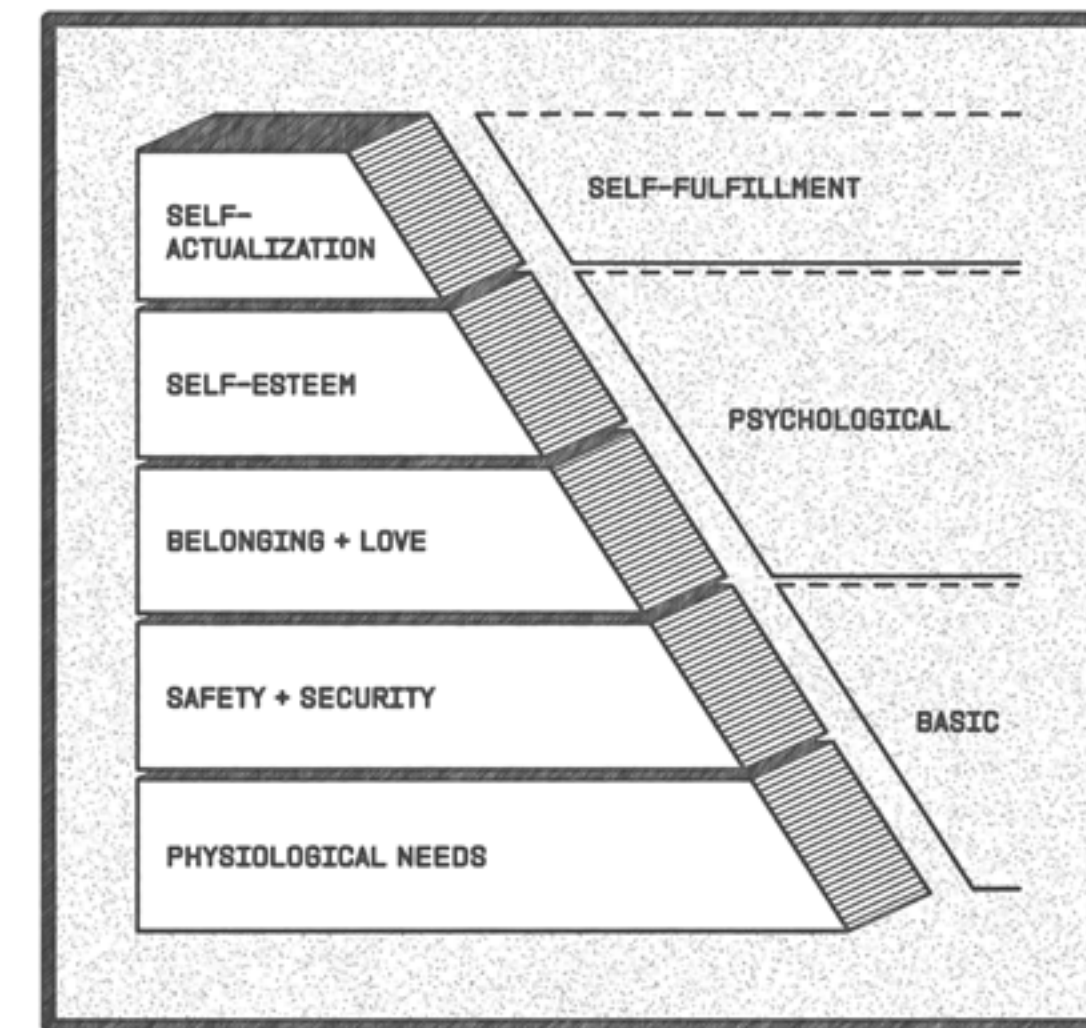Every living thing has needs. Truth is, some needs are apparent, and some aren't.

Some of these needs are must-haves like food, water, and sleep. Some are associated only with more complex creatures — for example, mammals have more needs than plants. And while it's great to have some needs met, not all are strictly necessary (self-actualization, for instance).

The good news is that Abraham Maslow, an American psychologist, created a simple model to help us understand the order of our needs and motivations. Called Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, it's often pictured as a pyramid.

At the crux of Maslow's model is the notion that the bottom of the pyramid contains our most basic needs, and that our needs move from "must have" to "need" to "like to have" to "I've got all I need but I want to be more" as we move higher up the pyramid.

While Maslow originally believed each level must be satiated before one could move to the next level, he later came to believe that the human brain is a complex system running a whole host of parallel processes at the same time. He also believed that the human condition is made up of an array of different motivations, often competing or conflicting, emanating from various levels of the hierarchy.

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Each of us has to take responsibility for seeing that our basic, foundational needs are being met. It's simply impossible for us, or any of our colleagues, to become self-actualized beings if we don't take personal responsibility for meeting not only our current needs, but also our future basic needs.

Reaching the highest level, self-actualization — the ability to become all we imagine we're capable of becoming — is maybe best captured by this quote from our founder: "Be a better and better version of the best version of ourselves."

In essence, Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs provides an exceptional tool for helping us prioritize the development of our well-being.

So… what does Maslow's Hierarchy have to do with our company? Glad you asked.

HUMANS ARE SOCIAL CREATURES

As you may recall, about 10,000 years ago, our species was the only remaining member of Hominini on the planet, largely due to our evolved social brains.

So, what is it about the *H. sapiens* brain that makes us more social? And why is Ninety even writing about evolution? Well, think about what life was like 50,000 years ago or even 3,000 years ago…

Here we are, pretty much naked, and we need to figure out whether or not to trust someone. We consider that they could very well kill us or, on the other hand, they could help us acquire food or protect our family. They could help us build a structure to protect us from the elements and store our food. Maybe they can even teach us something or tackle tasks we'd rather not — or can't — do. Heck, they might even make us laugh.

AH, TRUST…

So how did we come to trust other humans?

