About Your People

People · https://kb.jeffreysummers.com/docs/about-your-people/

The Third Fundamental

People is the third Fundamental because every Guest experience your operation produces is created and delivered by one person — a cast member. Not by the concept. Not by the menu. Not by the marketing. By the person standing at the table, behind the counter, or calling an order back to the kitchen at 7:30 on a Saturday night.

Perspective reads the market and names what the Guest actually needs. Product names what the operation sells against that read. People builds the cast that delivers the Product. The order is not accidental. You cannot develop the right cast without the Perspective to know what you are developing them toward or the Product to know what they are delivering. Perspective sets the target. Product names the deliverable. People is how the operation actually delivers it, shift after shift, with or without the operator in the building.

That's the load-bearing test of a People discipline. Not whether the operation performs when the operator is present. Whether it performs when the operator is not.

People Is Not HR, Staffing, Or Culture

People in the framework is a specific operating discipline. It's not the paperwork of hiring. It's not the mechanics of scheduling. It's not the atmospherics of "culture" as the industry uses that word — the T-shirts, the mission statement, the pizza on Friday.

People is the architecture through which the operation hires, trains, develops, leads, and holds the cast that produces hospitality and executes service. It's the operator's answer to the question: what is the operation actually delivering to the cast, and what does that make possible for the cast to deliver to the Guest?

The cast member's ability and willingness to deliver a meaningful [GX] is not determined by their job description. It is determined by how they have been hired, trained, developed, led, and treated by the organization they are working for. The experience the cast delivers to the Guest is a direct

reflection of the experience the organization is delivering to the cast.

This is not a motivational argument. It is an operational one. You cannot train a cast member to deliver a level of hospitality they have never experienced. You cannot ask a cast member to make a Guest feel valued by an organization that has never made them feel valued. The gap between what you want your Guests to experience and what your Guests are actually experiencing is almost always a People gap — and the People gap is almost always a leadership gap before it is anything else.

People Is The Product For The Cast

The framework carries a load-bearing parallel that most operators miss. What the operation sells to the Guest is [GX] — the Guest's product. What the operation "sells" to the cast is the cast's product — the role, the compensation architecture, the development path, the leadership posture, the standard, the [Lead Family] the cast member gets to be part of.

Both are product-shaped. Product is Guest-facing. People is cast-facing. Both are designed or defaulted. Both compound or degrade. Both are the operation's answer to a contract — [The Guest Contract] on the Guest side, [The Cast Contract] on the cast side.

The operator who reads People as a cost center reads only one half of the equation. Payroll is a cost. The cast product is an investment. The two show up in the same line of the P&L and they are not the same thing.

The cast product is the mechanism through which every other investment in the operation either pays off or does not. Menu design pays off through the cast that executes it. Product architecture pays off through the cast that delivers it. Marketing pays off through the cast that catches the Guest the marketing sent. Every dollar spent upstream of the cast is either amplified or absorbed by the cast the operator built.

By Design Or By Default

The People architecture the operator runs is either designed or defaulted. There is no third option.

Designed means the operator has decided who the operation hires, why, against what standard. Decided what the operation trains, how, against what curriculum. Decided how the operation develops the cast into leads, into managers, into the [Lead Family] that runs the operation when the operator is not in the building. Decided what the operation pays, why, against what compensation architecture. Decided what the operation stands for, and what standard is held

whether the shift is easy or hard.

Defaulted means the operator hires whoever is available, trains whoever is willing, develops whoever bubbles up, pays whatever the market forces, and holds the standard the operator personally can hold — which caps the operation at the operator's direct presence and prevents it from developing past them.

The Summers Principle (T$P) reads through People the same way it reads through every other Fundamental. The cast the operation produces is a perfect reflection of the People architecture the operator built. Fix a cast problem without changing the architecture and the cast problem returns. Every time. Because the architecture that produced the problem is still running.

The Two Roads Read On People

Every operator is on one of two Roads — transactional (Road 1) or relational (Road 2). The Road determines what the cast product is, what the operation invests in it, and what the cast becomes.

People on Road 1 reads the cast as labor. Labor is a cost to minimize, a schedule to fill, a headcount to manage. Hiring runs on the transactional exchange — hours for wage, task for pay, showing up in exchange for a check. Training runs on the minimum required to keep the operation running. Development runs on whoever demands it, if anyone. Leadership runs on positional authority — the title carries the weight, not the relationship.

The cast on Road 1 delivers a Road 1 experience. Compliant. Adequate. Turnover-heavy. Standards drift toward the transactional contract the operator signed with them — this much for this much, and no more. The cast owes the operation what they were paid for. The operation owes the cast what they were promised. Nothing on either side compounds.

People on Road 2 reads the cast as the primary asset of the operation. The cast is not a cost center. It is the mechanism through which the operation compounds. Hiring runs on fit to the standard, not fit to the schedule. Training runs on capability, not on compliance. Development is architected, not accidental — the [Lead Family] is built on purpose, and the operation invests in the cast the way it invests in equipment, real estate, and brand. Leadership runs on relational authority — the standard the operator holds, the way the operator holds it, and the cast the operator becomes worth following.

