SUPER TECH UNIVERSITY

The Employee Reality Check

A workbook for owners who are done being the reminder system

Hold your people accountable — without running them off.

What's inside

Part 1 Look in the Mirror First

Part 2 Pick Your One

Part 3 Write the Standard

Part 4 Score the Work

Part 5 Have the Conversation

Part 6 Make It Stick

Assessments Owner Mirror Check, Employee Scorecard, Employee Self-Check

Cheat Sheets Diagnose Before You Discipline, Reading the Results, The No-Surprise Ladder, The Tailgate Talk, Words That Work, The Thursday 10

Worksheets Pain Audit, Standard Card, Coaching Action Plan, 30-Day Tracker, Owner Commitment

Eric Sprague & Larry Wilberton | SuperTechU.com

START HERE

Read This First

A straight word before you score anybody

I've spent 44 years in the trades — on trucks, in crawlspaces, and running crews. I've built and sold multiple multi-million dollar home service companies. Here's what that taught me about employees:

> *Most employee problems aren't employee problems. They're clarity problems, training problems, or system problems wearing an employee's name tag.*

That's not letting anybody off the hook. Some people won't do the work no matter how clear you are. But you can't know which kind of problem you've got until you check the whole system — and that starts with you. Train before you blame.

This workbook walks you through it in order: check yourself, pick one person, write down the standard, score the work honestly, have the conversation, and follow through until the new habit sticks.

How to use this workbook

#	Step	What you do	Time
1	**Mirror Check**	Score yourself first. Find the gaps on your side.	10 min
2	**Pick Your One**	Run the Pain Audit. Choose the one employee costing you the most.	10 min
3	**Write the Standard**	Fill out the Standard Card for their role. If it's not written, you can't enforce it.	20 min
4	**Score the Work**	You score them. They score themselves. Compare the gap.	15 min
5	**Have the Conversation**	Run a 10-minute Tailgate Talk. Agree on one behavior.	10 min
6	**Make It Stick**	Track it weekly for 30 days. Recognize the win or move up the ladder.	5 min/wk

Rules of the road

- **Behavior, not identity.** "Your callback rate is too high" is coaching. "You never pay attention" is an attack.
- **One standard for everyone** — including your favorite tech, your family members, and you.
- **Use what you saw in the last 2–4 weeks.** No grudges, no gossip, no "that one time in 2023."
- **Keep completed pages private.** These are coaching notes, not bulletin-board material.

This is a practical coaching tool built from field experience, not a validated HR assessment. It helps you organize what you've observed. It does not make hiring, firing, or disciplinary decisions for you. Follow your company policies and get qualified HR or legal advice before any termination.

PART 1 | ASSESSMENT

The Owner Mirror Check

Your people can only hit a target you've made clear, trained, and backed up. Score yourself first — nobody sees this but you.

#	Statement 1 = Rarely 2 = Sometimes 3 = Usually 4 = Always	Score 1–4
CLARITY		
1	Every role in my company has written standards — not just ones in my head.	
2	If I asked my techs what "a job done right" means, they would give me the same answer.	
3	New hires get the standards on day one, not after their first mistake.	
	Clarity subtotal (3–12)	
TRAINING		
4	I train a skill and have them practice it before I hold anyone accountable for it.	
5	My team gets short, regular training — not just a big session once a year.	
6	When someone misses, my first question is "did we train this?" before "what's wrong with them?"	
	Training subtotal (3–12)	
TOOLS & SYSTEMS		
7	My people have the tools, stocked trucks, and information they need to do the job right.	
8	Schedules, job notes, and customer info are accurate when my team needs them.	
9	When three people make the same mistake, I fix the system instead of blaming three people.	
	Tools & systems subtotal (3–12)	
FEEDBACK		
10	I tell people what they're doing right at least as often as what they're doing wrong.	
11	I correct in private, at the moment it matters — not in front of the crew or weeks later.	
12	My people know where they stand without having to guess.	
	Feedback subtotal (3–12)	
CONSISTENCY		
13	I hold everyone to the same standard, including my best producer and family members.	
14	I follow through on what I say I'll do — for my team, not just my customers.	
15	I don't take the work back ("fine, I'll do it myself") when someone struggles.	
	Consistency subtotal (3–12)	
	MIRROR CHECK TOTAL (15–60)	