While there are many things that differentiate our brains from other animals, current research reveals that when it comes to trust, one of the key factors is a neurotransmitter called oxytocin.[2] Oxytocin is sometimes referred to as the "cuddle hormone" or the "love hormone." Among other things, oxytocin helps us assess whether we should run from another human being or trust and interact with them.

While there are several theories, it appears that initially, the *H. sapiens*' socially evolved brains helped these particular hominins team up to procure food and defend themselves, satisfying the first two levels of Maslow's Hierarchy: the physiological need for food, water, and sleep and the need for safety.

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TRIBES

Over time, our socially evolving ancestors began to see the power of trust. More specifically, they learned that if they didn't trust first regarding character, there was no way they could divide and conquer by taking advantage of their individual talents.

Dividing and conquering made being with others more valuable (satisfying the third-level "love and belonging" need) and also helped early humans become more self-aware as they understood their individual talents compared to those of their fellow tribe members. This helped them develop their fourth-level need, which is self-esteem: they not only belonged, but also felt they were contributing to the well-being of their tribe.

In short, they mattered.

WHAT CAME FIRST: WORDS OR EMOTIONS?

At some point, likely more than 100,000 years ago, our ancestors started to develop a few more powerful capabilities. The first was an increasing array of emotions. Then came words, the tools that helped them label things and create more sophisticated ways of understanding themselves and life.

In terms of emotions, it's likely that our earliest were those that helped us with basic survival, like fear and love. In time, as belonging became more and more important, those emotions became more nuanced. Think: shame in contrast to guilt.

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Once our emotions became more and more sophisticated, we started to develop words that helped us better understand and communicate what we were feeling. Then the words themselves put us on the path toward becoming beings who need to self-actualize.

PURPOSE

Fast-forward a bit more, and we see our oxytocin-enhanced forebears and their tribes start to develop a sense of purpose that drove individuals and bound tribes more tightly together. Sometimes this purpose was simply to make life better for themselves so they could better defend their way of life. Other times, it was to pursue glory or some greater sense of being.

HIERARCHIES OF COMPETENCE

In time, humans pursued purpose and developed more complex ways of thinking about and understanding life. They began to excel beyond just dividing and conquering based on an array of competencies like talent, skills, experiences, and energy. They could now envision greater futures.

They began delegating and elevating, getting others to help so they could focus on bigger and better opportunities, and they formed **hierarchies of competencies**, such as organizational building, planning, and leadership skills. These were the kinds of competencies that made life safer and richer for not only today, but also tomorrow and beyond.

These hierarchies of competencies enabled humans to build larger and larger tribes for a host of purposes, including security and enhancing their ability to create things that made life better. Often, such things required larger groups of people; building the Great Pyramids is a prime example.

VALUES

In order to keep things civil as they built larger tribes, humans began to create **values** that codified acceptable and unacceptable behaviors. These values were often codified in the form of what we consider religious teachings and principles, which appear to date back at least 5,000 years ago. Values made it easier for humans to work together and, as the size of the tribes grew, to hold them together.

LAWS AND RIGHTS

At some point many thousands of years ago, we started to enact **laws** and regulations that decreed certain values were so important, there would be a penalty associated with their violation.

This culminated in a focus on **rights**. The founders of the United States believed humans had certain inalienable rights. While they found these to be "self-evident," they created the Bill of Rights to enumerate the constitutional rights of U.S. citizens.

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We believe that a human's inalienable rights include the right to:

- Breathe (Maslow Level 1, or "ML 1")

- Eat (ML 1)

- Sleep (ML 1)

- Move (ML 1–2)

- Think (ML 1–5)

- Talk (ML 3–5)

- Associate (ML 3–5)

- Create, including procreate (ML 2–5)

- Learn (ML 4–5)

- Own the things we create or trade them for things owned by others (ML 4–5)

- Defend our rights (ML 1–5)

Ultimately, it's only through having these rights that we're truly able to thrive and flourish as human beings.

RIGHTS VS. NEEDS

We believe that needs are not rights. When born, we're totally incapable of meeting our individual needs. That said, for a host of reasons (not the least of which is each of us is extraordinarily unique), it's impossible for a human to self-actualize without becoming someone who takes ownership for his or her needs. Otherwise, it'll be impossible to achieve self-esteem, let alone self-actualization because we'd be dependent on someone else, such as an individual or a group.

We deeply appreciate that not every person is able to take care of their needs. This is where the tribe and its values come into play. We believe healthy tribes endeavor to take care of those members who have either temporarily fallen on hard times or are not able to care for themselves.

We further believe that healthy beings and tribes need to be led by people with the ability to think longer-term so the tribes and their peoples are adequately prepared for hard times.

Said another way, we believe Maslow's Hierarchy doesn't just apply to individuals; it also applies to tribes.

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So, from an organizational point of view, what makes for a great modern tribe?

In our opinion, great tribes are comprised of people who have:

- Shared but complementary interests (what we like to do and learn about)

- Shared purpose (how we make life better)

- Shared Vision of the future (where we want to be in ten years)

- Shared Core Values (our beliefs, behaviors, and norms)

- Complementary talents (what we bring to the table)

- Shared goals (what we want to accomplish over the next three years and one year — as a company, as teams, as individuals, and as partners)

- Shared priorities (what we need to get done over the next 90 days, the next week, and the next day)

- A Business Operating System for turning a Vision into reality

- Healthy culture (a place where people genuinely trust one another)

- A system for helping people learn about themselves and grow as individuals and team members

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One of the great things about humans is we're super curious creatures who not only love learning, but also love teaching. Consequently, we've collectively had thousands of people studying all sorts of things for thousands of years.

Among the things studied? What it takes to build a great company.

There are countless definitions of what a great company is. For us, a great company is a business that is built for the long run, something we call a **highly sustainable company**. Getting there is hard work, but the right tools makes it much easier and, most importantly, attainable.

This is where the right Business Operating System (BOS) makes all the difference. A universally applied BOS represents everything from an organization's structure to how its projects are managed and its people are led.

