

## THE FLASHPOINT STYLE

At **FLASHPOINT** we take what we do seriously, but we don't take ourselves very seriously. Never confuse the two. We operate on the simple principle of earned respect. Each and every person at **FLASHPOINT** is accorded the deference and respect which they have earned through their own efforts and the demonstrable results of those efforts. A job is measured in hours, while a career is measured in results. Respect at **FLASHPOINT** is far more important than popularity.

The sense of purpose at **FLASHPOINT** is tangible and contagious. We are an intense, focused group of committed people. We want it all, and we want it bad. Because we are deadly serious and concerned about doing our best, almost everyone we come into contact with gets that message loud and clear. Not surprisingly, our attitude actually improves theirs, and we get more help, better service, and more support than money can buy. Mutual respect is a far more valuable currency than promises or dollars. We deal people in and make them a part of our energy and effort.

When we talk about our school and our responsibilities, we are interested in facts and results, not in quick fixes or excuses. If we make a mistake, we step up and take our medicine -- we don't waste anyone's time with excuses or in attempts to minimize the error. We take mistakes more personally than you could ever imagine -- they hurt each and every one here, and we hate to see anyone make any mistake at any time. Every error hurts and some of us never forget any mistakes. Mistakes are perpetual embarrassments to the kind of college we are trying to build.

Sometimes it's easy to believe that people get ahead because they're good talkers, quick on their feet, attractive and articulate. Many of our people and students will have all of these important skills and qualities, but that's not why they will succeed. They will succeed because they work as hard as they can, and they make it their business to know all the facts, figures and details of whatever they're working on. They pay precise attention to the details and, not surprisingly, the big things tend to fall into place.

The casual give-and-take which is a part of our day-to-day work can make it seem that we put a premium on glibness or sometimes take things lightly. This is a very dangerous impression because it sometimes misleads newcomers. Quick comebacks, snappy retorts, and fast (but not necessarily correct) answers play a part in our internal corporate culture, but no part whatsoever in how we serve our various audiences -- students, parents, investors, partners, directors, regulators, etc. The plain fact is -- we care about providing a good education and about our school and the people we serve more than any of our competitors do. We make commitments; we do what we said we'd do, and we do it when it's due -- no excuses offered or accepted.

At **FLASHPOINT** we do try to make things look easy. Mostly we accomplish this by working twice as long and hard as anyone else. There are no shortcuts. We put out the maximum possible effort and attention to any job we undertake -- no matter how small, tedious or

insignificant it may seem at the time. We don't expect to out-smart people -- we plan to out-work and out-fundamental them. We don't ever confuse our standards for doing a job with what someone else might accept. We never try to wing it. We start with the long, slow, hard way to do each task because that's the only way to be sure that it gets done right. We want to do the job right the first time. As we progress, we hope to get better, faster and more efficient, but never at the cost of the quality or the accuracy of our work.

**FLASHPOINT** is based on a simple proposition -- we know what we are talking about because we live it every day. We get the facts; we organize and analyze them until they squeak; and then we present them as clearly and concisely as we can in a complete and professional fashion. Looking for a solution without listening to the problem is like working in the dark. Anything we lack in technical training or experience, we make up for by expending the energy and effort to learn on the run. We are great listeners and quick studies -- we learn from every source and grow a little every day.

We are constantly improving the technology of keeping in touch. We learn to get better by listening carefully, constantly and thoroughly -- to our "student customers", vendors and other partners, industry sources, employers and to those responsible for regulating our activities. Our technology is useful to us only as a mechanism to assist us in supporting our students and faculty; anticipating their needs; and responding to their requirements. It will never replace the need for consistent, caring and responsive interpersonal communications. If we lose touch with our users - we'll soon lose their confidence and support as well. The way we'll succeed is by being the best and most careful listeners around.

We have a strong sense of quality -- quality in our students and in our services; in the people we work beside; and in the tools and systems we develop in order to do our work. Economy at **FLASHPOINT** comes from high value, not from low cost. Quality is never an accident -- it's always the result of intelligent effort. Aesthetics are an integral part of the quality we instill in everything we undertake. Appearances and first impressions do count. We expect and intend to be a first class college in every way. We never settle -- if something is almost right, it's wrong.

