

eth²os

Guiding values for 2020.

second to none



dedication

Now, more than ever, we seek humanity, clarity and steadiness our lives. Though the world may change around us, if we choose to reflect within, we can find a deeper level of enduring guideposts by which to navigate these times.

In reflecting on the path our company has journeyed over the past three decades, we have uncovered an ethos that has most profoundly shaped our mission and who we are.

These twenty values, or ethos, individually have the capacity to add depth to one's life; collectively they can be personally and organizationally transformative. I believe it is not by chance these very same ethos are often present and alive within those client companies with whom we work, and who are the most successful within their respective industries.

The associates of Second To None wake each day to live our mission of helping companies realize their full potential. I hope these values can add meaning to your life and serve to support you in realizing your full potential, for as we grow as individuals, so too will our companies and communities evolve and flourish.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "JWHall", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Jeff Hall
Founder & President
Second To None, Inc.

www.second-to-none.com

1 authenticity

ethos²

Living in these fast-paced, rather extraordinary times has sparked a yearning within us for relationships and life experiences that are genuine and real.

Achieving this starts with being true to ourselves.

As children, we live authentically, seldom afraid or embarrassed to seek out what we want or to speak our minds. In transitioning from youth to adulthood, we tend to tuck that authenticity away, putting it aside while we chase our dreams, afraid that it might hinder us in our success.

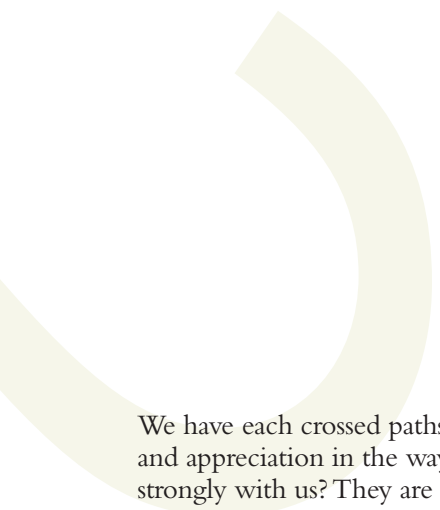
The authentic you is your true self and, in living authentically, you live your truth, making time for the things you love and projecting who you really are. The simplest way to live your truth is to leave the expectations of others behind and live the way you feel most worthwhile. Living authentically means that you make choices without fear or doubt, trusting in your soul's wisdom.

People who live authentically inspire us to let go of our own defenses and relax for a moment in the truth of who we really are. Our reward for taking such a risk is that as we do, we will attract and inspire others, giving them the permission to be real too.



grace

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We have each crossed paths with individuals who seem to so naturally project a sense of balance and appreciation in the way they go about their lives. What is it about them that resonates so strongly with us? They are living in a state of grace. And we each can as well.

Grace exists inside us and all around us.

It is our inner beauty that radiates outward, touching everyone we meet. To be able to live in a state of grace is available to all, and is inherent to our birthright. All we must do is open our eyes to its presence and we will find and experience grace everywhere.

When we accept that we always exist in a state of grace, we are able to live our lives more graciously. Knowing we are graced gives us hope, makes us more generous, and allows us to trust that we are taken care of even when we are going through difficult times. Grace is our benevolence of heart, and our generosity of spirit.

Grace is unconditional love and the beauty that is our humanity. When we know that we are blessed with grace, we can't help but want to live our lives in harmony.

intention

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One of the many joys found in starting and building a small company is having a sense of freedom and flexibility in our pursuits. Likewise, one of the risks is in trying to do or be everything, which can dampen effectiveness.

The answer lies in consciously narrowing focus: living and acting with intention.

When our thoughts and actions are scattered in several directions and we are no longer aware of what we are doing or why, it is time to center ourselves. We begin by acknowledging that we have become spread too thin. Our thoughts might be out of sync with our feelings, and our actions may be out of sync with both.

We can visualize ourselves casting a net and pulling all the disparate parts of ourselves back to the center of our being. From this place of centeredness, we can begin again, directing ourselves outward in a more intentional way.

The universe is aware of both the concrete goals we actively pursue and the abstract dreams we have not yet begun to refine. In order to manifest our aspirations, we not only need to know what it is we generally wish to achieve; we also need to clearly articulate these aims to ourselves and the universe.

When we intentionally define what we want, listing and visualizing each goal with as much detail as possible, our aspirations take on new substance. What was once a mere wish becomes real and achievable when put into words.

Our hopes and dreams are the universe whispering to us, planting an idea of what's possible while directing us toward the best use of our gifts. The universe truly wants to give us our hearts' desires. We simply need to be clear about what they are and live with intention.

4 transparency

As individuals and as organizations, we can choose to outwardly project one persona, while protectively keeping everything within, or we can choose to openly share with one another our goals, challenges, strengths and weaknesses. This second path is one of transparency.