From their start, most organizations use some kind of operating system to manage daily operations, budgeting, orders, payroll, and more. These early systems, however, are typically haphazardly assembled, limited in scope, and lack sufficient integration capabilities.

Once organizations realize this approach won't suffice, they can move away from the accidental system they initially created. As they scale, their BOS parallels that ascension, becoming more intentional. Eventually, a fully integrated BOS becomes the foundation for those highly sustainable companies that are built to endure.
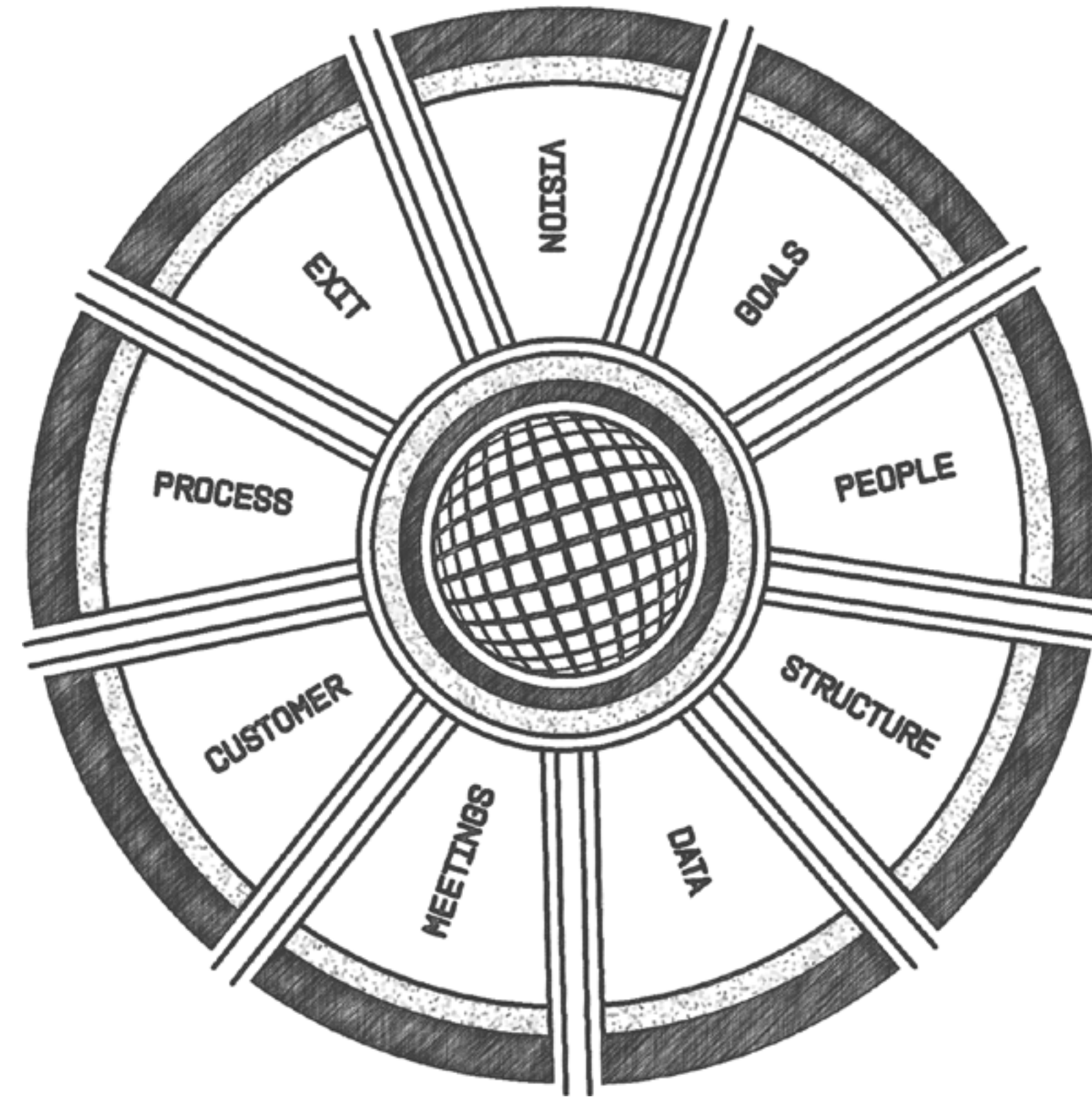
Implementing a new Business Operating System may seem daunting, but it's a wise investment of time and resources to ensure long-term growth and sustainability.

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OUR BUSINESS OPERATING SYSTEM

Since our founding in 2016, Ninety has helped businesses align and focus so they can thrive. Our cloud-based platform powers multiple BOSs to allow in-person, remote, and hybrid teams to work smarter and more effectively — together.

Launched in 2023, 90os is our own Business Operating System that integrates seamlessly into the Ninety platform and helps companies focus, align, and thrive through mastery of the 9 Core Competencies: Vision, Customer, Goals, People, Structure, Data, Meetings, Process, and Exit.

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About Niche

Let's agree that it's much easier for us to work on things that are interesting to us than on things that are not. Even better, then, is when we turn these interests into passions. Better still is when we're not only passionate about something, but also really, really, good at doing it.

Companies are just like people — after all, they're a collection of people bound together by things like interests, values, goals, and a shared purpose.

When we talk about interests, we're usually referring to a meta-concept. For a company, interests include more than the product or service we sell — our "niche" — but also one of the skill sets (such as marketing) associated with successfully, and hopefully repeatedly, delivering this product or service to the world.

Many businesses start off with a clearly defined niche, but they often become lost when the market changes. We strongly prefer companies who serve a particular market, or an Ideal Customer, with a product or service that can evolve as the market evolves. Life was very tough for buggy whip manufacturers at the turn of the 20th century after the widespread adoption of cars over carriages; we'd rather not be an example of a modern day buggy whip manufacturer.