The **FLASHPOINT** approach is informal and non-bureaucratic. Verbal communication is key, not memos. "Come or call, don't write" is the internal watchword. However, in our dealings with third parties or on personnel or student matters where careful documentation is critical, everything we do must be written and as fully documented as possible. We do it the **FLASHPOINT** way whether they want it or not, and we do it without being asked because, as often as not, we are creating information which they need whether they know it or not. The education of everyone we work with is as much and as important a part of our jobs as anything else we do. They need to know how we do business because it's the way we expect them to perform as well. We are leaders in thought and actions.

People at **FLASHPOINT** are accessible at all levels. However, in respect to their own obligations and responsibilities, "drop-in" visits with our senior people for chats or heart-to-hearts are scheduled at the crack of dawn, after hours or on the weekends. If a conversation is worth

having, the party seeking the time needs to demonstrate that it's important enough to extend him or herself in order to make it happen. Communication at **FLASHPOINT** is so critical that no one is ever too busy to make the time. Both parties owe it to each other to be sure that they're prepared for the meeting and that they've done everything necessary in advance to make sure that the meeting can accomplish something. We are all interested in new ideas and new approaches or solutions to making our school better- but they need to show enough advance thought, analysis and effort to make it worth investing the time in the discussion.

We think that it's exciting and challenging to be a part of **FLASHPOINT**. It's certainly intense, but there is as much laughter from time to time as there is serious discussion. We believe that in the long run people rarely succeed at anything unless they enjoy it. **FLASHPOINT** is a special place to be -- not just another job. More than anything else, the **FLASHPOINT** organization is personable and approachable, but still dedicated to getting the job done. In many respects, because no one outside the school can really appreciate all of the joys and frustrations we face every day, we become our own best friends. We have no time for politics, finger pointing or buck passing -- we all have much too much to do. Remember that nothing is easier than fault-finding. No talent, no self-denial, no character and no brains are required to grumble. One last point -- friends at work are great to have, and we're all in this together, but our responsibilities to the school and our students always come first. At **FLASHPOINT**, discipline trumps morale.

With the informality at **FLASHPOINT** comes a certain lack of structure. We share a commitment to letting people who have demonstrated their maturity and talent attack problems on their own within certain unstated but quickly understood guidelines. To make matters even worse, even the clearest of the "rules" can change from time to time with or without notice. This can be a very confusing environment, but in a fast moving and rapidly changing organization, it's almost inevitable. If you're not confused and concerned, you're not growing. The most important idea here is to ask questions and to try to develop a sense of knowing what you don't know. At **FLASHPOINT** there are no penalties for asking questions. Everyone at **FLASHPOINT** is a valuable source of information as long as someone takes the time to ask for their help.

Bigger isn't ever the same as better. Sheer growth by any measure is not our principal goal and, most likely for the foreseeable future, it won't be. Our goal is to remain a quality organization doing a careful and thorough job of which we can all be proud. If we can achieve the consistent quality in our work which is necessary to do the job right, our school and the demand for our services will automatically grow. Competition is avoided -- not by barriers to entry or contracts - - but by continuing to deliver on the promises we've made to all of our "customers".

At **FLASHPOINT** we have a highly developed sense of confidence -- we are succeeding in the face of considerable challenges and difficult circumstances, and we will continue through our work and efforts to be successful. But we always keep an eye out for the banana peel. We are responsive because, as an organization, we are constantly insecure -- there are no sure things in today's competitive world and each and every time that we take anyone for granted, we can count on getting kicked in the face in the near future. But if we all try as hard as we can, we

know that, in the end, we can make it work, because the strength of our resolve and our commitment simply will not be denied.