Living and acting with transparency requires acting from a place of honesty, humility and trust.

Within today's business environment of global competition and innovation, employees are striving to achieve a broader set of goals under compressed timetables. It is here that an open minded and transparent work culture plays a vital role. Such an environment can serve as one of the primary triggers to facilitate accountability, trust, communication, responsibility and pride.

Transparency encourages employees to rigorously communicate with a broader set of co-workers as peers, in order to exchange ideas, thoughts and best practices that can lead to a stronger foundation of sustained, collective success.

The background of the image features large, stylized, semi-transparent letters 'S' and 'C' in a dark grey color. The 'S' is on the left and the 'C' is on the right, both spanning across the vertical divide of the image. The word 'empowerment' is written in white, bold, sans-serif font, positioned over the 'S' on the left side.

empowerment

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It is natural to desire having a sense of control over our own actions.

When we are freely and openly able to exercise our skills, experience and best judgment, we are able to more fully give of ourselves and feel engaged in the work we do.

Exhibiting trust in others is incredibly empowering, for it allows individuals to participate in co-creating their environment. Co-creation, in turn, deepens the individual sense of responsibility for the long-term sustainability and success of the organization.

Elevating the capacity for fellow co-workers to make decisions, then transforms those choices into actions and outcomes that result in a broad and extraordinary strengthening of the organization.

integrity

A boat with no leaks is said to have integrity, as is a solid piece of furniture. It is their wholeness – no gaps or weaknesses – that gives them their integrity. People who have integrity convey a similar “seaworthiness” and stability. There is the sense that they can be counted on, that their actions will be consistent with their ideals. Just being in the presence of someone with this quality creates a feeling of steadiness even in a chaotic environment.

Living with integrity and alignment generates self-confidence and self-esteem. It is important to take time on a regular basis to examine whether your actions, your words and your vision are in alignment.

Make it a priority to acknowledge imbalances you find and commit to resolving them. Take time to consider, and when necessary, revise your overall vision for life, making sure your actions and words support your ideals.



flow

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I believe there is a natural rhythm to the world and universe around us. Through free will, we can choose to work within this rhythm and energy, or attempt to manipulate it.

The expression “going with the flow” is a metaphor that applies to navigating a river. When we go with the flow, we follow the current of the river rather than push against it. People who go with the flow may be interpreted as passive, but to truly go with the flow requires awareness, presence, and the ability to blend one’s own energy with the prevailing current.

Going with the flow doesn’t mean we simply hope for the best. Rather, it involves letting go of agendas and noticing the play of energy all around us.

Going with the flow doesn’t mean that we don’t know where we’re going; it means that we are open to multiple ways of getting there. We are also open to changing our destination, clinging more to the essence of our goal than to the particulars. We acknowledge that letting go and modifying our plans is part of the process.

Trust that the big river of your life has a plan for you and let it carry you onward. Throw overboard those things that are weighing you down.

Take a deep breath and move into the current.

trust

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The idea of trusting the universe is a popular one these days, but many of us don't know what this really means and we often have a hard time doing it. This is partly because the story of humankind is most often presented within the context of struggle, control, and survival, instead of one of trust and collaboration.

It is a good idea to take responsibility for the things in life that we can control or create. We work so we can feed, clothe, and shelter our loved ones and ourselves. We manifest our dreams and visions in physical form with hard work and forethought. But at a certain point, when we have done all that we can, we must let go and allow the universe to take over.

This requires trust.

It requires a trust that runs deeper than just expecting things to turn out the way we want them to. Sometimes they will, and sometimes they won't. We develop equanimity and grace as we learn to trust that. With the guiding hand of the universe, life will unfold exactly the way it should. We are engaged in an ongoing relationship with a universe that responds to our thoughts and actions.

communication

When we are in a relationship where we feel listened to and understood, we count ourselves lucky because we know how rare that experience is.

We reserve our most intimate selves for the people who, along with us, co-create an open space where we feel free to express ourselves and listen without judgment. These relationships, which thrive on open communication, can mean the difference between a disconnected loneliness and a deep sense of belonging.

In the St. Francis prayer of good will, we find the powerful passage, “Grant that I may seek to understand, more than to be understood.” We all long to feel heard, understood, and loved, and clear communication makes this possible.

The key is consciously creating an environment where we can each communicate meaningfully, lovingly, and wisely. In this way, we honor our companions and create relationships in which there is a genuine sense of understanding and respect.

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synchronicity

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When events appear to fit together perfectly in our lives, it may seem at first that they are random occurrences, things that are the result of coincidence. These synchronous happenings, though, are much more than that, for, if we look at them more closely they can show us that the universe is listening to us and gently communicating with us.