OUR NICHE

The core idea behind Ninety can be summarized with a simple analogy: If you were a skilled carpenter, would your time be well spent designing and building your own carpentry tools to complete a job?

Of course not.

But believe it or not, every Senior Leadership Team we've ever met as coaches — literally, thousands of teams — has manufactured their own Business Operating System (BOS) and, worse, is trying to survive with an incomplete tool kit. This is an issue — and an opportunity, especially in the age of information.

Our niche is well-defined: **we're a learning, support, and technology platform that simplifies the hard work of focusing and aligning teams so they can thrive.**

Our mission is to be the world's leading provider of cloud-based whole-company building tools.

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Research reveals that people who seek meaning beyond themselves are healthier, happier, and live longer.[3] The same goes for companies.

A company's established reason for being — our "Why" — helps:

- Articulate why our company exists and how it makes life better

- Give meaning to our work

- Appeal to both our hearts and minds

- Provide clarity regarding why we do the things we do

- Keep us focused on both the greater good and the longer term

OUR PURPOSE

We have a very clear Compelling Why, or in other words, our purpose, passion, and just cause. Our passion is helping people build great organizations. And our just cause is to help them focus, align, and thrive. We believe it's a cause worth embracing. And we're very passionate about what we do.

We're committed to this purpose because we believe it's impossible to fully serve companies without fully serving individuals.

We believe one of the most important things humans do is Work. Work not only provides humans with income, but it also can — and should — provide us with a sense of purpose, a certain confidence that we're making life better. This helps us occupy our minds in a healthy and productive way while hopefully enjoying fulfilling relationships with other team members.

Ninety helps leaders create great places to Work. Consequently, we believe that our platform has the ability to ultimately help millions of people.

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"If you don't know where you're going, you'll end up someplace else." – Yogi Berra

To paraphrase Yogi Berra, if a leadership team doesn't have a clear and compelling Vision of where it wants to take the company, how will it ever know what's needed to get there? More pointedly, if an owner doesn't have a compelling long-term Vision, it's probably time to sell.
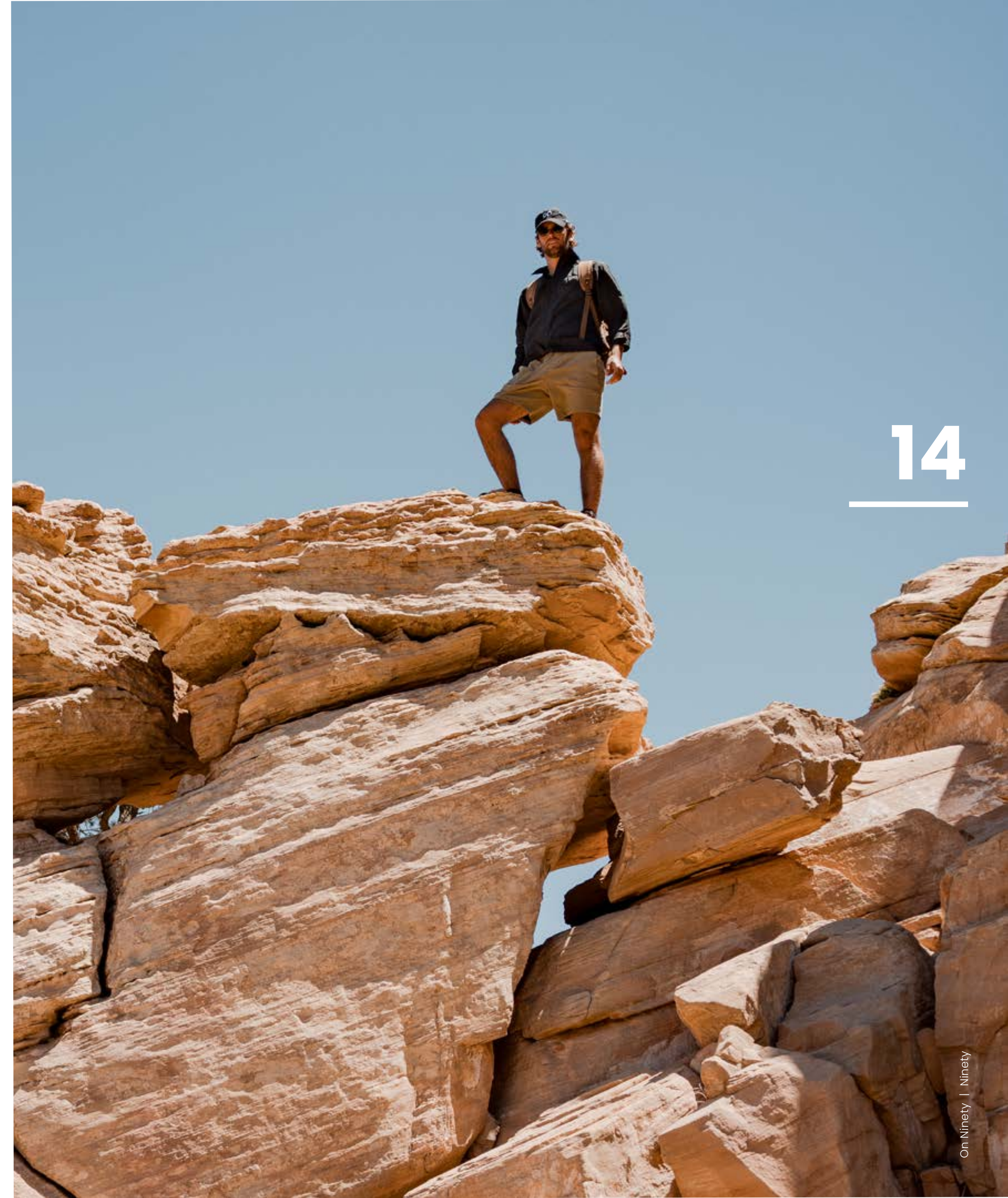
Talented and ambitious people are not only purpose-driven, but also goal-driven. They want to be able to point to something significant they've accomplished. They want to see a future that's much bigger than today, a future that matches up well with their own needs for growth.