**FLASHPOINT's** progress depends on the belief that things can always be better. We believe that "if it ain't been fixed, it's gonna break" and we prefer anticipation and action to waiting to see. There is simply nothing we do which can't be done better. If we don't do it, someone else will come along and do it. We never assume that, because we do things a certain way, they can't be changed for the better or that only big changes matter. Progressive improvement beats postponed perfection and every little bit helps. At the same time, you should never assume that anything we do is arbitrary. More than likely, there are one or more good reasons which it is important to understand before attempting to make changes. That is one of the reasons why we attempt to get so many people involved in the decision-making process. It makes a great deal of sense to observe things for a while and make sure you know what you're talking about before you open your mouth.

We are proud professionals. We try to treat our people as professionals, and we expect that they will act as professionals at all times. Pros are people who do a job well even when they don't feel like it. We trust each other to do our own jobs well and to pitch in unselfishly to help others as well. We try to take a straightforward, even simple, approach to our problems and to our college with a single goal in mind. Day-in and day-out, we want to do the best and most professional job that we can possibly do. No less. We are proud of this standard and not the least bit self-conscious or ashamed to be "old-fashioned" about the basics.

## THE **FLASHPOINT** STYLE - PART TWO

### Introduction

At **FLASHPOINT** things move so rapidly that it's sometimes wise to take a little time to reflect and re-focus our energies so that we all clearly understand why we're here, what we're trying to accomplish and what we expect (reasonably or unreasonably) from the process. Each of you has read "The **FLASHPOINT** Style" by now, and I believe that it's as fair and accurate a representation of what life around here is going to be as there can be. Nonetheless, some of the ideas and concepts covered had to be broadly expressed and may not be easy for everyone to apply directly to their day-to-day experience.

In this memo, I've tried to narrow the focus and deal as closely as possible with the most elusive concept of all -- what makes the leaders at **FLASHPOINT** tick? What drives people around here to expend such exceptional amounts of energy and to make such real sacrifices of their time and personal lives on an ongoing basis? Why does it seem to be so obvious to many of our best people that we just never compromise and that it's our obligation to push as hard and move ahead as quickly as we can each and every day?

Maybe it's that we all believe that our uncompromising performance will continue to lead to more of the successes we've had so far. One thing is clear -- no one here does it for the money. We couldn't buy -- even if we tried -- the loyalty, commitment and results that our key players demonstrate every day. So what's the goal or objective which creates so many "peak performers" at **FLASHPOINT**?

As you'll see in reading on, the shortest answer seems to be that -- in the end -- each of us is doing it for ourselves. It's our own confidence, self-respect and futures on the line as well as our image of the kind of people we want to work with and to be.

Five years from now, the most important issue won't be what you've done; it'll be what you've become. As the expression goes:

**WORK HARD, STICK TOGETHER,  
IMPROVE EVERY DAY AND ALWAYS  
ASK THE QUESTION:  
HOW BADLY DO I WANT IT?**

That's not always an easy question to answer. And, for some of you, it's a question that comes up on a regular basis. But the leaders at **FLASHPOINT** no longer even ask -- they know the answer because they live it all day long -- every single day: we want it very badly and we want it now. Here's some questions which should help each of you decide on your own answer as well as whether you've got the drive and desire to excel at **FLASHPOINT**.

### **Key Questions and Concerns**

**Do I really want to excel and to assume all of the burdens and responsibilities which come with being a leader?**

1. Do I have enough self-discipline and desire? These qualities, far more than material motivations, will keep you moving when the going gets tough.
2. Can I make the personal investment and the necessary sacrifices of time, friends and family?
3. Can I accept the loneliness? Is acceptance by my peers and co-workers more important to me than doing my job right?

4. Can I handle the uncertainty, ambiguity and risks of advancement -- what if I fail? (P.S. At **FLASHPOINT**, it's no sin to try and fail -- the sin is in not trying.)

