

PIRATA  
GROUP

Culture  
Manual

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# The old man and the traveller

There was once an old man who lived in a village in a mountain valley. He had worked hard on his farm all his life and now he was content to hand over most of the work to his children and the younger ones in his village. His days were now pleasant and leisurely.

Most of all, he liked to climb up the mountainside behind his village and to sit on a bench there, smoking his pipe, dozing from time to time, but also contemplating the village, the fields, the people and the animals that he loved so much in the valley below.

One sunny summer's day, as he sat there smoking his pipe, he heard footsteps approaching along the mountain path which passed by his bench. It was a young man with a heavy pack on his back. He walked up to the old man and said,

"Do you mind if I sit down and rest a while?"

"No, of course not, make yourself comfortable," replied the old man.

It was a hot day and the young man was clearly tired because it took him a while to catch his breath. After a few minutes, he turned to the old man and asked him, pointing down to the village below,

"Is that your village down there?"

"Yes," said the old man. "Why do you ask?"

"I was wondering what the people are like there," the young man said.

The old man thought for a while, pulled on his pipe, and then answered with another question.

"What are the people like in the place you've just come from?"

"Oh, that's just it," said the young man, pulling a face. "I don't even like to think about them. They were all liars, cheats, thieves and drunkards. That's why I've left. I'm looking for a new place to settle down and your village looks nice."

The old man looked at him sadly and said,

"I'm afraid you'll find that the people in my village are liars, cheats, thieves and drunkards, too. This is no place for you."

With a sigh, the young man picked up his pack and went on his way.

A few days later, when the old man was sitting on the same bench, dozing in the summer sun and smoking his pipe, another young man approached along the mountain path, carrying his heavy pack on his back. He walked up to the old man and said,

"Do you mind if I sit down and rest a while?"

"No, of course not, make yourself comfortable," replied the old man. It was another hot day and the young man was clearly tired and he closed his eyes for a while before taking a good look around him. After a few minutes, he turned to the old man and asked him, pointing down to the village below,

"Is that your village down there?"

"Yes," said the old man. "Why do you ask?"

"What are the people like there?" the young man asked.

Once again, the old man thought for a while, pulled on his pipe, and then answered with the same question.

"What are the people like in the place you've just come from?"

A smile spread over the young man's face.

"Oh, they are wonderful," he replied. "You couldn't wish to meet friendlier, happier more hospitable people. I've only been away for a few weeks and I'm missing them already. But I wanted to see the world and to find out more about life. But I'm looking for a place to stay for a while and your village looks so nice."

The old man returned his smile and said,

"Of course, you'll be welcome to stay. The people you left behind is the exact same people you will get to find here"

And the two of them made their way together down the mountainside to the old man's village.



# Welcome to Pirata Group!



Hello!

Welcome to Pirata group.

We would like to let you know the reason why we have decided to create this manual. We would love our people to understand and align with our short, mid & long term goals.

This manual is to be applied to your daily life with us as a set of behaviours and codes we all expect and hope to be followed in order to make this a great place to work.

This manual is more than a training document, it is to be continuously referenced, helping us to make better decisions based on what we believe works and it will continually evolve as we learn and grow.

Over the past years we have made mistakes and we have learned a lot about what works and what doesn't. We will continue to learn as we grow, and this manual is intended to be a guided principles playbook for us all to have a great time, without forgetting who we want to become and what we want to achieve.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Pirata team". The signature is stylized and cursive.

# How all of this started...

Pirata group, or Pirata restaurant as we were known as just a few years ago, started like every other dream, with a sentence:

**"What do you think if we built our own restaurant?"**

The idea was simple enough, we wanted to build a restaurant where we could take care of our guests and have a great time while doing so. The project was born out of all our frustrations working for somebody else and we wanted to change the way things were done in the food and beverage industry in Hong Kong, we believed it was possible, we still believe so.

The dream was to build a successful restaurant and we didn't dare to dream further, the idea just seemed so big we had no idea that we would've achieved what we have today.

We lost a lot of locations along the way for different reasons, we struggled to find financing and we had to fight for every dollar during our pre-opening stages, if we had run out of cash, we simply wouldn't have any more. Our homes were our offices and we did not have a dedicated team looking after complicated things such as payroll, contracts or even finances, it was just us. Pirata Group is really just us when you think about it. The team is far larger but Pirata is still just you and I and your team around you, it is not some fancy corporate office.

