

Prologue

The story of a manager in Hawaii

Every manager has a story. This is mine.

I began my working career on O‘ahu behind Fort Street Mall’s F.W. Woolworth lunch counter when I was 15. That was when Woolworth’s drugstore design included diner type service, but there were no booths or tables. Customers would sit on red vinyl-topped swivel stools bolted to the floor around these U-shaped bays of counters, one bay with 12 seats for each waitress. The menu was in a laminated card held by this metal grid at the far end of the counter in front of you, a grid curved in at each end to corral your salt and pepper, sugar shaker and ketchup bottle. To your back was the rest of the store, with racks of greeting cards, sewing notions, fishing tackle, or baby food nearly within arm’s reach.

There weren’t any hostesses. Customers walked right up and sat where there was an empty stool, the counter was wiped clean, and the waitress looked calm and sorta friendly. Job performance was really easy for the boss to measure. Back then your tips went into a locked box, and he’d count them out for you when you clocked out: Good tips meant happy customers. If your bay was usually busy and you were found to be honest, you were an employee he was going to keep. It didn’t take me too long to learn my early lessons on satisfying repeat customers, and keeping the balance between making them happy and turning each stool for more money in the till.

Fast forward two years, and at 17 I'm boldly lying to the assistant human resources director at a Waikiki hotel that yes, I'm 18 and can get a blue card to serve liquor. The job I want is opening the Third Floor Restaurant, credited by many as being the granddaddy of fine dining in Hawaii. Because I already know what bosses want to hear, I get the job. Now there are tables and a hostess to deal with, and there are more lessons in the expectations of good customer service. After my first shot, customers will have to remember my name and ask for me. And jeez, fine dining takes way more time; I'll need to get more out of each one of them. The boss will measure my performance in somewhat the same way, right?

As much as I celebrate inside that I got the job, I hesitate to tell most of my friends. This job is in Waikiki, and it's at a *hotel*. My family will be fine, for they love me unconditionally and have always supported the choices I've made. But with my friends I know what I'll hear, and I do.

"What, you gonna work with *tourists*? Those people don't belong here. Why do you want anything to do with them? You gonna be just another money-hungry local letting those hotel guys commercialize our culture and pretend to know what we're all about. How can you do that? They make a mockery of us, and who we *really* are. How can you be like them? Don't you have any pride?"

Yet along the way, I'd learned that I had to create my own future and not just let it happen to me. Luckily for me, those were lessons that had come from my mom and dad, and they had never steered me wrong. I was sure that not only would it all work out, I could possibly make a difference and prove my friends wrong. And for goodness sake, it was just a job feeding people.

So I take the job. There are new lessons in teamwork, for I have to work with a captain and another waitress. There are new lessons in cooperation, timing, and yes, in manipulation. The hostess I can handle through my customers, but then there's the kitchen and I gotta tell you, the Woolworth fry cooks were sweeties compared to these European chefs. It doesn't take me too long to figure out I'd much prefer being in charge, but there's a glitch in the system here; to be a captain

you have to be exotic (translation: Asian, European, or otherwise non-local) and male. One of my friends had said, “You’ll see. You’re gonna find out they don’t care about you, they don’t really want you there anyway.” Was he right? I shut the thought out of my head and figured out how to get the job done until the time I *was* in charge. It would happen.

Fast forward 19 years, six hotels and two islands. I’m trying to decide between sticking it out though yet another hotel ownership change or joining up with the newest kid on Kona’s Gold Coast, the Hualalai Resort at historic Ka’ūpūlehu on the Big Island. I’ve been managing employees since I hit 18—truthfully 18—and I’ve sampled that elite group called The Executive Committee in two different international hotel corporations. I still hesitate to tell my local friends where I work, and there’s no kidding myself any longer, because I now do way more than just feed people. If anything it’s gotten worse, for I still don’t feel I’ve made much of a difference in representing our culture well, and I’ve moved pretty darn far up the ladder.

