

Who Mike DuBose Is

Knowing someone's likes and dislikes can be a big help in working effectively with the person. The following is a speech that Mike made to his staff in order to promote mutual understanding and a more efficient workplace. All leaders should develop similar documents for their employees so that their expectations are clearly defined.

How I Like to Operate

- I care a lot about you and view you more as friends and colleagues than employees. Most of the time, I want to be viewed as part of the team rather than the head of the team.
- I am trying to improve as a leader. I will be the first to say that I don't have all the answers and have a long ways to go, and I need your help to get there. I feel like I have improved over the past few years, but I am still just a young flower in old soil. As such, I am a big believer in life-long learning.
- I am a changed person since the day that I woke up blind (I have since regained my sight, but have become much more sensitive to my employees' needs). I no longer crack the whip and push people too hard without considering their opinions. I will continue to press forward, have high standards, and constantly push you to be the best you can be, but it will be "with you" instead of me just telling you what to do.
- I'm results-driven and emphasize reasonable accountability and decision-making based on factual information and conservative budgeting.
- I strive to be humble, even sometimes giving the credit to others for my ideas.
- I am a very curious, inquisitive person. It is important to me to get a factual perspective on why or how things are working (or failing).
- Those who know me understand that I think out of, over, under, and outside the box. Sometimes, that can be a weakness because I may come up with ideas too big to implement!
- As a strategic thinker, I like brainstorming and trying to figure out how we will beat our competition in the future. I'm less interested in what we are doing this week than I am in preparing for where we will be in 1-3 years. I am a visual person and create a road map in my head with the steps that will take me to my destination. The big picture is very important to me!
- What really makes me happy is brainstorming with staff, and then having them come back to me with a plan, get my input, and handle the details of implementation (while keeping me updated). Finally, we look at the success of that plan with the knowledge that although failure, partial success, or great success will occur, any one of those is fine as long as we learn. Recognizing, accepting, and doing something about failure early on is just as important as realizing success.
- I enjoy giving input into projects, but I am not interested in running the show.
- If you ask for help with a problem, I will enjoy it. But if you do, keep in mind that I will automatically go into action looking for ways to fix the problem and will not get emotionally involved.
- I welcome your comments and will listen to your viewpoints, but sometimes I may need you to give me a little time to think about it. I usually come around or will meet you halfway.
- I will make assignments and set dates for projects to be accomplished, but I am always willing to negotiate on the deadlines.
- When it comes to customer service and the development of our products and services, I believe in high quality standards. I love to see us receive outstanding ratings and great comments from clients. Success is a direct result of us providing great service in all communications or interactions with customers.
- I value teamwork and everyone helping row the boat together in a single direction. We can become a seamless company through structure and consistency: clear communications (the left hand knows what the right hand is doing) and reasonable policies and procedures.

- I do not like extended conflict, but limited short-term conflict is good because it means staff members are trying to improve the system. I like peaceful environments where people work in harmony as a happy, positive team.
- I like for people to have dialogues with me, express their ideas, debate in a friendly way, be honest if I am doing something wrong, and let me know what bothers them before it festers into a bad situation.
- I'm looking for the right balance of communication to keep me in the loop about what's going on in the companies—not too much or too little. Good communication amongst staff is very important so that everyone knows what is going on.
- I love *making* money and the entrepreneurial spirit. It is not as my God (as it used to be), but a game whose outcome is usually profit. If we pay our bills, everybody wins!
- I love *giving away* money – one day, those who stay with me may be pleasantly surprised!
- I appreciate when we win, and losing stinks, but failure and losing have often been my greatest teachers. I believe that in conflict, there is always opportunity. If you can learn from a mistake or a failure, you become stronger and it is a learning experience.
- However, I'm also really into crisis prevention and management for those problems that can be avoided—in fact, one of my mottos is “Hope for the best, but prepare for the worst!”
- Efficiency—doing the most possible in the highest quality way while expending the least amount of time and resources—is important and something that I want to see within the companies. I also like it when people use the same product in multiple ways within the company.
- I'm looking for creative but organized staff who keep us out of trouble, are self motivated and directed, and require minimal supervision to keep track of their own projects.
- Taking you to Hawaii was one of the happiest moments in my life, and we all had a great time in Italy. I would like to see staff have more of that type of fun!
- I like people with good character and values, and I like for folks to tell me when they think I am not living up to our high company standards, ethics, and values.

What I need is for you to put the past in the past and judge me from this point on, as the new leader I have become, rather than the one I was.