OUR VISION

Our Vision hinges on the cornerstone of our philosophy: everything centers on trust.

We teach that great companies have high-trust relationships with all their Ideal Stakeholders, and our Compelling and Audacious Goal (CAG) reflects this ethos. It's a rallying cry for our entire organization, and it will take everyone's sustained efforts to achieve it. Bold but attainable, it's simply this:

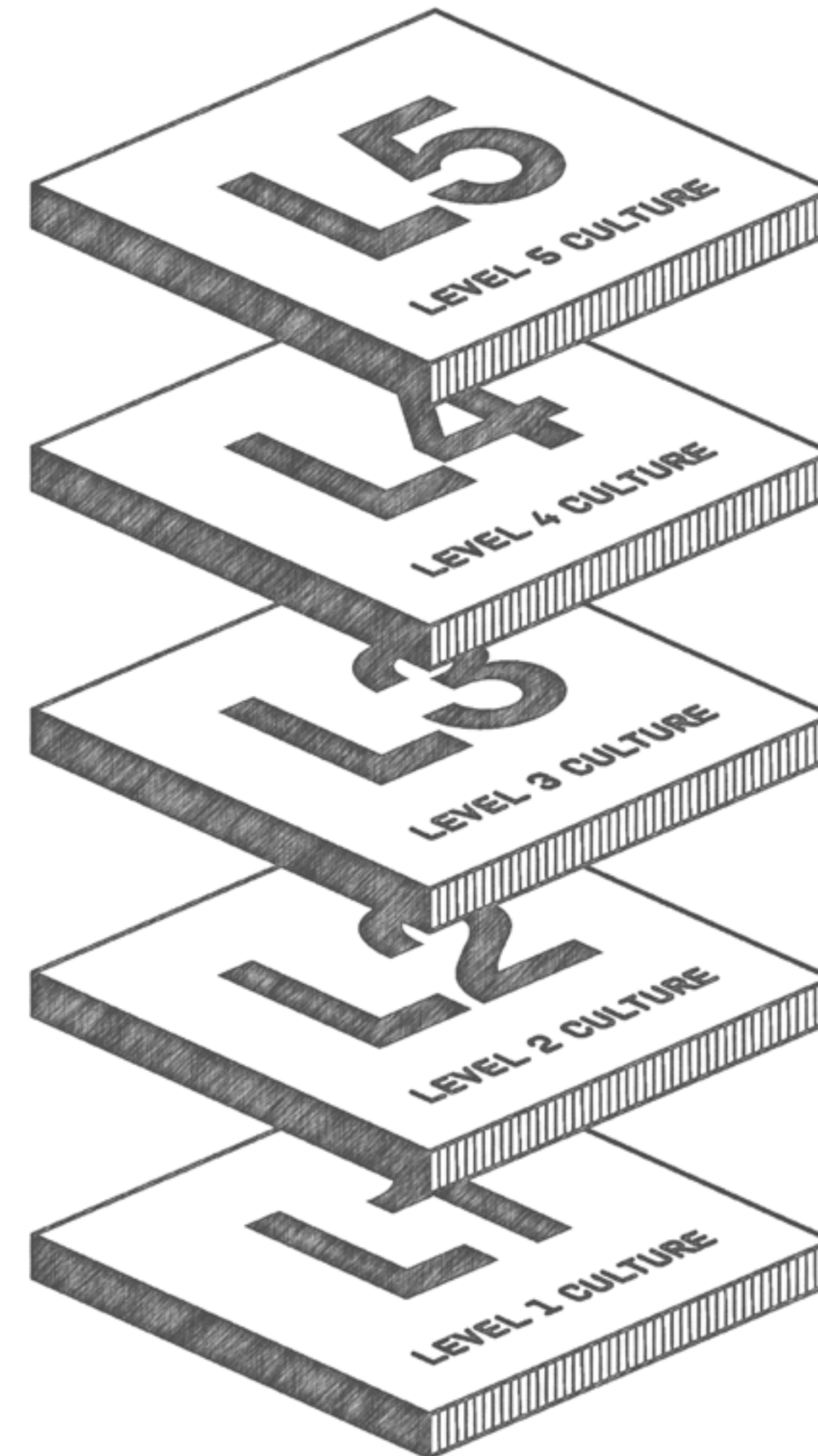**We aim to be one of the most trusted brands in the world.**

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Companies are like people: they have personalities, strengths and weaknesses, good days and bad days. They have people that love and trust them, and they invariably have people who aren't particularly fond of them. (Hopefully, that's just their competitors.)

Organizations that establish Core Values (more on this later) are one step closer to becoming what we call a High-Trust Company (HTC). HTCs have cultures where people feel like they belong, they contribute meaningfully, and they're appreciated. Team members are fully committed because they love why the company exists and where the leaders want to take it.

In our opinion, HTCs have what we call Level 4 or Level 5 cultures, an idea we adapted from the "Five Stages of Culture" model presented in *Tribal Leadership* by Dave Logan, John King, and Halee Fisher-Wright.[4]

The top three things we find useful about this model:

1. It's highly likely the levels of focus, alignment, and trust all increase as we move from one level to the next.

2. Our ability to attract and retain great people is based on the health of our company's culture. This is a very simple measure for assessing the strength of our overall culture.

3. The framework works well for assessing any type of relationship, such as between you and your employer, you and your colleagues, or even your company and its clients. (And yes, even your family and friends.)

OUR CULTURE

Our company focuses on excelling at the factors Paul Zak writes about in his book *Trust Factor: The Science of Creating High-Performance Companies.*

Agreements — We embrace an agreements-based culture. <u>We don't do expectations</u>. We believe one of the core components of a healthy relationship is to make sure we're all on the same page in terms of what we call Focus Filters. These include our Core Values, our Compelling Why, our Compelling Value Proposition, our industry and niche, our goals, and our Ideal Customers.