I finally choose Hualalai for one significant reason: I meet a man there who I at first dismiss as a hopeless dreamer who needs a reality check. Yet several meetings later, he has achieved something truly amazing to me, and he has done so by talking about a concept that has long been stirring uneasily in my soul: sense of place. Sam Ainslie will be my boss, and he has given me his promise that this time I’ll be able to say I work for the Hawaii hospitality industry and hold my head up with pride and dignity. We will manage Hualalai with a respect for her culture and for our employees’ sense of place. We will engender an ‘*Ohana* in business.

In that moment of Sam’s promise my path became clear and certain. And it was exhilarating.

It was February 1996, and by this time I’d become a new person: a mother. I was consumed with something vitally important to me—raising my son and daughter with the values that would help them be good people. Warning them about the trappings of life and keeping them safe wasn’t enough; I wanted to teach them *how to think*. If there was anything my management career had done for me up to this point, it was

grooming the importance I placed in people developing intellectual honesty with themselves. I wanted my kids to make good choices that were steeped in good values that would ground them and place a light in their spirit. They were now 9 and 12 years old, and I was acutely aware that they were smack dab in their formative years; the clock was ticking on the time I had left to shape their lives. They were also the loudest and most influential critics of every decision I made. I could not disregard their opinions as easily as I'd dismissed those of my friends when I'd first decided to work in Waikiki. My children were the very reason we lived on the Big Island in the first place.

For me, everything connected to good life-shaping values was connected to sense of place. I had no illusions about how growing up in the islands had deeply affected me, giving me my own values, and creating the person I felt I was. Thus far, Hawaii was doing her part in influencing my children as I knew she could. Thus far, my husband and I both felt great about the decisions we'd made for them, and the things we'd taught them. But then there was the matter of my own intellectual honesty with myself in my work; that connection was still incomplete, and it still unsettled me. In my way of thinking, the work someone did defined them—and the work I did defined me. Even the barest hint of hypocrisy was unacceptable.

I loved my work. I loved being a manager. I felt I had a huge responsibility to those I managed, and I took on that responsibility eagerly; I was willing to be held completely accountable. I had learned so much about what I believed it was to manage people well. But were these things—the good things, the *right* things—in practice every day? Was the knowledge I gained through the years used to make a positive difference? I knew there was still more to be done, and it was time. I was primed and ready.

As much as I'd wanted it, and had come to the Big Island hoping to find it, Sam Ainslie's promise was unexpected, and it was truly amazing to me. When it came to nobler, culturally correct pursuits I was accustomed to going it on my own. His promise was bold: "*We will manage Hualalai with a respect for her culture and for our employees' sense of place. We will have an 'Ohana in business.'*" Woven into his voice, and what actually

spoke to me, was his genuinely deep belief and his sincerity, and I could actually feel it. Instinctively I believed him, I had faith in him, and I trusted him, and I began to see how it would be possible—it would happen! I even helped him give orientation to the other local kids. The land beneath my feet seemed to talk to me, and my own belief was nurtured. There was so much hope.

Sam did not know it at the time, but he gave me a new mission. I would define what it meant to be a great manager. Being one would be my new calling.

Over the next seven years I would learn that the search for meaningful work starts within you. I would learn that sense of place is a very powerful and very personal thing, and culture is defined in one's values, one's attitude, and in one's own choices, not in circumstance. I would learn that there is something far worse than "commercializing the culture" and that is ignoring it.

Our culture is alive. It grows and changes every day just as we do. It needs our *Mālama* (our care).

I would learn that to be *Pono*, to feel right within oneself, the answers could only be found within. I would consistently and frequently experience what before had seemed to sporadically occur by happenstance: being someone who manages other people is immensely fulfilling and rewarding when you do it well, with a deliberate and thoughtful plan true to the values you personally believe in, and values you share.

To be a manager is to touch the lives of others in profound ways.

As a manager, you must accept this certainty with responsibility. With care. With *Aloha*.