Reading your Mirror Check

Total	Where you stand	What it means
52–60	**Solid Ground**	Your side of the deal is in good shape. If someone is still struggling, it's more likely a skill or will issue. Go to Part 2 with confidence.
40–51	**Leaky Foundation**	You're doing a lot right, but there are gaps your people are falling through. Fix your lowest area at the same time you coach.
15–39	**Fix the Foundation**	Straight talk: part of the problem is on your side. That's good news — it's the part you control. Start with the Standard Card in Part 3 before you hold anybody accountable.

> **Look at your lowest subtotal, not just the total**
>
> Your lowest area is your owner fix list. A 9 in Clarity and a 4 in Training means you've told them what to do but never shown them how. Hope is not a training program.

My lowest area:	**My highest area:**

The one thing I've been blaming on my people that might actually be on me:

One owner fix I will make in the next 14 days:

Example: "Write the arrival-window update process and tell the office who owns it."

CHEAT SHEET #1

Diagnose Before You Discipline

Every missed standard comes from one of four places. Name the right one and you'll fix it the first time.

Root cause	Sounds like	Owner fix	Ladder?
DON'T KNOW Clarity problem	*"I didn't know I was supposed to do that."*	Write it on the Standard Card. Say it out loud. Check they can repeat it back.	**No. This one's on you.**
CAN'T YET Skill problem	*"I tried, but I'm not sure how to handle that."*	Show it, practice it, role-play it. Ride along. Check again in a week.	**No. Train before you blame.**
CAN'T BECAUSE System problem	*"The truck wasn't stocked." "Nobody told me the time changed."*	Fix the tool, process, schedule, or handoff. Then re-set the expectation.	**No. Fix the system first.**
WON'T Will problem	*Knows it, can do it, has the tools — and still doesn't.*	Tailgate Talk with specific examples. One written agreement. Clear follow-up date.	**Yes. Start the No-Surprise Ladder.**

Three quick tests

1. **The paycheck test:** If their paycheck depended on doing it right tomorrow, could they? Yes = will. No = skill, clarity, or system.
2. **The three-person test:** Are two or more people missing the same thing? Then it's not a person problem. Train it as a team (see Cheat Sheet #6).
3. **The paper test:** Can you point to where the standard is written down and when you trained it? If not, start there.

> **Remember**
>
> The next generation doesn't need coddling — they need coaching. Diagnosing first isn't being soft. It's refusing to waste a conversation on the wrong problem.

PART 2 | WORKSHEET

Pick Your One

The Employee Pain Audit

Don't try to fix the whole crew at once. Find the one person costing you the most time, money, and sanity, and start there. One win builds the habit — for you and for them.

Rate each 1–5: 1 = barely notice it 3 = weekly headache 5 = it's eating my week

Employee / role	Time	Money	Sanity	Customer	Total
	Times I step in / rescue	Callbacks, rework, lost sales	How much I think about it at home	Complaints, reviews, calls to office	4–20

What is this costing you? Do the rough math.

Hours per week I spend fixing, reminding, or covering for this person	
× What my hour is worth to the business	$
× 4 weeks = monthly cost of my time	$
+ Callbacks, rework, refunds, lost add-ons per month (estimate)	$
= What this problem costs me every month	**$**

My one employee to start with:

Why them? What specifically keeps happening?

Write behaviors you have seen, not labels. "Left two jobs without photos" — not "lazy."