We are often asked 'What is the secret of your success?'; the truth is not very fancy, we simply looked no further than one guest at a time. We were only thinking about today, ensuring we could do the best work that could be done, learning along the way how to do that job better and better.

In the beginning we were more of a family than a team, a bunch of people with a common set of beliefs that wanted to make great things together.

Contrary to what you may see today there were a few times we thought we wouldn't be able to make payroll or pay rent, we had many days of only 8-10 covers. It was tough, in those times you question all

your beliefs and motives, you second guess yourself and lose hope. But we made ourselves a promise, "we will be just looking after one guest at a time" we could not fail, we would not fail until we made the best restaurant we could make, thus Pirata restaurant was born as a place that people could call a home away from home. Nothing mattered more to us than the experience of each guest, we only aimed for perfection and surprise...The rest is a history we are still writing.

## Why Pirata?

The name Pirata has a colourful history, while working in other businesses we often had to bend the rules to make things happen with the limited resources available, always in the respect of our workplace and always with the restaurant success as our driver but our efforts were misunderstood at times and we quickly got a nickname from our financial team of "pirates". We were treated as outlaws purely because we did everything necessary to promote our business and make better returns.

**"Regardless of what our bosses thought, we felt we knew better, it was frustrating."**

As often is the case, Manuel and Christian made the most out of a bad situation and turned it into an advantage, that frustration fueled them to work even harder at their dreams, they wanted to be surrounded by like-minded people. Pirata has the same meaning in Italian and Spanish so it was an easy choice. "Pirate" is what we are, as we live and operate unconventionally and like pirates of old we don't depend on fancy hierarchy or fixed rules other than the ones we give ourselves. Like pirates we are only as strong as our team is.

- 
- 2014 Pirata
  - 2015 The Optimist
  - 2017 Tokyolima
  - Pici Wanchai
  - Meats
  - Pici Central
  - 2018 Chaiwala
  - Pici TST
  - The Loft
  - Pici Shatin
  - 2019 Pici Lai Chi Kok
  - Honjo
  - TMK
  - 2020 The Pizza Project

## What kind of organisation are we?

When we were thinking about what kind of organisation **we are**, many questions arose and we felt there is no right or wrong answer... so perhaps we should start with what kind of organisation **we are not**.

### What we are not...

**01 Still.** We are not an organisation that is afraid of change or growth. As we grow we will break and will have to reinvent and reimagine ourselves, we firmly believe what got us here won't get us there.

**02 Perfect.** We don't just want to be perfect, we want to be curious and perfectly imperfect. As we grow we are facing numerous challenges that we are not shying away from, in fact we are excited about them.

**03 Blameful.** We do not believe in a culture of finger pointing and criticism. Do we always live by this? Unfortunately not, but we are working to cultivate an awareness and openness amongst our people to get to a place where people admit their mistakes and talk about them freely to reflect upon them. Remember next time we get blamed for something we did wrong it's time to raise our voices, as a reminder that we don't believe in blame.

**04 Closed.** Opening up allows us to be on the same page, opening up goes both ways, we want to let you know - although we do not always make the right decisions we truly try to make the best decisions we can make continuously. Do we always succeed? We don't, but we can promise we make decisions to the best of our knowledge. Feedback to us is very important and when someone believes a decision could be made better, it will do nothing but good for the team to express their beliefs.

**05 Critic.** All feedback must be constructive, in order to give every team member the opportunity to do it better. We won't be able to improve things if we are not aware how they can be improved. If you truly care about making things better - always follow your inner critic and think 'how can we make it better?'

## What we are not...

~~Still~~  
~~Perfect~~  
~~Blameful~~  
~~Closed~~  
~~Critic~~



## What kind of organisation are we?

### What we want to be...

**01 Brutally honest.** Honesty can be painful but allows us to understand how we can keep on growing. When you are exposing an honest point do not forget to ask yourself whether it is true, necessary & kind.

**02 Safe.** In order to foster open communication it's extremely important as a company we make the individuals feel safe, they should feel they can say anything they believe will be good for Pirata Group without having any regret. Only when we create this environment will we be able to get the best of our people. First always listen.