**Am I willing to invest, endure and sacrifice without any assurance that all my efforts and energy will be recognized and rewarded?**

1. Getting the job done (whatever it is) will require enormous amounts of energy, time, effort and commitment. The only answer to what you're willing to invest is -- whatever it takes.
2. Endurance helps convert whatever obstacles and difficulties life puts in our path into opportunities and sometimes even triumphs. We don't complain, we don't sulk -- we pick ourselves up off the floor, wipe ourselves off, and start all over again. How much can we endure? Whatever we must endure to get the job done and done right.
3. Try as we might, sometimes things don't work out as we planned - life isn't always fair, and plenty of people work hard all their lives for very little. We at **FLASHPOINT** have been very lucky so far, but there are no promises or guarantees. So, as we give things up, make sacrifices, and assume new responsibilities, we don't even get to ask -- much less answer -- the toughest question of all -- how long will it take? In many businesses and many careers, if the founders had known how long or how hard the journey was going to be -- they would never have started. So here again the questions are the same -- what we're doing, how we're doing it and why -- and the answers are simple: we're doing it because it's the right thing to do and the right way to do it. If our actions ever come to depend on what others think of them, we'll have lost our way.
4. A word of encouragement -- we don't miss many good people, so don't worry about being overlooked or lost in the shuffle of growth. Advancement at **FLASHPOINT** is based mostly on results (results now -- not in the future) and only partially on potential. Let us be the judge of your potential and spend your time and energy keeping your eye on the ball so you don't accidentally get hit in the face on your way to the future.
5. For five years, as a young lawyer, I started each day with a little promise to myself. It went something like this: "One day soon, I'll be a leader. Until then, I'll be the best follower around." Sometimes it isn't easy -- sometimes there seem to be better ways to do things -- easier paths to the same end, etc., but the discipline you develop by learning how to execute the fundamentals will aid your concentration, enable you to better

focus your efforts, and provide a solid base of experience for your future growth. Don't sell it short and don't try to speed up the process -- you only end up cheating yourself. Remember that a person who chases too many rabbits usually ends up with none.

## **Maximizing Peak Performance**

**FLASHPOINT's success** depends on receiving extra special performance from exceptional people. Not necessarily exceptional in their education, their work background or even their technical skill, but exceptional in a far more important way -- they bring meaning and the ability to grow to any job they were asked to perform. They make their work exciting, challenging, stimulating even when it isn't, because they have learned to test and measure themselves and their own performance against their personal best (not some outside standard) and, not surprisingly, the best ones become their own toughest bosses and critics. If anyone thinks our success will come from being tough on our people or our students, they're nuts. It will come from people being tough on themselves and proud of it. We don't compete with each other, and we're really already past the point of proving ourselves to outsiders -- our standards and our goals are internal -- we take on these jobs knowing they aren't easy, and we'll stand or fall on our performance. To finally become a true part of **FLASHPOINT**, each of you needs to conclude that there's enough meaning and value to your work (whatever it is) to make it worth the commitment and effort required to do it in a first class fashion.

At **FLASHPOINT** we believe that every single job is important and must be important to the people doing it. Most companies manage by their rules, procedures and structures to deprive their people of the ability to contribute and to make their jobs matter. At **FLASHPOINT**, we try to stay out of the way since we believe that "peak performers" aren't people with something added; rather they're people with very little of their potential taken away. They are people who find their principal motivation within themselves and who are driven by an unstoppable belief in their own worth and potential. They are self-developers whose goals are to grow to the highest levels possible -- both in their achievements at work and in the development of their human faculties.

## **Critical Traits and Beliefs**

Look at our leaders and a few simple traits and beliefs emerge. Measure yourself against these standards, and you'll never go wrong.

1. We have a mission, we truly care about it, and we are devoted to it. We are single-minded and have an unassailable belief in the likelihood of our success. We have no preconceived limitations. We do more than expected, never less.

2. We focus our energies wholeheartedly on the job. Anything that moves us away from our objectives is discarded. People who get things done are not people who never lose their way -- they're people who know how to quickly find it again. Failing to plan and stick to the plan is the same as planning to fail.
  
3. We react in exactly the same way to success and failure -- we absorb the experience and apply the lessons we've learned to the next task in our continuing journey. Setbacks are information; mistakes are signs that it's time to correct our course. Changes are opportunities to be exploited and capitalized upon. We never coast -- if we're not steadily improving, we're getting worse.
  