The day would come when it was time for me to bid farewell to Hualalai. I left the Hualalai Development Company having been vice-president of operations, responsible for a budget in excess of 20 million dollars, and overseeing more than 350 employees in eight diverse disciplines: golf operations, golf maintenance, resort landscape maintenance, sports club and spa operations, retail, food and beverage, natural resource management, ocean recreation and safety. Our canvas included resort hotel operations, club management, land development and real estate sales in the

creation of an award winning residential resort community. I had worked with great managers and with a staff who challenged me daily to be a great manager for them, and I loved doing it.

On any given day my employees personally shared their *Aloha* with up to a thousand guests who had come to Hawai'i hoping to find something special within our embrace. Our customers came as visitors and many became residents, unwilling to part with the *Aloha* that had infused their spirit. They had fallen in love with our culture. They had discovered sense of place.

I had discovered that to make that difference I'd always wanted to make, I'd have to share what I'd learned. Mission had become purpose. Managing with *Aloha*, true to the cultural values that drive their employees, had to happen for more managers, and for all those who say, "I run a business, and I hire others to help me." We could bring integrity and nobility to management.

Today I am a management coach, teaching the lessons of *Managing with Aloha* within the services offered by my own consulting company, and I continue to love each and every day doing so. It is immensely rewarding watching great managers emerge because they have deliberately chosen to manage purposefully, with *Aloha*.

E komo mai, come with me.

You can do this: *You* can be a *great* manager.

In so kindly listening to my story, you have already started, so *Mahalo nui*, thank you. Thank you for choosing this book and allowing me to share what I have learned with you.

Introduction

What should managers be?

At some time or another, every child is asked, “What do you want to be when you grow up?” I’ve never heard one answer, “I’d like to be a manager.” I didn’t.

Yet I now believe heart and soul that it is a calling to be a great manager. Unfortunately, greatness is rarely achieved, and thus examples are rarely talked about. Children don’t hear inspiring stories of managers often enough to want to be one.

Even in Hawaii, where the fanciful romantic concepts of the *Aloha* spirit are marketed and draped like charm bracelets around the hospitality industry, managers are thought of as babysitters. They are not really considered the ambassadors of the *Aloha* spirit, although that spirit is what they seek to peddle, and their profession is not thought of as particularly noble. Why is this?

Process versus people

Early on I was taught that good managers manage good processes. While earning some of my supervisory stripes in the heyday of the Total Quality Management movement I learned how to hunt and destroy variation like a heat-seeking missile, normally sidestepping the people who were a part of the process along the way. I was an open book in my quest to learn my job correctly, and guess what I found? The *Aloha* spirit does not sit streamlined and variation-free within your bulletproof

processes; it swims around within your people, surfing the high and low tides of their disposition each day they report to work. Further, there is an *Aloha* approach to managing that brings the very best of what they have to the forefront.

Said another way, I have come to realize that yes, good managers do work with good processes, however the *great* managers are the ones who concentrate on how they manage people. And boy oh boy, high tide, low tide, people are filled to the brim with variation! They have interesting, dynamic, challenging variation, and being a manager who works on valuing those differences as the way to simultaneously improve the process is so much more fun. Yes, fun! And understand this: The fact that processes simply do not and cannot exist for every employee to work variation-free is what makes managers so needed. This intuitive knowledge is the juice that kick-starts truly great managers who seek to make a difference with the people they manage. To execute their jobs well, employees need teachers, coaches, cheerleaders and mentors, and that's what managers need to be for them. Great managers relish the opportunity.

The role of the manager

Instinctively most managers know this. It's probably the reason that one of the earliest traps new supervisors often fall into is trying to be best friend or after-work beer buddy to their employees. Well, take it from someone who has seen this strategy backfire time and again; employees don't really want you to be a father figure, second mother, best friend, soul mate, or even confidant. They want you to be their boss! A strategy-mapping, consistent, objective, organized and predictable boss with an inspiring vision, and a boss who has the same high expectations for everyone they manage—including themselves. You will seldom, if ever, come across employees who say that to you directly; however, when that's what you deliver, many will thank you for being the kind of leader they wanted. They will recognize in you the manager they needed. They will sing your praises as their best boss ever.