Learning to pay attention to and link the things that occur on a daily basis can be a way for us to become more attuned to the fact that most everything happens in our lives for a reason – even when that reason is not clear right away.

This idea of synchronicity means that we have to trust there is more to our lives than what we experience on a physical level. We need to be willing to look more closely at the bigger picture, accepting and having confidence in the fact that there is more to our experiences than immediately meets the eye.

Being open to synchronicity also means that we have to understand that our lives are filled with both positive and negative events. Once we can recognize that one event is neither more desirable nor better than the other – they all have an overall purpose in our lives – then we are truly ready to listen to the messages the universe gives us.

While we may not be able to see everything in our lives as being synchronous, we can certainly use hindsight to be more aware of how the universe guides us. This sense of wonder at the mysteries of the universe and the interconnectedness present in our lives will help us see our overall ways of being and will in turn make it easier to work more consciously towards our spiritual evolution.

11 impeccability

Since frankness and sincerity form the basis of all life-enriching relationships, your word is one of your most precious and powerful possessions.

Every thought we think and every action we take has an effect on the world around us. To be aware of this is to be conscious of our impact on the people in our lives. At first, being more conscious requires effort, but once we have made it a habit, it becomes second nature. The more we practice this awareness of others, the more we find ourselves in easy alignment with our integrity.

As you cultivate honesty within yourself, you will find that your honor and reliability put people at ease. Others will feel comfortable seeking out your friendship and collaborating with you on projects of great importance, certain that their positive expectations will be met. And if life's surprises prevent you from keeping your word, simply admit your error apologetically and make amends quickly.

Since the path of truth frequently represents the more difficult journey, embarking upon it builds character. You can harness the power of your word when you do your best to live a life of honesty and understand what motivates dishonesty. In keeping your agreements and embodying sincerity, you prove that you are worthy of trust and perceive values as something to be incorporated into your daily existence.

connectedness

One of the many gifts that nature offers us is a clear demonstration of the interdependence between all living things. The person who exhales the carbon dioxide, the clouds that produce the rain, the sun that gives light, the leaf that transforms all these things into sustenance for a tree – not one of these could survive without being part of this cycle.

Each living being is dependent upon other living things for its survival. When we look at the world, we see that this is not a place where different beings survive independently of one another. Earth is home to a web of living things that are connected to each other through a spinning kaleidoscope of relationships.

We need each other to survive and thrive.

reciprocity

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One of the most wonderful abilities we have is the ability to make choices.

We can choose to think positive thoughts or negative thoughts. Likewise, we can make an effort to ensure all our actions contribute to positive outcomes or we can convince ourselves that negative outcomes are inevitable. Such choices can then have a profound affect on your life, for they are the seeds you sow in the universe.

Your words and deeds, even the thoughts kept hidden in your mind, contribute to your experience by attracting similar words, deeds, and thoughts because of the Law of Attraction.

All over the world, there exists a simple precept that, when followed, has the power to end conflict and banish strife. It is the Golden Rule, a key concept in many philosophies and spiritualities that admonishes us to “do unto others as we would have them do unto us.” Its meaning is clear: treat others only in ways that you would want to be treated. However, the golden rule is not always easy to follow. It can be a challenge to honor others as we wish to be honored. Yet, when we do so, we bestow a gift of loving kindness on our fellow human beings. And, in honoring others, we honor ourselves.

The Golden Rule is rooted in pure empathy and does not compel us to perform any specific act. Rather, it gently guides us to never let our actions toward others be out of harmony with our own desires.

Kindness begets kindness. In doing so, you generate a flow of positive energy that enfolds everyone you encounter in peace, goodwill, and harmony.

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inspiration

We all know inspiration when we feel it. It is a force that enlivens us and activates us to do something – we might paint, write, pursue a hobby that brings joy, or envision a new career. We might call an old friend or plan a trip abroad. Whatever the case, doing what we do from a place of inspiration makes all things seem possible.

Inspiration sometimes comes out of nowhere, landing unexpectedly in the midst of your life and lifting you out of your habitual mind and into a higher level of seeing. However, we can be more intentional with our relationship with inspiration than just waiting for it to come to us.

There are many ways to cultivate its presence, from journaling to visiting with a particularly interesting friend. Finding what inspires you and consciously cultivating it will give you access to new ways of thinking and energy you didn't know you had.

When was the last time you felt the spark of your imagination? When was the last time you acted on an impulse that felt totally right? When we are in the presence of what inspires us, we hear our inner guidance more clearly and we have the energy to follow its cues.



potential



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The gifts we are born with and those that we work to develop throughout our lives vary in form and function. Some we find use for every day while others are only useful in specific circumstances. Yet many times we overlook opportunities to share our unique gifts with others. It may be fear of criticism that holds us back or the paralyzing weight of uncertainty. Ultimately, we doubt that our innate talents and practiced skills can truly add value to others' lives.

