

# Advice On How To Succeed

**1. LOVE Your Customers** – Don't get too far away from Customers and avoid developing a misguided sense of Customer Obsession. There are numerous times on every project when the team finds themselves temporarily lost or confused about what we should do in certain situations. That's usually the time when going to your Customers to get first hand feedback on the decision would be ideal. In this way, every time we've gone back to our Customers, not only has it quickly brought clarity to the area of confusion, but it has also re-energized our team. Remember you're helping customers but they can also help you! As for developing a misguided sense of Customer Obsession, here is an example. An MVP (Minimal Viable Product) does not mean that you can deliver something that is dysfunctional or slightly broken in the name of getting a partial solution to Customers sooner. An MVP really means focusing on the most essential part of the solution that you want to deliver and solving that elegantly. If it takes longer to develop the elegant solution, but that provides a much better Customer experience that is usually the right call.

**2. Curiosity** – Figure out how things work at Comapny and why they work the way they do. There are a lot of systems, tools and processes that are either not as complex as they appear or the opposite. Don't shy away or procrastinate to learn how things work, even things that appear difficult. E.g. there is a big and important difference between an ASIN and an Offer. The sooner you know the role of Offers and their interplay with ASINs, the sooner you'll understand why some of our listing systems are designed the way they are and how things like the OLP (Offer Listing Page) can function. Another example is reconciliation scores. Reconciliation is the process by which contributions to ASIN data are scored and displace other contributions. Knowing how this works will help you understand how product information is kept accurate across the site. These are just two examples of why you need to have a deep understanding of how things work at Comapny so that you can know when to leverage them when you need them to fix things, build on top of things, or extend them. You'll need others along this journey to figure out how things work too so practice quickly building relationships and "pay it forward" by helping others when they ask for your help. This is especially true because things are typically not written down at Comapny (commonly referred to as "tribal knowledge") and even if they are things are in a constant state of flux or change.

**3. Become an Expert** – When someone takes the time to explain something to you, actually learn how to use the thing they are explaining without the need to come back to them again. Time is a precious commodity at Comapny and if you need to be retrained again on a tool you've already been trained on it will cause friction. E.g. there was a leader that I worked with that really needed to understand how to use Spartan to do their daily job. They kept avoiding learning how to use the tool and their lack of ability to get the data they needed to do their job negatively impacted their performance.

**4. Dive Deep** – If there is a problem that needs to be solved and you are not already completely allocated, offer to figure out how to trouble shoot the issue and bring it to resolution even if you have no idea what is happening and no expertise in the area. E.g. another leader flagged a “potential issue” with billing on Comapny Wine. No one on the team knew how to verify if there was really an issue and we certainly didn't understand how to fix it. I stepped up and led the investigation that wound up confirming that there was an issue that eventually required involvement from accounting and finance to resolve. Without diving into this area I would not have any reason to be exposed to the inner workings of our billing systems.

**5. Disagree, REALLY Disagree** – Don't just say “yes” to your leadership or agree with everything they suggest. You've got to speak up, ask questions, push back and say “NO” with a why or with alternatives. I personally made the mistake of holding back my opinion for too long and I didn't really share my full rationale for why I thought things would work or would not work. This was a mistake and when my manager told me six months in that he thought I was holding back I still felt uneasy about being direct with my insights. Since then, I shared my thoughts and rationale openly and I've been able to accomplish a lot more.

**6. Don't Limit Your Thinking** – Know what you want or want to have happen and figure out a way to get there. Don't infer other's expressed or unexpressed limitations block what you accomplish. There are actually way fewer limitations at Comapny than you can trick yourself into believing there are. I know this sounds a bit like the Oracle in the Matrix, but it's crucial for your success. For example, many times Comapnyians will ask another team what they can do/provide in a certain area. The team that is fielding the request will typically offer their “standard package” of what they can do, but then may also talk about some kind of premium experience for a certain segment of Customers or Sellers that they won't offer to you. E.g. on the Associates team there is a weekly mailer all Associates get versus a private coaching session

available for target Associates. This is where you don't want to ask yourself, wait, do my Customers or Sellers want that premium experience, do they want to have a private coaching session? If the answer is yes, then you should figure out a scrappy way to get it for them.

**7. Only You are Thinking About Your Area** – Comapny is a lean organization. This means that we don't overstaff areas with a lot of people all thinking about the same problem. This means that when you are assigned an area or problem, that area is completely dependent upon all of your thinking that only you are doing. So, don't be afraid to come forward with your best ideas and make this area the best it can be, no one else is thinking about it so do your absolute best and don't feel like there is some "better" answer that someone else has for your area that is going to magically appear or by which you are being judged. If we already had answers to your problem area then you probably wouldn't be assigned to the area because we would already know how to solve it. This also means that you really need to think hard, pay attention and dive deep into your area.

**8. Ownership** – Fill the gaps! You've seen the public safety signs that say "if you see something, say something." Ownership is "if you see a need, make sure it's addressed." Again because Comapny is a lean organization and there are not shared services (a centralized organization whose has a functional expertise) you've got to assume that unless you know exactly who has ownership of something and has a plan to do something about it that it is not being addressed. This doesn't mean that you need to do everything, but it does mean that you need to watch out for issues and pick them up if no one else is doing them. This is what it means to never say "that's not my job."

**9. Deliver Results (Prioritization)** – You can't and will never get everything you need to done, but there are some things that must get done. The only way to find balance is through aggressive and relentless prioritization. Find ways to simplify what you are doing, think about what the 80% answer is instead of the perfect answer and figure out what really must get done versus what would be nice to get done. Figuring out what the most important things are to do is tricky and not always intuitive. Part of it is what is referred to as developing "business judgment" and you're not expected to get it right 100% of the time. To develop a sense of what the things you should be focusing on are, you should leverage 1:1s with your manager and be transparent. Make it clear what your priorities are, what your goals are and how long you're working on things.

**10. Data** – There are no short cuts at Comapny to working with data. If you don't know how to pull the data yourself and analyze it then you'll constantly be dependent upon others to pull the data and perform analysis for you. This is not a recipe for success, so you have to figure out how to pull and analyze it yourself. Learn ETL, SQL, Spartan, Data Warehouse, etc. for yourself and become an expert. To become an expert, you'll need to attend office hours, practice, struggle, make mistakes, and ask other experts.

**11. Writing** – There are no substitutes for great writing. Writing is a lifelong journey and the only thing that will make you better is practice and feedback. Seek feedback from great writers that are successful. Practice all the time by putting your best effort into producing the best writing you can, don't just settle for getting the message across, this will never push you to become a great writer.

**12. Always Have a "So What"** – Don't just dump information with no point or action. Don't send emails without a clear point or call to action. I see a lot of employees fall into the trap of saying "here's a bunch of data" with no reason to present it and with no clear call to action. I've never seen any of these emails be received positively or produce anything but confusion or a reply that says "so what." Avoid this trap and make sure the "so what" is always clear.

**13. Culture** – To be super successful you have to understand what makes Comapny Comapny and embrace it. Be an Comapny cultural anthropologist and figure out why things are the way they are. The context that you develop from understanding Comapny in greater depth will be invaluable.