When you hire people they come connected. Your

employees have families and friends. Your role as their manager is a different one, and it is one they come on board expecting you to fill—boss! Your role is to support them in a way that will help them forge good relationships in the branches of the personal network they already have. You do so by keeping them positive and optimistic in their work.

Your place in the continuum is to create a work environment in which they thrive, so that when they return home they are in a great state of mind, ready to openly share the positive energy they had gained at work. You can demonstrate values and character traits such as treating others with honesty and respect, dignity and *Aloha*. In a way you are serving their families and friends, by giving your employees the gift of a good example to follow, and expecting them to do well.

And here's the wondrous thing: Do it right, do it well, and your employee will come back to work the next day at high tide, ready to surf the wave of high productivity with you. Abundance has been created wherein you get back what you have given, and more.

Why focus on management?

Managing with Aloha was written because I fell in love with being a manager. I discovered that my work could be a celebration of the values I had grown up with, values I grew to comprehend more fully within my life in business strongly connected to our culture, and to my sense of place within the islands. Writing the book became voice for my passion about the calling to be a great manager, and for a new sense of purpose. I wanted other managers to fall in love with their work just as I had, by bringing a Hawaiian sensibility to what they do, with love and respect for our culture—or for whatever culture they find they are in. It is a love affair you can have with heart, soul, and complete intellectual honesty, something needed in every business endeavor I know of.

Leadership has been the bigger buzzword for our generation: Aspire to be a leader, and not “just” a manager. This premature and faulty condescension disturbs me, for I see the promise of great integrity and nobility required in being a great

manager. Personally I see leadership and management as two different things, something I explore in more depth when we discuss *Alaka'i*, the Hawaiian value of leadership in Chapter 14. It is my belief that managing well comes first, so that emerging leaders can learn the empathy needed to lead effectively when they have found new and better ways, and they will have earned a circle of influence from which to stage their efforts.

It will often require a charismatic leader to create excitement, and lead the way with new and innovative thinking. However it will require a great manager of people to actually inspire employees to get the job done. In choppy seas, the leader may be sitting in front of the canoe with the keenest eye for land, but the manager is the one who is steering. The manager is focused on his paddlers: He is the one who will enable them to bring that canoe to shore.

It is the manager who will touch people directly and affect them more often, and in particular, business managers are the most influential movers and shakers I know. When great management is in place, the ideas of emerging leaders find fertile ground.

Why incorporate values into business?

To manage *with Aloha* is to draw out the best performance of your own management practice from the values that are inherent in your nature *and* a match for the demands of your business. To be a *great* manager is to realize your success depends on the people you manage, and they are driven by their values just as much as you are. You have to respect their culture, and learn to speak the language of their values. In all likelihood, their values will match up with your own much more than you think.

Values are an inseparable part of the fabric of the human race. We have all grown up being shaped by values that are woven into our culture, for values drive the quality of our experiences. These values are layered with the nuances of our parents' life experiences, and those of their parents. I believe we inherit them as surely as we inherit the color of our eyes

and the curl in our hair. You learn about them more explicitly when you misbehave, for parents universally have this innate certainty that values = goodness = better behavior.

As far back as I can remember, *Aloha* surrounded me, it was the grandfather of all the other values I'd come to learn, woven into my culture and thus my character. It was a feeling connected to family and community, comforting and familiar but unobtrusive, a sort of color that warmed up the background of everything. *Aloha* was just there, it wasn't something that we talked about much, it was more a way of living that you grew up with—and everyone else assumed you grew up that way. It was good, and it was right.

When I became a manager I quickly figured out I couldn't keep *Aloha* in the background any longer: I had to pay better attention to it and welcome it into my management performance with open arms. Why? Because when I did, it worked, and it worked wonders. I realized that *Aloha* was a statement of personal truths for me, my own source to look inward to. When I released it, *Aloha* made my job easier, and it made me much more effective in delivering the results that were expected of me.