The cast on Road 2 delivers a Road 2 experience. Standards that hold when the operator is not in the building. Turnover that declines as tenure compounds. A [Lead Family] that runs the operation on its own architecture, not on the operator's direct presence. The cast owes the operation their

best work because the operation earned it. The operation owes the cast a career worth building. Both sides compound.

Same tools. Different Road. Different outcomes. The Road determines the outcome.

The Cast Contract

People operates against a specific contract — [The Cast Contract] — the operation's binding agreement with the cast about what the operation will provide and what the cast is expected to produce in return.

The Cast Contract is not the handbook. It is not the offer letter. It is not the annual review. It is the accumulated set of commitments the operation makes and honors — or fails to honor — over every shift the cast member works. What the operation says it will do. What the operation actually does. The gap between the two is where the Contract lives or dies.

Improvements to the operation the cast is asked to execute against are commitments the operation is making to the cast — commitments to a standard, to a development path, to a compensation architecture that reflects the cast's growth. The operator who asks the cast to improve without honoring what improvement means on the operation's side is running an unbalanced Contract, and the cast reads that imbalance long before the operator does.

The Cast Contract is the operating instrument that turns People from an aspiration into a discipline. Every hire, every training decision, every development conversation, every leadership move is either honoring or violating the Contract. There is no neutral position.

What The Operator Misses When People Is Wrong

When the People architecture is off, every downstream outcome is off in a predictable pattern:

- **Product degrades because the cast can't hold the standard.** The Guest experience the operator designed cannot be delivered by the cast the operator built. What the operator sees is inconsistent [GX], Guest complaints on the shifts the operator is not running, and the standard drifting toward whatever the least-trained cast member on the schedule can execute.
- **Performance metrics look right because the cast is producing enough output to hit the number.** What the metrics miss is the cost the cast is paying to hit that number, the leads who are looking for the next job, and the cast member whose potential the operation never developed because the operation was too busy running.

- **Profit compresses because turnover is compounding.** Every cast member the operation lost cost more to replace than the operation admits. Recruitment, training, ramp-time, the shifts run at reduced capability while the new hire learns — all of it is [Profit Foreclosure] the P&L doesn't show, because turnover cost is smeared across a dozen lines instead of one.
- **The operator becomes the ceiling.** The operation cannot scale past the operator's direct presence because the cast the operator built cannot hold the standard without the operator in the building. The operation is simultaneously the engine and the constraint. Every hour the operator spends running the shift is an hour the operator is not building the architecture that would let the shift run without them.

Every one of these is a People architecture failure before it is anything else. The operation is producing exactly the cast the architecture was designed — or defaulted — to produce.

The Work Of People

The work is not fixing the cast. It's designing the architecture the cast is produced by.

That means auditing hiring against a designed standard, not a defaulted one. Auditing training against a designed curriculum, not a defaulted one. Auditing development against a designed [Lead Family] structure, not accident. Auditing leadership against a designed relational posture, not positional authority alone. Auditing compensation against a designed architecture that reflects the operation's Road, not the industry's default.

People work is not a one-time project. It's a recurring discipline. The cast turns over. The environment shifts. The standard the operator holds today has to be worth holding tomorrow — which means the operation the cast is showing up to has to be worth showing up to. Every day. The operator who audits People once and locks it has built a new default, not a Designed People architecture.

What Changes Tomorrow

Walk the cast schedule for the next seven days. Not the shifts — the individuals. For each cast member on the schedule, name three things: what the operation has committed to them in [The Cast Contract], what the operation is actually delivering against that commitment this week, and what the gap is.

If you cannot name the commitment, the Contract is defaulted. If you can name the commitment but cannot name what the operation is delivering, the Contract is being violated. If you can name both and the gap is small, the Contract is being honored. If the gap is large, the Contract is where People work starts tomorrow.

Digging Deeper

Positions on the record.

1. Tipping Is Agency — https://kb.jeffreysummers.com/docs-category/tipping-is-agency/
2. What Is Restaurant Physics — https://physics.jeffreysummers.com/what-is-restaurant-physics/
3. The Class That Cannot Defend What It Sells — https://hacksterism.jeffreysummers.com/the-class-that-cannot-defend-what-it-sells/

Term definitions from the Knowledge Base.

- [People] — https://kb.jeffreysummers.com/docs/people/
- [The Cast Contract] — https://kb.jeffreysummers.com/docs/the-cast-contract/
- [The Lead Family] — https://kb.jeffreysummers.com/docs/the-lead-family/
- [GX] — https://kb.jeffreysummers.com/docs/gx/
- [The Guest Contract] — https://kb.jeffreysummers.com/docs/the-guest-contract/
- [By Design Or By Default] — https://kb.jeffreysummers.com/docs/by-design-or-by-default/
- [The Summers Principle] — https://kb.jeffreysummers.com/docs/the-summers-principle/
- [Two Roads] — https://kb.jeffreysummers.com/docs/two-roads/
- [Profit Foreclosure] — https://kb.jeffreysummers.com/docs/profit-foreclosure/
- [The Production] — https://kb.jeffreysummers.com/docs/the-production/