0034 Eating Your Own Dog Food

The Fundamental Preface · https://kb.jeffreysummers.com/docs/0034-eating-your-own-dog-food/

There's a phrase in tech for the practice of using your own product — eating your own dog food. The phrase is ugly. The discipline is non-negotiable.

Every framework in this work gets applied to the building you actually run. Not the version you tell investors about. Not the version you describe to peers at a conference. The one that exists at 7:42 PM on a Friday when the kitchen is backed up and two servers called in sick. That building. That version. Every framework, every diagnostic, every standard — applied there first, before anywhere else.

Being in the building is not the same as living inside the systems you built. The operator who works the line every Saturday and busses tables when the room is slammed can still exempt themselves from their own standards every other day of the week. Presence is not discipline. Discipline is whether the system you wrote applies to you the same way it applies to everyone else who walks through the door.

If you wrote the standard, you live the standard. If you set the schedule, you respect the schedule. If you said the cast meeting starts at 9, you are there at 8:55. The operator who exempts themselves from the system they built has already started the unraveling — not because the exemption is large, but because the cast saw it. The cast always sees it. And what the cast sees, they do.

This is the test that runs underneath every section of The Operator's Playbook: are you applying it to yourself at the same standard you would apply it to anyone else in your operation? Not in theory. In the building. Tonight.

The operator is accountable for everything — not blameworthy for everything. The dishwasher who didn't show up is responsible for not showing up. The supplier who shorted you is responsible for the short. You are accountable for the system that depends on one dishwasher with no backup. You are accountable for the supplier you never built a second option for. Accountability is what the operator owes the building. Blame is what stops the building from getting better.

Playbooks don't change operators. Operators change operators. This work can show you what's already there. What you do with the reflection is up to you.