Investing — We're committed to helping our team members become better and better versions of the best versions of themselves. We also believe we can't help people get what they don't want. Every quarter, we have Quarterly Discussions — feedforward-based, two-way sessions where we talk about how things are going and where our team members see themselves in a year and three years. We then own helping them develop the skills and experiences they need to get what they want.

Authenticity — We're a tribe, not robots. We believe every person is extraordinarily unique, and we embrace individuality and authenticity.

Open — We believe in being as open as possible with our team members. Every quarter, we hold a company-wide <u>State of the Company</u> meeting and share how we're doing regarding our 3-Year Goals, 1-Year Goals, and Rocks. We also make sure we use this forum to celebrate the great things we've accomplished at the company, department, team, and individual levels.

Caring — First, we strongly believe that, in the words of Teddy Roosevelt, "Nobody cares how much you know until they know how much you care." That's one of the reasons we focus on finding the <u>Right People</u> — those who, among other things, exemplify our Core Values. We deeply care about every team member, and we're committed to helping them flourish, hopefully as a member of our tribe — but also when it means helping them find another tribe that better serves their skills, aspirations, and values. That's how much we care.

Appreciation — One of the reasons we're so committed to quarterly State of the Company meetings is we get how important it is to be seen and appreciated, and we know we probably never have enough time to do this justice. That said, we genuinely try to show appreciation at every turn.

Yield — An agreements-based culture makes it crystal clear what's needed for us to be able to "let go of the vine." No one likes to be micromanaged. Consequently, we're all about making sure it's clear what core competencies are needed to succeed in a Seat and that we're appropriately helping our colleagues attain those required competencies so we can confidently let people get things done how they see fit.

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We believe trust is at the heart of a great culture.

Whether we have 10, 100, or 1,000 people working in our business, it's crucial the RARs of each Seat are crystal clear. When that's in place, everyone knows their exact role(s) and those of everyone else.

A great Org Chart is essential if we want a culture of accountability. The Org Chart, coupled with a thoughtful, documented, and shared Vision, clarifies who's responsible for what and simplifies the process of projecting our human resource needs as we grow.

Three Disciplines Inherent in a Great Org Chart:

1. **One person is responsible for each Core Function.** When more than one person is responsible, no one is responsible. However, that doesn't mean one person does all the work. A thoughtful Org Chart helps identify which RARs need to be delegated to others.

2. **Think roles, accountabilities, and responsibilities, not titles.** Which RARs are needed to turn the next phase of the Vision into reality? Get specific. Is a project manager necessary? Pinpointing the type of work each Seat will be responsible for develops a better feel for the required Competency, Commitment, and Capacity needed.

3. **Structure first, people second.** Don't build your Org Chart based on your people or, even worse, titles. People are allocated to the Seats later, when we genuinely understand the RARs and can determine the skills and experience needed to succeed.

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OUR STRUCTURE

At many businesses, Org Charts resemble pyramids, with one person at the top and wider and wider tiers below them. At Ninety, we're huge believers in working toward a SuperFlat organizational structure.

In the SuperFlat methodology, those tiers are less rigid and have fewer hierarchies, resulting in a very flat chart layout. Team members are less locked into Seats and more motivated to grow professionally. As they become ready to take on new commitments, the business structure evolves to enable them to do so.

The SuperFlat approach takes into consideration these big ideas:

1. Every Seat has a number of roles, accountabilities, and responsibilities.

2. A competent subject matter expert should occupy every Seat.

3. Leaders are competent, committed, and capable.

4. People want to be coached, not micro-managed.

At Ninety, we're huge believers in keeping our organization as flat as possible, so instead of adding more layers, we prefer to get more granular regarding our breadth of subject matter experts. This makes it easy for us to avoid the need to hire middle managers, create superficial layers, and worry about titles. At Ninety, everyone genuinely matters and is engaged in work that genuinely matters but moves us forward.

We teach that each of us have seven types of relationships, and that our well-being is significantly dependent on the health of our relationship with each type.

The Seven Types of Human Relationships (7R) are:

1. **Others** — Our one-on-one relationships

2. **Tribes** — Groups we belong to, including our employer

3. **Self** — To state the obvious

4. **Things** — The physical stuff we love to acquire, own, use, etc.