It is the world as a whole that benefits when we willingly share our gifts. Whether you have been blessed with the ability to awaken beautiful emotions in others through art or industry, or your aptitudes transmit more practical advantages, your gifts are a part of who you are. As you make use of those gifts as best you can, be assured you are contributing to worldly well-being.

Personal power is defined in part by your gifts. To use your talents is to demonstrate you understand yourself and are truly attuned to your capabilities. Every gift lying dormant in your soul has the potential to fill a void in someone else's life. Just as your being is made richer by the love, support, friendship and compassion of others, so, too, can you add richness to many lives.

Your earthly existence provides ample opportunity to explore your purpose, to utilize your skills in a life-affirming way, and to positively touch the lives of others while doing so.



gratitude



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Sometimes we forget to take the time to recognize the richness that defines our lives.

This may be because many of the messages we encounter as we go about our affairs prompt us to think about what we don't have rather than all the abundance we do enjoy. Consequently, our gratitude exists in perpetual conflict with our desire for more, whether we crave time, convenience, wealth, or enlightenment.

Yet understanding and truly appreciating our blessings can be as simple as walking a mile in another's shoes for a short period of time. Because many of us lead comparatively insular lives, we may not comprehend the full scope of our prosperity that is relative to our sisters and brothers in humanity.

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appreciation

As we walk through the world, the people we encounter appear so different from one another. We see babies, old men, pregnant women, and teenaged boys. We know couples on the verge of marriage and lonely widows. We interact with toddlers and the terminally ill. As different as each person seems, they are all living the human experience.

Being aware of the cycle of life and our place in it makes us wiser. We are each simply at different places in the cycle. As we develop a true appreciation for the phase we are in, we can savor it more, while likewise appreciating where others may be on their path.

This foundational life appreciation can then move us forward in recognizing and acknowledging the contributions of others and modeling thankfulness for those in our lives.

purpose

We are each born into this world with a soul purpose. Within us is a glimmer of the divine, a light that can potentially make the world a more beautiful place.

In many, that light often becomes dormant, snuffed out by fears and feelings of inadequacy. To spark it is to attract attention, face the possibility of rejection or the responsibility of success, and risk being labeled immodest. Yet when we undermine the light by hiding our aptitudes and quelling our dreams, we deny ourselves and others a wealth of experiences.

Your abilities are a part of who you are and when you take pride in them, you affirm the love, esteem, and trust with which you view yourself. Moreover, as you express the light within, you grant others permission to do the same, freeing them to explore their own talents and become in tune with their soul's purpose.

The gifts you were born with were not granted to you arbitrarily. While you may never discover what impact your light has had on others, you can be certain that when you embrace your talents and share them with others, you will spread illumination in the world and honor yourself as a soul having a human experience.

relationship

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One of the most satisfying outcomes in nurturing our company for two decades is found in the close and lasting relationships we encourage and support.

Whereas many organizations are either indifferent to, or intimidated by the thought of creating a safe space for closely connected relationships to flourish, it is because of this element of our culture we have been able to attract and retain highly engaged associates.

Most work-based relationships hit bumps from time to time, and one of the hallmarks of an enduring, trust-based friendship is its ability to ride out the turbulence and remain intact even as it faces changes. Our best friends are those who manage to love us through all of our transitions, as we do the same for them.

We find ways to embrace and appreciate the differences that set us apart and offer support no matter what. We allow each other to be exactly as we are at a given moment, even as we allow each other to change over time.

In this way, as co-workers and colleagues, we inevitably feel like family and often create very close personal relationships. We know we will stick together regardless of where our individual paths may eventually lead.

stewardship

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The notion of social responsibility, grounded in a deep and abiding belief that we have both an individual and collective duty to society at large, is genuinely reflected among the associates within our organization.

Drawing upon the lessons of gratitude, appreciation and reciprocity, our lives have been enriched through community stewardship. Giving back can be one of the most rewarding gestures we do. In its purest form, it is an outward way of honoring, assisting, or showing appreciation to others.

Within our organization, it is through financial and volunteer stewardship that we honor the blessings in our lives and consciously accept responsibility for contributing our gifts of time, talent and financial support to the vibrancy and life where we live.

Stewardship allows us to lend a helping hand, lift up others in their time of need and strengthen our community in both small and significant ways. The satisfaction derived from benevolent gestures is both palpable and immeasurable.



acknowledgements

The content, thoughts and passages within Ethos represent an integrated mosaic of the author's personal convictions and experiences, as well as a life perspective that has been informed by the writings and works of several influential sources, including: Leo Babauta, ZenHabits, DailyOm, Gaia, Lance Secretan, St. Francis and Eknath Eswaran.

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