PART 3 | WORKSHEET

The Standard Card

If it's not on the card, you can't hold them to it

Write 5–7 non-negotiables for this role. Each one should be something you could see or check. Then write the owner's side of the deal — accountability runs both ways. Laminate it, put it in the truck, and go over it in your next one-on-one.

Role:	**Date written / reviewed with employee:**

#	The standard (what we always do)	What "done right" looks like — how I can check it
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		
6		
7		

THE OWNER'S SIDE OF THE EQUATION

What I commit to so my people can hit this standard (tools, stocked trucks, training, accurate schedules, pay on time):

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Examples from the field (field tech)

On time, every time — customer and office know before the window if you'll be 10+ minutes late. ■ Before/after photos and job notes done before you leave the driveway. ■ Present options on every job — not offering is a disservice. ■ Truck clean and stocked every night.

PART 4 | ASSESSMENT

The Employee Scorecard

You score them. They score themselves. The gap tells the story.

Employee / role / review date / observer:

1	Owner Rescue	You or someone else has to step in, redo it, or remind them repeatedly — even though the standard is clear.
2	Needs Prompts	Gets there sometimes, but only with reminders or follow-up.
3	Meets the Standard	Does it right consistently without being told.
4	Raises the Bar	Does it right and helps others do it too. You could hand them more.

Area	What a 3 looks like	Owner	Self	Gap
Reliability	Shows up on time, ready to work, and does what they said they'd do.			
Follow-Through	Finishes the whole job — details, photos, paperwork, clean-up.			
Communication	Keeps the customer and office informed before they have to ask.			
Customer Care	Professional, respectful, offers options, handles concerns without drama.			
Ownership	Owns mistakes, doesn't blame, and helps fix them.			
Coachability	Takes feedback without defending and uses it on the very next job.			
Problem-Solving	Handles routine calls alone; brings a proposed fix, not just the problem.			
Initiative	Sees what needs doing and does it — add-ons, extra care, helping the crew.			
TOTAL (8–32, only when all eight are scored)				

Gap = Self score minus Owner score. A blank is fine — if you haven't seen it, don't guess. Go watch for a week, then score it.

Evidence Log

A score without an example is just an opinion. For every area you rated 1 or 2, write what you saw and what it cost. This is what you'll bring to the conversation.

Area	What I saw (job, date, specifics)	Impact on customer, team, or me
Reliability		
Follow-Through		
Communication		
Customer Care		
Ownership		
Coachability		
Problem-Solving		
Initiative		

> Good evidence: "Tuesday and Thursday, arrival window changed and the customer wasn't told. Both called the office. I had to call them back." Not evidence: "Bad communicator."

PART 4 | GIVE THIS PAGE TO YOUR EMPLOYEE

How Am I Doing?

Employee Self-Check

Your manager is filling out the same scorecard. This isn't a test and it isn't a write-up. It's your side of the story, and it helps us figure out what you need to win. Be honest — nobody gets in trouble for a low self-score.

Name / role / date:

1 = I need help with this **2 =** Sometimes **3 =** Almost always **4 =** Always, and I help others

Area	Statement	My score
Reliability	I show up on time, ready to go, and do what I say I'll do.	
Follow-Through	I finish the whole job — details, photos, paperwork, clean-up.	
Communication	I keep the customer and the office updated before they have to ask.	
Customer Care	I treat customers with respect, offer options, and handle concerns calmly.	
Ownership	When I mess up, I say so and help fix it.	
Coachability	When I get feedback, I use it on the next job.	
Problem-Solving	I handle routine problems myself and bring ideas, not just problems.	
Initiative	I notice what needs to be done and do it without being asked.	

What am I proud of from the last few weeks?

Where did I miss?

What do I need from my manager to do my best work?

Tools, training, clearer instructions, schedule changes — anything.

CHEAT SHEET #2

Reading the Results

The total tells you how urgent. The gap tells you which conversation to have. Use both.