5. **Concepts** — That is, ideas

6. **Universe** — It holds us all together and includes the spiritual

7. **Time** — Interesting to explore, but best saved for another time

The gist of the 7R framework is that the vast majority of us need to have a healthy, trusting relationship with every one of these types. Further, life tends to get messy when we let one of these relationships take away one or more of our rights and needs. Equally messy is when we focus so much on our present needs (our relationship with things, for example) rather than our future needs that we lack the necessary discipline to create long-term security for us, our family, or our tribe.
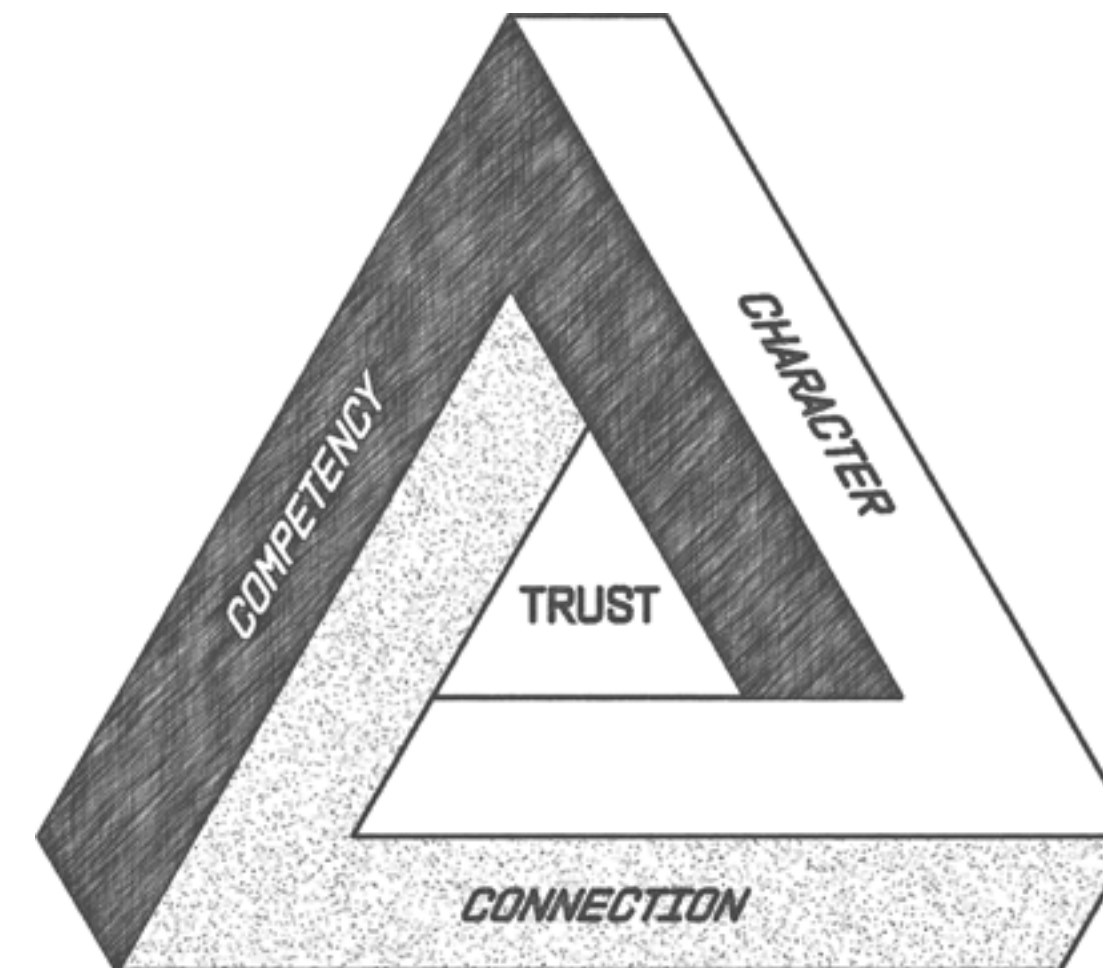
This is where our relationship with time comes into play and factors into our ability to become the well-balanced, self-actualized beings we want to be.

ABOUT TRUST

One of our foundational beliefs is that high-trust relationships are critical to our health as people and to a company's ultimate success.

We view Trust through three dimensions — Character, Competency, and Connection.

Trust is the most valuable asset a person, team, company, community, or nation can have. When we prioritize Trust, success will follow. We achieve trust through impeccable character, top-tier competency, and sincere connections. That's why we place such a strong emphasis on building and nurturing High-Trust Relationships.

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Every company has employees. High-Trust Companies have *great* employees who are the "Right People" in the "Right Seats."

Right People means the team member is a great cultural fit for the company's Core Values, which are the behavioral norms or philosophical beliefs of a person or group.

We recommend companies have 3–7 Core Values that:

• Clarify who the company is and what it stands for

• Unify the organization

• Inform process

• Guide hiring, coaching, and teaching

• Shape the reward and exit processes

Right Seats means the team member has the **CCC** — **Competency, Commitment, and Capacity** — for the Seat. That is, they have the Competency for the Seat, the Commitment to be in the Seat, and the mental, physical, emotional, and time Capacity to excel in the Seat.

In total, the Right People in the Right Seats are capable of, and excited about, filling very specific needs that are part of an Org Chart. This approach makes who's responsible for what very clear and makes it easy to agree on performance standards, delegate authority, create career path opportunities, and let people run and do their thing.

OUR TEAM MEMBERS

At Ninety, our Core Values are **G-TRIBE**:

GSSD — We Get Smart Stuff Done.

Team — We collaborate, trust, and support one another. We create, and live up to, our agreements.

Resilient — We calmly and wisely respond to adversity and setbacks.

Inquisitive — We are learning animals who ask questions and seek mastery of concepts we aim to understand better or deeply believe in already.

Best — We strive to be better and better versions of the best version of ourselves for ourself, our colleagues, and our company.

Extra Mile — We proactively go the extra mile when needed to ensure the Work gets done.

As we hope you can appreciate, we're very particular about who we bring into our G-TRIBE. We look for people who exemplify every one of our Core Values and have the CCC for the Seat. We look for people who genuinely get our company, want to work in our company, and have the capacity to run as fast as we're running.

Truth is, we deeply believe in the work we're doing because we feel it will eventually improve life for millions of people. That said, we've only just begun, so we're looking for people who are excited not just about our Compelling Why, but also about going on this journey with us.

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If you want to build a great company, you have to have customers or clients you love. Customers you believe in. Customers you understand and trust.

It's pretty obvious isn't it? If you don't want to have a great relationship with your customers, well, you won't. And if your customers feel like you really don't understand them and don't have their best interests at heart, then there's no genuine relationship between you. Without a genuine relationship, you're just a commodity, a transaction. And it's even worse if they don't even like you...

The best way to find customers you love is to be very intentional about who your clients are. Find your Ideal Customer. You should think about them in terms of geographics, demographics, and psychographics. And you should do everything that is economically reasonable to convert your Ideal Customers into raving fans — and avoid anyone else. Why? Because you won't love them, and they'll likely be a drain on your resources, frustrate your people, and potentially harm your brand.

OUR IDEAL CUSTOMERS

Our Ideal Customers are the Senior Leadership Teams of small to midsize businesses who want to build great companies. They care about their relationships, their team members, and their customers. They want to build companies that will endure. They're the lifeblood of a healthy economy.