This is a book that shares the stories of how managing with *Aloha* produces a lifetime of productivity that is colored with integrity. Management is about getting things done through other people; it doesn't get any more basic than that. You will best get things done through others by incorporating the values you share with them, values that embrace collaboration, and values that also are fundamental good practices in the business environment. And *Aloha* is the most universal value of them all.

The case for managing the Hawaiian way, with Aloha

Who or what is Hawaiian? In my lifetime, this has been a question of debate and controversy. It's a question that stirs passionate emotion, a question capable of creating both unity and division. When I was younger, I'd be hurt and confused by those who claimed you needed to be of Hawaiian blood to be Hawaiian, for as far as I knew, Hawaiian was all I was, all I

knew how to be. I'd never lived anywhere else, I had no other sense of place; if I wasn't Hawaiian, what was I?

Therefore it came as a great relief to me to hear someone I highly respected give me both his encouragement and his definition: "*These days any resident of this State who considers Hawaii his home and who has a true understanding of the Hawaiian culture ought to consider himself or herself a Hawaiian.*"
—Dr. George Kanaha.

These words were a gift. In a way I was getting permission to be myself, no matter what anyone else may think. I could *Ho'omau* (continue) and be true to myself, and that would be enough. For me it would be *Pono*, it would be right.

I first wrote his quote down when I attended classes taught by the late Dr. Kanaha in 1990. A few years later, as my interest grew in his work with the Waiaha Foundation, I would read these same words in the introduction of his book, *Kū Kanaka, Stand Tall, A Search for Hawaiian Values*. When we opened the Hualalai Resort at historic Ka'ūpūlehu, Dr. Kanaha's 1991 essay, *Critical Reflections on Cultural Values & Hotel Management in Hawaii*, was to be our Bible, our ethical scorecard. In his essay, he challenged the leaders of our industry to have the concepts of *Aloha* and *Ho'okipa* (hospitality) ring true: to give them credibility and validity. To say I have been profoundly—and positively—influenced by Dr. Kanaha would be an understatement. However, Dr. Kanaha also impressed me with his own respect for the *kūpuna* (elders) that he had learned from; in following his example I would continue to seek them out, just as he did.

First one learns. For the learning to stick, be fulfilling and become meaningful, one must apply what they have learned to what they do. They must allow their learning to evolve to personal belief—it becomes their *mana'o*, the deep and certain belief that drives one's instinctual actions. This is what *Managing with Aloha* represents for me, and this is what I hope to share with you.

Thus from here on, you will read about Hawaiian values, and how *you* can manage with *Aloha*, bringing Hawaii's universal values to the art of conducting business profitably. Trust me, these are *not* contradictory ideas. Part of my goal is

to show you how managing with these “soft” concepts are exceptionally good for business. They work better for those hard, gut-wrenching decisions than the exclusionary brutality of the numbers game, because they carry people through the long haul and help you achieve long-term success that can be perpetuated. You will find that the numbers do support and give credibility to values-centered management. My own corporate business experience was but one proving ground, the most recent with over 350 employees driving a multi-million-dollar bottom line. Numbers can be healthy when your success has grown infused with *Aloha*, and perhaps more important, you can feel good about achieving them.

Managing with *Aloha* defines a Hawaiian sensibility for the work we do, and it is the polar opposite of the fear-based management that can weaken and destroy the ethical and humanitarian hopes we have for business today. We live in a very global and increasingly transparent world, and managing with *Aloha* paves the way for managers born and raised with the Hawaiian culture to work in harmony with our “mainland” counterparts for common goals.

Managing with *Aloha* is a program that will showcase the wealth of talent that exists in Hawaii: it reveals that our home-grown managers embody opportunities that too often are missed. Managers who are *keiki o ka ‘āina*, children of this land, have a key advantage: they’ve grown up with a feel for the place, they have “sense of place.” You can manage with *Aloha* and simultaneously find you are in the ranks of the business elite who are innovators, mavericks, and visionaries. Yet you will stand apart, a shining example of how you can achieve business success today and feel absolutely wonderful about it because you have been true to who you are. Not only will you prove that you have what it takes to succeed, you will have defined it.