**03 Attentive.** Pay attention to the small details, at the end of the day a small touch of appreciation goes a long way, don't forget to thank your team for the hard work and have kind words towards them.

**04 Innovative.** We want to constantly introduce new ideas, believing in original and creative thinking.

**05 Transparent.** We want to be an open organisation. Information should be readily available to all our people ensuring we are all on the same page and are aware of the group's direction. Transparency means everyone has access to all the right information in due course, we aim to share as much as possible with our people so they can make better decisions.

**06 Determined.** Clear goals and success criteria start at the top of the group and cascade down, meaning hundreds of our people are working towards the same results. Determination always follows dedication.

## What we want to be...

Honest  
Safe  
Attentive  
Innovative  
Transparent  
Determined



[illegible]



## Behavioural values

Behavioural values are a set of common beliefs we have in Pirata Group that will allow us to achieve great balance at work.



### Teamwork

At Pirata Group we are a team, a few individuals working together to achieve the highest grade of excellence in everything we do, even when we fail. We believe in a can-do attitude, meaning:

- > If there is something to be carried – carry it!
- > If something needs doing – do it!
- > If somebody needs help – help them!
- > If you can contribute – contribute!

We believe in a giving culture, a culture where we take pride in assisting each other regardless of whether our assistance is reciprocated or not.

### Be nice

Showing compassion to your colleagues, being sincere and respectful is vital if we are to build the best hospitality organisation we can imagine. Never compromise your morals in difficult situations and don't listen to that devil on your shoulder. Ensure you will be kind and considerate. Put the good of your team above your own interests, their success is yours. Stay truthful and love one another.

### Commitment

The business belongs to you for as long as you stay here, and anything you learn will be taken with you and will be the foundation of your future successes. As a professional, you should treat the organisation as you would if it were your own home. You will spend many hours here, so take pride in it, keep it clean and tidy. If there is a problem, accept responsibility and fix it. Do whatever it takes to provide legendary service and don't sit back on your last success – always strive to improve. If it can be done better, it must be done better.

### Positivity

When was the last time we wanted to call a friend that only had negative things to say? Contributing positive energy plays a huge part in getting the best out of yourself and your colleagues. Who wants to work with negative people? Not us!

# Teamwork Be nice Commitment Positivity



## Business values

### Be light

Trusting our high performers by giving them the right goals and allowing them to achieve these on their own by providing the right tools, whilst allowing for constant change and innovation.

**Adaptability · Voice · Innovation · Trust**

### Be fast

Ensuring rapid growth without compromising our top quality service and product in an ever-changing industry. While doing so we must be aware of the many things that will become obsolete and dysfunctional and WE MUST thrive under these circumstances. We want to play out of the ordinary.

**Progressive · Courageous**

### Be focused

We are a results driven company, that means we have no time for excuses or distractions. We have never heard of any sportsman winning a game by complaining. If you don't have the right instructions... 'Go get 'em!'

**Results driven · Clarity · Alignment**

# Be light Be fast Be focused



**"I fear not the man who has practiced  
10,000 kicks once, but I fear the man  
who has practiced one kick 10,000 times."**

Bruce Lee

## How do we make decisions?

Decision making is one of the most difficult parts of our day to day. As leaders we must make a lot of decisions daily, some of them based on our experience and many of them based on something called 'gut feeling'. Not a very accurate science as you can imagine. We are not very different from you, we don't know everything or what to do in each situation.

When we are taking decisions we make them based on what we believe in. We try to constantly remind ourselves where we were and where we want to be. When making decisions we try to put the good of the team first rather than the individual. On many occasions what doesn't seem necessarily good for one person might be beneficial for a team.

As we grow we find we are able to make better decisions as we have tried and tested these decisions in the past and either got them right or learnt from the wrong ones. Please do not think we always know better, decisions are always best when they are driven by data, in a sense we see it this way :

**"If everyone has an opinion we will go with ours, and if someone has facts we will go with the facts."**



# When making decisions we try to put

# the good of the team first

# rather than the individual

# Time management

How do we believe our people should work? Focus your mind on the right things.