My Dislikes

- People who hide or try to rationalize their mistakes. We are all human, and mistakes happen—with me leading the pack! Just tell me you screwed up, how the mistake happened, how you plan to avoid repeating it, and what you learned from the error.
- People who make the same mistake over and over upset me. Repeating the same mistake is 100% against Total Quality Management principles
- Whining and complaining without suggestions about how to fix the problem.
- People who agree with me to my face but disagree or complain behind the scenes. I do not promote YES people.
- I hate gossip, those who spread it, nosiness, and negativity.
- Arrogance. Pride always comes before the fall!
- My-way-or-the-highway people who will not listen to others' opinions. When it comes to problem solving, several heads are always better than one!
- Defeatist attitudes. Statements like “This won't work!” or folks who focus on the negatives of a strategy without posing solutions really tick me off. It is important to look at all aspects and try to make it work!
- Over-promising and under-delivering to me, customers, and other staff.
- Big talk and no action. Chewing the fat and coming up with all kinds of ideas is wasted time unless you put some legs on those ideas.
- Staff members stewing about something instead of dealing with it, asking for help, or talking it out. Holding anger inside never results in a positive outcome.

- Failure to be budget-driven. Everyone should focus on making and saving money as we work toward our mission.
- Having to constantly remind people about their assignments.
- Staff who do not take the initiative to solve problems or offer opinions but instead pass the stress along to others.
- Finding out that something significant has happened (like damages in the building) by chance, rather than people communicating with me in a proactive way.
- Seeing stressed-out staff. One of my goals is to reduce stress in the company.
- Bureaucracy, rigidity, and inflexibility.
- I do not like surprises!
- I want to see our technology work better for us. Inefficiency drives me crazy!
- Losing money = going out of business. I hate losing money!
- Getting involved in too many details of a project. One of my weaknesses is sometimes allowing the perfectionist in me to take over, driving staff crazy and trapping me in details so I cannot lead into the future. Please help me avoid this.
- Being viewed as “the boss.” I hate that word! We are all part of a team working in unison.
- Complacency is our greatest enemy. I do not like customer evaluations that don’t rate us as good-outstanding. Average or bad customer service will take you out of business!
- Living day-to-day or week-to-week without a reliable plan for the future.
- Staff who are not passionate about what they do within the companies and do not produce superior work.

How Can We Work Together Effectively?

- Listen and take note of what I like and don’t like. This will reduce your stress when working with me.
- Know that I am sometimes like a walking computer, constantly looking for ways we can reach reasonable perfection, improve efficiency, enhance our customer satisfaction, and make more money than we spend. Please don’t be offended if I sometimes think of practical matters before emotional ones.
- Let me be a part of the team and not just “the boss.” I may occasionally overrule you, but that will be infrequent. I would rather serve as your guide and consultant.
- Your first priority at work is your customers, second is your regular duties, and third is me. Do not jump to attention when I ask for something unless I say it is urgent. Instead, work my request into your priorities, and if there is any confusion about what those are, ask me. I’m here to help.
- I will assign you a project and a target completion date, and then move on. Your job is to keep me updated and get it completed in a high-quality way. When you receive assignments, don’t overreact and pass your stress onto others.
- Don’t let me dictate what you do. Just tell me to let you assemble a plan and ask me to come back later. I will sometimes want to jump in and fix things or help, but it is better for me to step back and allow you to blossom. Please tell me if you think I am micromanaging you.
- Feel free to negotiate with me on deadlines and tasks. Don’t try to please me by overextending yourself.
- I may also negotiate with you on other issues like workloads (for example, if you help me with something, I will pull a person from another area to assist with your normal responsibilities while you are helping me).
- Don’t let me add to your stress! Let me help you reorganize or reprioritize your tasks and projects if you need me to. Priorities can change around here pretty fast, and it is alright to say, “OK, would you rather me do this or that?”
- Please remind me if you need me to take action on something that is important to your job. I often do not track assignments until I need to know the status. If you have asked me to do something and I have not responded, I may be busy putting out another fire. However, feel free to remind me. Don’t let my inaction frustrate you.

- Realize that some priorities will change. We must experiment with new things and continuously improve to stay relevant, and there will never be a perfect plan or a perfect way to do things.
- Voice your opinions in a professional way and without any fear. If something is bothering you, don't go home frustrated; schedule an appointment and we can have a quick face-to-face meeting. My door is always open, or you can send me an e-mail or give me a call. Don't mind telling me if you think that I am "full of it!"

I hope that you now understand me better, and let's be patient as we all move toward our bright future. Together, we will win!

Thanks, Mike