Step 1: Find the zone (owner score)

GREEN **Trust Them**	**27–32 and no area below 3**	Recognize it in public. Hand them one new responsibility with clear limits. Check in without taking it back. This is your next lead tech or trainer.
YELLOW **Coach Them**	**18–26, or any higher total with an area below 3**	Pick the one lowest behavior. Tailgate Talk. Agree on one change, the support you'll give, and a check-in date. Most of your crew lives here — that's normal.
RED **Act Now**	**8–17**	Don't wait. Use Cheat Sheet #1 to find the root cause, then start the No-Surprise Ladder at the right step. Fix any owner gaps at the same time.

Override rule

A serious safety, honesty, or customer-harm incident goes straight to your company policy — no matter what the score says. Don't let a good total hide a real problem.

Step 2: Read the gap (self score minus owner score)

Gap	What it means	How to open the conversation
+2 or more	**Blind Spot** They think they're nailing it	Lead with your evidence, not your opinion. "You scored this a 4. Here's what I saw Tuesday. Help me understand." The fix is usually clarity.
−1 to +1	**Aligned** You see it the same way	Fastest conversation you'll have. Skip the debate and go straight to the plan: "We both see it. What would help?"
−2 or more	**Confidence Gap** They're harder on themselves	Tell them what you see. "You gave yourself a 2. I'd give you a 3. Here's why." Recognition here builds loyalty faster than a raise.

Biggest blind spot on this scorecard: _____ Coaching priority: _____

CHEAT SHEET #3

The No-Surprise Rules

Good people don't quit over accountability. They quit over surprises, moving targets, and public embarrassment. Show the whole crew this ladder up front so nobody ever wonders what happens next.

	When & what	What it sounds like	Document
STEP 1 **Friendly Reminder**	In the moment, private, 30 seconds.	*"Hey, photos weren't uploaded on the Miller job. Get those in before lunch?"*	Quick note in your log. No paperwork.
STEP 2 **Coaching Conversation**	A Tailgate Talk when the same thing happens again.	Specific examples, their side of the story, one agreed behavior, a check-in date.	Coaching Action Plan (page in this workbook), both sign.
STEP 3 **30-Day Written Plan**	The behavior didn't change after coaching.	Clear standard, how it's measured, weekly check-ins, and what happens if it isn't met — stated calmly and plainly.	Written plan, signed, with weekly tracker notes.
STEP 4 **Decision**	End of the 30 days.	They met it: recognize it and reset. They didn't: you part ways with respect — and nobody's surprised.	Follow company policy. Get HR or legal advice first.

No Surprise Rules

- **Nobody gets fired from Step 1.** That predictability is what keeps good people from walking.
- **Diagnose first.** Don't, Can't Yet, and Can't Because problems (Cheat Sheet #1) get training and fixes — not reprimand.
- **Same rules for everyone.** Your top producer is judged the same as the new hire.
- **Praise in public. Correct in private.** Every correction happens one-on-one.
- **Clean slate.** Decide up front how long someone has to stay on track before they drop back to Step 1, and tell the crew. 90 days is a common choice.
- **Safety and honesty.** Serious incidents go straight to company policy.

Where is my employee on the right now?

☐ Step 1 ☐ Step 2 ☐ Step 3 ☐ Step 4 ☐ Not — this is a training or system fix

PART 5 | CHEAT SHEET #4

The Tailgate Talk

Ten minutes at the truck, not an hour in your office

Hold it where they work — at the truck, on the job site, somewhere they feel on their own turf. Private. Calm. Ten minutes. The employee talks first.