We love our coaching community and love serving them because they're our heroes. They're out there every day doing everything they can to help small to midsize businesses succeed. This is hugely important to us because, as we just shared, we deeply believe that these small to midsize businesses are the lifeblood of a healthy society.

In terms of geography, we serve companies throughout the world. We're fortunate that the coaching community extends across the world. We support them wherever they go and, of course, wherever we're needed.

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"The aim of marketing is to know and understand the customer so well that the product or service fits him and sells itself." — Peter Drucker

If you want to build a great company, you have to have customers or clients you love. Customers you believe in. Customers you understand and trust.

Chicken or egg? It's not necessarily obvious what comes first: getting clear on what you're selling or getting clear on who your Ideal Customer is.

What is obvious is that they have to work really well together, because companies can't be great at everything. Typically, a company excels at one of the following value propositions:

- Saving consumers money with the lowest cost

- Improving lives through innovation

- Creating ease of use by providing extraordinary customer service

- Offering a unique feeling by increasing a customer's status

An organization's **Compelling Value Proposition (CVP)** is its promise to its customers. We create departments, teams, and seats to fulfill the CVP and turn Ideal Customers into enthusiastic fans of our products or services. Embracing this strength and leveraging it is how we find, serve, and retain our Ideal Customers.

Our marketing strategy needs to be hand in glove with our executed CVP to ensure that our clients are receiving the value they signed up for. This isn't to say we can't try to be strong at one of the other value propositions. But we can't veer away from or pursue a secondary value proposition to the detriment of our CVP.

OUR COMPELLING VALUE PROPOSITION

At Ninety, our CVP is great customer service, followed closely by innovation. We're not interested in satisfying anyone's needs for status or being the cheapest solution on the block. Our entire being is about helping our clients focus, align, and thrive. We just happen to deeply believe we can do this best with the help of technology that is:

Simple

Ninety's intuitive interface provides seamless information sharing within organizations.

Helpful

Always dedicated to improving the user experience, Ninety's human support team guides users to success.

Powerful

A game-changing system that helps organizations operate at their fullest potential. No learning curve. Ninety is intuitive to navigate, easy to use, and contains every one of the essential tools our clients need to build focused, aligned, and thriving organizations.

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You'll never build a great company unless your business is capable (at some point) of generating a reasonable, risk-adjusted return on capital to attract and retain equity. Investors have choices. Even if you built the company with sweat equity, that equity is worth something, and you deserve a fair return on it.

We use the term "risk-adjusted" because some equity is at the higher risk of total loss than others. As an example, if the company is at an early stage, prospective investors will want to have a decent shot at making a higher return on their investment than they would expect to get in the public stock market.

Any way we look at it, sooner or later, a company has to be able to generate an attractive risk-adjusted return on equity. This profit should be enough to keep the equity holders feeling secure with their investment. We don't just need companies to perform well enough to generate a reasonable risk-adjusted return on equity. Companies also need to grow to attract and retain team members.

If a company doesn't grow, its people won't be able to take on new and bigger challenges unless other people quit. No growth is ultimately a death sentence for a company because the best people will eventually leave to find those challenges, and only those who lack motivation will stay.

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Key Questions to Ask an Employer

Now that you understand our philosophy for building, operating, and scaling a great company, we want to offer you a way to apply it when looking for a new challenge of your own. The prospective employer will have questions for you — here are some questions you can ask them back.

Ask them to tell you about their:

- Core Values — What do all their team members have in common? What are the essential behaviors and values of their company culture?

- Compelling Why — What is their "why"?

- Ideal Customers — Who are they? What are their demographics, psychographics, and geographics?

- Compelling Value Proposition — Why do Ideal Customers buy from them? What makes them unique?

- Growth Rate — What opportunities for growth will you have?

- Compensation Philosophy — How do they ensure team members feel fairly compensated and appreciated?

- Feedforward System — How do they communicate a need for changes?

- Employee Development System — How do they help their team members grow?

- Career Path System - Do you offer a structured career path system and if so, could you describe it?

- Profit Sharing — What is their system and philosophy?

- Goals — How do they set goals and track performance against goals?

- Top Three Performers — Who are their top three people, and what makes them great?

- Bad Hire — Why didn't their last bad hire work out? What made them a bad fit?

- Onboarding Process — How do they set up new team members for success?

- Employee Turnover — What's their percentage of employee turnover each year, and how much of it was unwanted or avoidable?

ABOUT NINETY

Ensure you have the right tools.

As business builders and coaches, we get how hard it is to run and build decent businesses, let alone great companies. That's why we're on a never-ending journey to help our clients do just that.

Companies love the Ninety platform because they can see clear accountability, recognize more opportunity, and work smarter and more effectively together.

Having worked with thousands of small and midsize businesses, we're confident our tools will make it easier for you to focus, align, and thrive.

Visit the 90u Library to learn more.

Key Terms

- **Business Operating System (BOS)** — How an organization operates; a system that represents everything from an organization's structure to how its projects are managed and its people are led.

- **Competency, Commitment, and Capacity (CCC)** — A framework for determining a potential employee's fit for a Seat that evaluates whether they have the skills, motivation, and mental, physical, emotional, and time capacities to excel in the Seat.

- **High-Trust Company (HTC)** — HTCs have cultures where people feel like they belong, they contribute meaningfully, and they're appreciated.

- **Highly sustainable company** – A great company that's built for the long run.

- **Compelling Value Proposition** — A company's value creation promise to its customers.

References

Throughout this work, we drew on information from the following respected sources. We enjoyed these resources and hope you consider adding them to your own reading list.

[1] *Sapiens: A Brief History of Humankind* by Yuval Noah Harari

[2] *Trust Factor: The Science of Creating High-Performance Companies* by Paul Zak

[3] "Why Meaning in Life Matters for Societal Flourishing" by Clay Routledge and Taylor A. FioRito

[4] *Tribal Leadership* by Dave Logan, John King, and Halee Fisher-Wright

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