If you are a manager new to the islands, managing with *Aloha* will help you gain an incredible richness from your experience working within your host culture, while you find comfort in their universal truths, and in values you recognize. *Aloha* is within all of us, it is something we were born with. It is a feeling, a stirring in one’s soul that begs to be shared, and

a spirit as real as anything you can hold in your hands. And you needn't have been born in Hawaii to have it. You've discovered it within you if you have chosen to live here and work here. Each of us has this choice to make: Do we release our *Aloha* and share it? Do we live it, and do we celebrate it? The arms of *Aloha* are waiting, eager to embrace you.

Whoever you are, it is my fervent wish that you will be a great manager, one who will achieve *Pono* (rightness and balance), that tremendous feeling of satisfaction and contentment when all is good and right for you. It is my dream that a child in your future will recognize his or her own calling, look up to you and say, "I want to be a great manager one day."

How best to read this book

Shall we get started?

I encourage you to initially read this book sequentially, following the order of chapters as they've been placed. I've designed each chapter to be a self-contained primer per value, so that the book can serve you well as a reference guide and source of inspiration once you make the choice to manage with *Aloha*. However upon the first reading you will discover that the values build upon one another: What you have read in previous chapters will frame the concepts you are learning in each new one.

In addition, you will likely find that you develop your own *mana'o* about these values. Your *mana'o* is the whole of those thoughts and beliefs that have become your givens: They are what rings true for you, serving to empower you. Your *mana'o* will help you apply the values of the earlier chapters in a manner that is most natural for you. As you read the later chapters you will find that the meanings of earlier ones have become enriched in your understanding.

Whatever command you may have of the Hawaiian language you must keep in mind that the values I present here have context: They are specifically aimed at improving management practices, and business is a pragmatic affair that seeks its own sensibility and logic.

Chapter 1 is devoted to a discussion of *Aloha* itself.

Chapters 2, 3, and 4 will explore your purpose, mission, goals, and passion for achieving them. With Chapters 5 and 6 we address achievement, and how it is best defined for you, for your company and for your customers.

Chapter 7 reveals my belief that 'Ohana (family) is a wonderful form for the practice of *Aloha*, especially here in Hawaii. With 'Ohana in place to sustain your efforts and gain you community support, Chapters 8 through 13 explore the nuts and bolts of day-to-day management: We discuss concepts like teamwork, win-win agreements, responsibility, motivation, training programs, communication and conduct.

Chapter 14 introduces you to *Alaka'i*, the value of leadership, and it contains a discussion of how management and leadership differ. At this point you've learned quite a lot, and in Chapters 15 and 16, *Mālama* and *Mahalo* will address how best to take inventory of your assets and care for them.

I end with *Nānā i ke kumu* (look to your source) and *Pono* (rightness and balance), for these are values that will help you discover your own source of strength and the essentials that keep you grounded. Both of these values help you find balance and contentment as you weave these lessons of *Aloha* together in a way that is most meaningful for you.

I strongly encourage you to mark up this book, allowing it to be a canvas for your own self-expression; The margins have been enlarged specifically for you to do so. In so many ways, management is a hands-on, personal love affair. My suggestion is that you write your first reactions in the margins of the text itself as different values and their concepts speak to you. Write down what you will *do*; spell out the action steps you will take to put the lessons of *Managing with Aloha* into practice. Draw pictures, design whiteboard lessons of your own, or log promises you've made to yourself. Use any blank spaces at the end of chapters to pencil in a windowpane grid and design a storyboard for the future you will create. If you are one of those people who has never marked up a book and just can't bring yourself to do it, use post-it notes. Whatever style you choose to write down your thoughts, *ho'ohiki*: keep those promises you make to yourself, for everything will start or end with you.

Ready?

Read with an open mind, write your thoughts, speak your heart and bring your *Aloha* to life.

This is your call to arms, the arms of *Aloha*. Start a movement with me, and be the one to bring *Aloha* to business today. Your customers are waiting. Your employees, peers, and family are waiting. The very best in your life is waiting.