Minute	Move	What to say
0–1	**Open with belief**	*"I want you to win here. I saw something I want to talk through. How do you think the last couple of weeks went?"*
1–3	**They self-score**	Walk through their Self-Check. Listen. Don't argue. Most people will name the problem before you do.
3–6	**The three questions**	*1. "What went well?"* *2. "Where did we miss?" (Share your evidence here.)* *3. "What do you need from me?"*
6–9	**Agree on ONE behavior**	*"So for the next ten jobs, you'll ___. I'll ___. We'll know it's working when ___." Write it on the Action Plan.*
9–10	**Close with a date**	*"Let's check back on [date]. I believe you can do this."*

DO	DON'T
Bring two specific examples with dates	Say "always" or "never"
Let them talk first and finish	Ambush them in front of the crew or a customer
Stay on behavior and results	Make it about their attitude or character
Pick one thing to change	Unload your whole list of frustrations
Own your side (training, tools, clarity)	Say "I shouldn't have to tell you this"
Say "this has to change" AND "I believe you can"	End without a written next step and a date

"Clear standards delivered with genuine belief in the person — that's the most powerful leadership tool I've ever seen."

— Eric Sprague

CHEAT SHEET #5

Words That Work vs. Words That Wreck

The same message can build loyalty or start a job search. Keep this one in your truck.

WRECKS IT	WORKS
"You never update the customer."	"On the Johnson job Tuesday, the time changed and the customer didn't hear from us. Walk me through it."
"Why can't you just do it right?"	"What got in the way?"
"I shouldn't have to tell you this."	"Let me make sure I was clear about what I expect."
"Everybody else can do it."	"Here's what the standard looks like. Let's practice it once."
"Fine, I'll do it myself."	"How would you fix it? Go ahead — I'll check it with you."
"You have an attitude problem."	"When you argued with the customer, they called the office upset. That's what we need to fix."
"Don't let it happen again."	"What will you do differently next time — and how will I know?"
"We need to talk." (and nothing else)	"Got ten minutes at the truck after this job? I want to talk through the Miller job."
Silence when they get it right	"Saw your photos on the Reyes job — that's exactly the standard. Thank you."

Magic phrases to memorize

- "Help me understand."
- "What do you need from me?"
- "What would you do?"
- "That's exactly the standard."
- "This has to change, and I believe you can."
- "Let's check back on [date]."

> The next generation doesn't need coddling — they need coaching. Coaching sounds like specifics, questions, and belief. Bossing sounds like labels, lectures, and sighs.

PART 5 | WORKSHEET

Coaching Action Plan

Turn one conversation into one clear agreement. Fill it out together.

Employee	Conversation date	Follow-up date

1. What I observed

One or two specific examples — job, date, what happened.

2. Why it matters

The impact on the customer, the crew, or the business.

3. Their side

"What got in the way? What do you need?" Write what they say, in their words.

4. The ONE behavior we agree on

What exactly, for how many jobs or how long, and how we'll know it happened.

5. My part as the owner

Training, tools, a template, a clearer process, a ride-along.

Root cause: ☐ Don't Know ☐ Can't Yet ☐ Can't Because ☐ Won't

Ladder step: ☐ Not on ladder ☐ Step 2 ☐ Step 3

Employee signature	Owner / manager signature

PART 6 | WORKSHEET

The 30-Day Follow-Through Tracker

The conversation is the easy part. Following up is where habits get built.

Five minutes a week. Check the agreed behavior against real job records — not your gut. The moment you see it done right, say so.

The behavior we agreed on:

Week	Date	What I saw (job records, ride-along, customer feedback)	On track?	Did I recognize it? / Next step
Week 1			☐ Yes ☐ Somewhat ☐ No	
Week 2			☐ Yes ☐ Somewhat ☐ No	
Week 3			☐ Yes ☐ Somewhat ☐ No	
Week 4			☐ Yes ☐ Somewhat ☐ No	

Day 30 verdict

☐ Habit locked in

Recognize it in the morning huddle. Pick the next behavior or hand them more responsibility.

☐ Needs another rep

Real progress, not there yet. Find the barrier, adjust support, run another 30 days.

☐ Move up the ladder

No change despite clear standards, training, and support. Go to the next ladder step.