Understanding the importance of prioritising in Pirata Group is key. We are busy here! Time management is defined by your capacity to group your duties in four different boxes:

## Urgent & important

Always identify the activities with the highest leverage. The activities that will free up our time when done correctly generally involve systems, recruitment & training. These activities should always be at the top of your priority list, such as activities with immediate deadlines, and also those that you know will have the greatest impact

## Urgent & not important

These duties are relatively easy to get out of the way, such as a quick phone call or an email. Generally they are duties that will not take up much of your time, but be careful with this one! They are the ones that can distract us from what is important and urgent. Avoid doing these duties at the expense of urgent & important duties.

## Important & not urgent

These can potentially be some of the duties with the highest probability of being misunderstood. In our day to day we face a lot of things which we believe to be important, and perhaps because we want to work on them more than anything else, we lose track and we complete them instead of doing what is really important. A good example will be a general manager covering a waiters section instead of preparing his recruitment or training plan, or an executive chef doing the prep for the restaurant instead of recruiting and training the right people. You shouldn't work on the tasks in this column until you have completed all of your important and urgent tasks first.

## Not important & not urgent

Usually involving development ideas and things that we are working on for the future, such as the improved marketing plan that we have always wanted to do, or a great idea to improve sales, for example.

Time management is defined by your capacity to group your duties in 4 boxes

**60%**  
**Urgent & Important**  
(Priorities, high leverage activities)

**5%**  
**Urgent & not important**  
(Things we need to get out of the way)

**25%**  
**Important & not urgent**  
(Planning)

**10%**  
**Not important & not urgent**  
(Futuristic, the vision)

### We always use the word **we**

Our people are our biggest asset. They are responsible for bringing new restaurants to life, for making our guests happy, for looking after each other and for the many other super powers that they have. In order to be surrounded by the right people, there are a few guiding principles that will bring us clarity when making decisions:

**01 Practice empathy.** Do you remember a time when you were hired by another company and you felt misguided? What can you do to offer the right guidance from the first day and how can you be consistent regarding your message and the evolution of your people?

**02 We always use the word WE.** We take ownership and share credit, on the good days and bad days. Nothing is more detrimental to a team than our own people talking in the third person or first person.

**03 Good people like good missions.** Be surrounded by people that are goal driven, if they look at the top of the mountain and seem concerned, they are probably not for us.

**04 Good people,** when provided with the right tools, can be evolved into independent thinkers.

We want to create an environment where hardworking people thrive.

#### A word on leadership

As leaders, we are not responsible for results but we are responsible for the people responsible for results. How do we create the right environment for us to be able to deliver these results?

- > Bring the right people
- > Create the goal together
- > Train them on their vision
- > Be relentless
- > Give the tools
- > Inspire them
- > Trust them

||

Leadership  
is the  
willingness to  
run towards  
the danger to  
protect those  
in your care

||

Simon Sinek

# People, people, people

## Our team comes first...

### But what does that mean at Pirata Group?

This is a concept that can often be misinterpreted, so we want to be clear about how we put this into practice, by defining what you can expect from us, as well as what we expect from you...

#### The right way

- 01 Getting the right people in the right positions
- 02 Acting on the interest of the team as a whole
- 03 Creating an environment where people can express themselves
- 04 Providing the necessary tools in order for our team to deliver a good job
- 05 Giving our team the freedom to create their own objectives - each individually contributing to the company's direction.
- 06 Resolve problems together, always listening first to the solutions proposed by our people
- 07 Provide growth and opportunity, wherever possible
- 08 Understanding mistakes will happen, helping to resolve issues
- 09 Prioritising personal growth and progression within the organisation
- 10 Listening carefully to our people and improving as much as we can, always one improvement at a time
- 11 Inspiring the team to meet challenges head on, leaving their comfort zone and delivering the very best.
- 12 Inspiring and trusting our people, whilst leading by example.

#### The wrong way

- 01 Micro-managing
- 02 Only acting to purely satisfy the individual
- 03 Offering extra holidays or extra pay with no reason
- 04 To keep poor performers in the organisation because they are nice
- 05 Wanting to be always right; it's not who is right, it's what is right
- 06 Not adapting when it is necessary to do so
- 07 To allow blame within the organisation
- 08 To allow lack of discipline across the team (Lateness, grooming standards)
- 09 Accepting mediocrity





## Pirata people

Pirata People is the employee wellness program for Pirata Group. This is one aspect of our drive to always look after the bright future of our people.