4. We excel, not despite changes, but because of them -- we anticipate difficulties and seize opportunities -- we adapt and keep growing. We understand that there's never a right time to do a difficult thing and that people won't make any change that involves a sacrifice if they think they can avoid it. Our job is to educate them to the benefits of change and to lead them to improve themselves. We can sell it because we believe it ourselves.
  
5. We never give in to a competitor or a situation just because it initially looks impervious to our attempts to affect it. If we can make the first dent, the rest of the team and those who follow us will get the job done. When we're truly stuck, we draw on those times in the past when it looked just as bleak and remember that we just put our heads down and plowed straight ahead and somehow got through it together, and we always will.

## **PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL**

While there's almost unanimous agreement about the real success stories in any business, we hear about what it takes so often that we sometimes take it for granted. It's easy to lose sight of how important each person's performance truly is to making a great company -- but it never goes out of fashion. And it will always be the rule at **FLASHPOINT** -- we love the eager beavers and the tigers. They're the ones who try to do more than they're expected to. They're always reaching. And reaching out to the people they work with; trying to help them do their jobs better. That's just the way they're built -- they don't know how to do things half-way. They attack their jobs with both zeal and impatience. They hate shoddy work and mediocre people. Sometimes they challenge or break the rules -- that comes with the territory. You can always

apologize, but you can never regain a lost opportunity once you've let it pass. Most of all, they get things done -- they're driven by their own goals and objectives -- no one needs to hold their hands.

What do the best of them all have in common? Here again, you've heard it before, but this time take it to heart and ask yourself how you stack up. Be honest with yourself -- things can always get better.

1. THEY LEARN ALL THE TIME. They're not too proud to take notes or ask questions. They're not so stupid that they think they'll remember everything or that someone will waste the time to repeat it for them when it really counts.
2. THEY'RE-PROACTIVE, NOT REACTIVE. They're driving toward the goals -- making things happen -- setting the agenda and controlling the situation whenever and wherever possible. They're in a hurry. They are ahead of the problems. No one waits for the other shoe to fall or the shit to hit the fan. When you're all fired up, you're that much harder to extinguish.
3. THEY LISTEN CAREFULLY AND THEY PAY ATTENTION. They make the time, even when they don't have it -- and they believe in the power of having friends in low places. Our students, our partners, and everyone else follows the basic rule: they don't care how much you know until they know how much you care. At **FLASHPOINT**, we care. We are continually building relationships which will assure our success.
4. THEY IMPROVE CONSTANTLY. Sometimes an inch at a time. Sometimes bit by bit. But no detail is too small -- no fix is insignificant -- every little bit helps improve the overall picture. Tiny pushes, not mighty shoves. We can't wait for miracles; we prefer the back-breaking grind of getting a little better every single day. We're never satisfied.
5. THEY'RE PROUD OF THE TEAM'S SUCCESSES. No one spends much time taking individual credit, but you'll never see prouder faces any place when someone wins a creative award, or someone else announces that we've completed another successful project, film or game, or **FLASHPOINT** reaches another milestone because everyone pitched in and worked their butts off to get there. When people ask us what we do to make things run so well, the answer's very simple. We do our best -- what else would anyone expect?

6. THEY HATE EVERY SETBACK, MISTAKE OR FAILURE. Yes, it's very personal. It's agony -- it's an insult and it makes the good times go away in a flash. We can't afford it -- we can't permit it -- we'll never accept it. No one should who believes as strongly as we do about **FLASHPOINT**. Everyone's work is a reflection on all of us at **FLASHPOINT** -- we are each other's business.
  
7. THEY'RE FULLY FOCUSED AND CONCENTRATE ON THE GOALS. Is what I'm doing or about to do getting us closer to where we need to be. Are we paying complete and total attention to our priorities? Eyes always on the ball. Obsessed because the little things make all the difference between success and failure. **We didn't come to play -- it doesn't pay. We came to win -- that's all there is.**

We're looking for the stand-outs, the exceptional performers, the obvious leaders -- they'll be rewarded. We've all come too far already to accept anything less than the best.

So a final word to the wise: if you want to be in the fast lane, be prepared to run like hell.