Stop being the reminder system

If you’re reminding them every day, the habit belongs to you, not them. Build the reminder into the system instead: a checklist in the job app, a photo upload that has to happen before the job closes, a line on the Standard Card. Then check the result, not the person.

CHEAT SHEET #6

Make It a Team Win: The Thursday 10

When two or more people miss the same standard, stop coaching one at a time. Train it to the whole crew in ten minutes.

Super Tech U Case Study: Levi Gain, Doug's Carpet Cleaning

Levi didn't hire anybody new, buy new equipment, or change his market. He started the Super Tech video training with his crew every morning — one topic, one role-play, done. His team started offering add-ons and wowing customers, and his revenue went from $485K to $850K in a year with the same crew. It worked because ten minutes is small enough to do daily, and allows the team to learn a little at a time.

Minutes	Block	What happens
2	**Why it matters**	Tell a real customer story — a review, a complaint, a callback. Connect the standard to a real person.
3	**Show it**	Demonstrate exactly what "done right" looks like. Your best tech can lead this.
3	**Practice it**	Pairs role-play it once each. Tech and customer. Swap.
2	**Commit**	*"Everybody does this on every job this week. We'll look at the numbers next Thursday."*

Plan your next Thursday 10

Topic (one standard only)	
Customer story I'll tell	
Who demonstrates it	
Role-play scenario	
How we'll measure it next week	

"Hope is not a training program."

— Eric Sprague

PUTTING IT TOGETHER

A Worked Example

One tech, one behavior, thirty days

The situation: Jordan is a solid tech. Good with equipment, customers like him. But twice this week the arrival window changed and the customer never heard about it. Both customers called the office upset, and the owner had to call them back personally.

Mirror Check	Owner scored 6 in Clarity. Realized nobody was ever told who sends the update when a schedule changes — office or tech.
Root cause	Mostly Can't Because (no clear owner of the update) plus Don't Know (it was never on the Standard Card). Not a Won't — so no ladder yet.
Scorecard	Communication: Owner 1, Self 3, Gap +2 = Blind Spot. Jordan thought the office handled it. Total 23 = Yellow, Coach Them.
Tailgate Talk	*"Tuesday on the Garcia job and Thursday on the Patel job, the time moved and the customer didn't hear from us. Walk me through what happened." Jordan: "I figured the office texted them." Owner: "That's on me — I never made it clear. Let's fix it."*
The agreement	For the next ten jobs, when the arrival time changes, Jordan texts the customer within 15 minutes using the template and logs it in the job notes. If the customer can't be reached, Jordan tells the office.
Owner's part	Wrote a two-line text template. Added the standard to the Standard Card for every tech. Told the office they're the backup. Ran it as that week's Thursday 10 for the whole crew.
Day 30	Nine out of ten schedule changes handled right. Owner called it out in the morning huddle. Habit locked in. Next behavior: options on every job.

Notice what didn't happen

Nobody got yelled at. Nobody got written up for a problem the owner created. The owner fixed their side, Jordan fixed theirs, and the whole crew got better — in about 30 minutes of total conversation over a month. That's accountability without running people off.

PART 6 | YOUR COMMITMENT

Owner Commitment

Write it down. Sign it. Put a date on it.

My one employee	
The one behavior we're working on	
My one owner fix *From the Mirror Check*	
Date of our Tailgate Talk	
My next Thursday 10 topic	
Date I'll re-score them *30 days from the Tailgate Talk*	

I commit to training before I blame, holding one standard for everyone including myself, and following through for the full 30 days.

Signature	Date

BRING THIS TO YOUR NEXT STU COACHING CALL

- ☐ Your Mirror Check total and lowest area
- ☐ One completed scorecard (names removed) and the biggest gap
- ☐ The one behavior you agreed on
- ☐ One question you want answered

My question: _____

"The next generation doesn't need coddling — they need coaching."

— Eric Sprague