Through the creation of the Pirata People community, we aim to put our company values into action by providing our staff with an inspirational environment where they are able to have fun, relax, make new friendships with staff from other outlets and develop new skills, all of which will contribute to making our lives better.

Since Pirata People was launched, some past activities and workshops have included: Cinema trips, bowling nights, money management workshops, mindfulness classes, football matches, day/night hikes, cooking masterclasses, crossfit classes, Spartan race, mental health awareness seminars, yoga classes and dog walking to help local charities.

Aside from the weekly activities provided, the Pirata People community acts as a support network for our staff. We understand that from time to time some of us may experience unexpected difficulties that life throws at us, and if this happens to you, remember 'It's ok to not feel ok!'. Pirata People acts as a non-judgmental platform that you can reach out to in confidence if you are in need some support of any kind. If we are unable to provide you with the support you need right away, we will do our best to help you and guide you in the direction of the most appropriate person or organisation. Our PP hotline is active every day between 11am and 7pm, please feel free to call or text us +852 5994 7377

You will discover information about Pirata People events via your outlets WhatsApp groups and also on our staff only instagram account: Monkey Pirata.

We encourage our staff to contribute with suggestions or ideas for future events or activities, so if there is anything you think would be a great idea for Pirata People then please don't hesitate to contact us on the Pirata People hotline: +852 5994 7377

Finally, although we all work in our respective outlets, let's not forget that we form part of a large group, and Pirata People is the community that brings our staff together, so we look forward to welcoming you to participate in the Pirata People events coming soon!

A black and white photograph of a group of people, mostly young adults, participating in a group exercise or dance in an outdoor courtyard. They are wearing casual clothing like t-shirts and leggings. Some have their arms raised. In the background, there are multi-story residential buildings with many windows and balconies. The overall atmosphere is active and community-oriented.

# Weekly activities are organised by our team and everyone is welcome!

Check on Whatsapp  
(+852) 5994 7377

## Strengths & weaknesses

### Things we are good at

- 01 We are not afraid to get it wrong
- 02 We have no problem raising our hand and admitting when we have made a mistake
- 03 We are creative
- 04 We are operations driven, guest is king
- 05 We are good at having faith in what we do
- 06 We are good at providing opportunities for our people

### Things we are not good at

- 01 Providing a clear structure
- 02 Giving continuous feedback to our peers
- 03 Offering stability within our work environment, what was good yesterday isn't necessarily good today
- 04 Having the capacity to follow a one year plan
- 05 At celebrating our successes (we will get better)
- 06 At listening to people when they tell us it is not possible (Sometimes we really should...)

## Rules of transparency

### Do's

- 01 We talk openly about each others performance
- 02 The organisation's direction gets communicated quarterly
- 03 If we have a question - we ask
- 04 Our leaders have access to the right figures so they can make the right financial decisions
- 05 When someone asks a question, we should answer openly and honestly
- 06 We talk openly about the organisation's issues with a positive approach

### Dont's

- 01 Say anything behind someone's back that you wouldn't say to their face
- 02 We don't share information during the planning stage
- 03 We don't speculate

## How do we like to solve problems?

01 **Stay positive** - In order to make the right decisions we need to have the right mindset, leave your emotions at the door.

02 **Do not project problems on others** - If you seek help, say so, but do not make your colleagues feel responsible for your problems. As leaders, it is not relevant whose problem it is or who has created the problem, what matters is who is going to be responsible for getting it fixed.

03 **Lay down the reasoning** - Devote the right amount of time to put into writing why you think you have a problem and what are the considerations to be made.

04 **Ask yourself why, ask yourself 5 times** - Great leaders solve the problem at the source:

**Case study** - My service standards are not excellent,

- > Why? Because my team is not good,
- > Why? Because I didn't have time to recruit,
- > Why? Because I'm busy,
- > Why? Because I haven't organised my priorities.

**Solution:** Seek help, not to do the service but to be able to organise myself better.

05 **Draft a plan** - Abraham Lincoln was quoted as saying "Give me six hours to chop down a tree and I will spend the first four sharpening the axe." Say no more ...

06 **If you can fix it, don't worry** - just fix it. If you cannot fix it - don't worry, there is nothing you can do. We spend half of our lives worrying about things we cannot change or things that will never occur.



