

CHAPTER 11

'Ike loa

To know well. To seek knowledge and wisdom.

'Ike loa is the value of learning.

Seek knowledge, for new knowledge is the food for mind, heart and soul.

Learning inspires us, and with *'Ike loa* we constantly give birth to new creative possibilities.

'Ike loa promotes learning in the *'Ohana*; we must incorporate the seeking of knowledge and wisdom into our business plan and into our daily practice.

'Ike loa is to know well, and knowing others well enhances our relationships and broadens our prospects.

'Ike loa: pursue wisdom. Learn and know well.

The Daily Five Minutes

Perhaps my most valuable lesson in *'Ike loa* was the one born at Hualalai out of our desire to know our *employees* well. We instinctively knew we could manage better the more intimately we knew those we managed. *'Ike loa* became the birthplace of a core standard we initiated with all managers called "The Daily Five Minutes." It started as an experiment, and it was so effective that it became non-negotiable as a habit my managers were required to cultivate and practice daily.

It is a simple habit: Each day, without fail, managers are to give five minutes of no-agenda time to at least one of their employees. They'd log the event in a simple checklist of names to ensure they didn't miss anyone, and they'd speak to each employee in turn on a regular basis.

To be honest, my initial goal was actually to give the managers daily practice in the art of listening well, for I was trying to come up with a solution for the common complaint that "my manager doesn't ask for my input and feedback, and if I do give it, he/she doesn't

Managing with Aloha, Bringing Hawaii's Universal Values to the Art of Business
Book Excerpt by Author Rosa Say

really listen well to what I'm trying to explain to them." I reasoned that if they had no agenda themselves with this Daily Five Minutes, they wouldn't "half-listen" as they mentally prepared what they'd say when they could get a word in. Employees were brought into the plan and openly told about the program: they were asked to prepare something, and be ready to fill the silence when a manager approached them and said, "How about a break from the action here, let's step away and Take 5."

In the beginning, the managers were cautioned to give themselves a good 15 to 30-minute window, for there'd likely be some pent-up stuff that had to come out. However, over time, the managers who kept up the habit discovered their Daily Five Minutes rarely stretched over 10. This is what happened: In the process of developing this habit, they greatly improved their own approachability. They had nurtured a circle of comfort for their employees to step into and talk to them—whenever time presented itself. The Daily Five Minutes itself soon became a more personal thing. Employees started to share their lives with them—what they did over the weekend, how their kids were doing in school, how they felt about a local news story. Managers began to know their employees very well, and their employees began to relate to them more as people and not just as managers. They were practicing the art of *Ike loa* together.

Knowing well enhances relationships

Benefits from the Daily Five Minutes piled up: Managers ceased to judge employee situations prematurely, for they had built up a relationship that demanded all be allowed to speak first—and they *wanted* to speak with their employees, sure they'd receive more clarity. The Daily Five Minutes became a "safe zone" where employees felt they could talk story with their manager "off the record," and managers learned to ask, "are you venting, or asking for help? Do I keep this in confidence, or do you expect me to take action?" It became clearer who was responsible for following up on things. Managers had less and less of those "if only I had known about this sooner" surprises.

Managing with Aloha, Bringing Hawaii's Universal Values to the Art of Business
Book Excerpt by Author Rosa Say

Employees began to initiate the Daily Five Minutes themselves, both with their managers and with other employees they wanted to know better. Everyone learned to say “no” and to be more respectful of time issues, saying scripted sentences that were non-emotional: “Now is not the best time, but I promise to Take 5 with you later.” Everyone became much better at reading expressions and body language, a skill that had added benefits when they were dealing with the customers. Cultural barriers started to break down, because managers started to learn the “communication language” they needed to use to relate to each employee as an individual, and they gained better understanding of the “sense of place” of each one.

So you see, *Ike loa* promotes all types of knowledge, and it is just knowing, and knowing well. When programs like the Daily Five Minutes give it form, even spontaneous unrehearsed conversation can erase confusion, and replace wrong assumptions with the right information. Personally, I have an ongoing and passionate love affair with books and the written word, yet some of my best knowledge has simply come from talking story with my staff: They are exceptionally patient teachers.

Ike loa.

To know well. To seek knowledge and wisdom.