## What makes a manager

### Systems

Systems are the base of any leveraged activity. **Do things, do them once, do them right.** Providing our team with the right formula to do things right again and again is the most valuable thing we can do for them.

**Remember: systems should manage people, people can't manage the systems.**

If people are brought into a faulty system environment we will foster frustration and we will need to do the job twice. We must make sure the house is tidy before we bring in the best players.

### Recruitment

Once our systems are created it is time to find the best people we can get our hands on. Recruitment is the single most important thing a manager has to do, what is more important than bringing the best people into your team? How can we create extraordinary experiences without the right team?

### Training

Training can bring out the very best in our people. Providing them with the right tools to do the job to the best of their capacity is imperative if we are seeking success. We are only as good as our weakest link.

# Systems Recruitment Training

### What is a Pirata Group high performer?

A person

- > That is always exceeding expectations
- > Who all of their colleagues speak very highly of
- > That inspires the team and contributes whenever they show up
- > That can adapt to change and will always find the positives
- > That thinks outside of the box to fix problems no one else seems to be able to fix
- > That you want to have on your side on the bad days

# Expansion of Pirata Group

What is our criteria when looking for new opportunities? How do we work on a new concept?

First and foremost we want to have fun. We believe in the importance of loving what we do. While looking for a new concept we don't have a predetermined approach. But, for our approach to make a new concept work, the question is always the same, what comes first, the concept or the space? The 5 key rules while developing a new concept are:

## Concept

As a rule of thumb we tend to have 4 or 5 concepts in development stages at any given time. When working on the concepts the first pillars are always photography and music (Look and feel as well as the ambience), followed by the food program at a later stage. But we always start by how every element will be incorporated into the concept

# Key elements into one new concept

**01 Service style** - What kind of service we are aiming to provide will determine the management team that will go behind. Is it casual and easy like Pici, takeaway like The Loft or full sit down dinner like TokyoLima? Understanding the service will dictate training programs, reservations standards, uniforms to name a few.

**02 Look & feel** - That's determined by the design and the music, what we call the ambience. For us it's very important to put the right amount of time into the things that no one sees but everyone notices. Do we want to express a sense of opulence or simplicity? The materials we are using will determine very much the way our guests perceive the place and whether they perceive it as an expensive or cheap place, contrary to belief, it's not the price that determines the perception.

**03 The food** - Building the menu around the food doesn't have to be country themed necessarily as Pici is not an Italian restaurant but a pasta bar, and MEATS is just a place that serves protein driven product. In some cases a strong theme might be adequate. The food however is the biggest challenge while building a concept, also menu development and tastings can be very time consuming.

**04 The music** - A very important element of the experience as music has the capacity to express the identity of a restaurant. It will be very easy to find jazz in hotel lounges, indie in student bars or oldie's music in Pici. Music gels together everything.

**05 The pricing** - Has to be a reflection of everything else, the interiors, the food style, the portioning, reservations or no reservations. Everything must be reflected in the pricing, if someone is planning to come and spend 700 HKD per person chances are they will not leave this decision till the last minute and instead they will plan ahead.

**06 The space** - The space and location are fundamental factors of a concept and usually they will determine a lot of factors in a new concept, the level of lighting, where it is located, the area clientele, they are all key elements that must be spot on and should be taken into consideration. For example we will not be able to bring clientele to enjoy a business lunch in TokyoLima without natural light.

**07 Something is missing here** - Normally when we are in the new concept creation phase we brainstorm to identify what's missing from the market, what's the 'market opportunity'. We start by looking into different cuisines, locations, pricing, how we want the guest to feel etc.

**07 Financials** - This is the difference maker, financials need to make sense, at least on paper. We set some rules to make non emotional decisions when it comes to a new concept and then it goes down to whether it makes sense financially or not. There is no point working very hard for the next 6 years if the concept will not be profitable or add value of some sort.

**08 The team** - The team, together with the space are possibly the only two elements in the equation that we can't change so we must get them right at the beginning. The quality of the food, the mood in the restaurant and the guest experience are the result of having the right people in the right places. We must be content with our management team before we open our doors. Something we have learnt in the past is that the greatest people make the greatest concepts. If a concept is great but we don't have a great team behind it, it will get lost.

