



## THE “PROMPT”: An Important Cue—A Call to Action

By Philip P. Beyer

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You wouldn't believe how many times I've heard business owners and managers say, “We ask an employee to do a certain task or action—they do it for awhile, but then they forget or fail to do it consistently—sometimes not at all.”

For example, recently one of our new System100™ software clients explained how he needed an employee to fill out a certain form they had designed—with the names and quantities of Finished Goods they were warehousing for customers. The employee had failed to do this consistently, and my client ended up doing it himself. I could sense the frustration from my client and his managers as we discussed the problem. They seemed very discouraged and perplexed.

I asked them, “Do you have a **PROMPT** for your employee to do this task?”

They said, “A what?”

I repeated, “Do you have a PROMPT for them?”

After explaining, I could tell my client and his managers had assumed they should only have to show an employee how and when to do a task, and it should just continue to happen. Well, tell that to the Airlines!

Airline pilots would be lost without a series of PROMPTS. Now you may not think a pilot should need a PROMPT to ensure they lower the wheels before landing, but that's just one of hundreds of critical steps a pilot must remember—or, better yet, check off—in order to take off and land a plane safely. The pilot's list of PROMPTS helps ensure that not one important detail is forgotten.

If you've read my book SYSTEM BUSTERS, you know I am a big proponent of Checklists for each employee; with PROMPTS to complete various tasks or actions. Nothing should be committed to memory or left to chance. That can be deadly in any business!

Our Checklists even include the time (or approximate time) of day certain tasks should be performed—i.e. **Wednesdays 2:00 pm**  **Production Supplies ordered from vendors**. I've seen Daily Routine Checklists bring order to many companies, along with other PROMPTS, such as Quality Control Checklists, Service Control Checklists and Procedures.

About now, you may also be saying, “I have made checklists with prompts, but some employees fail to complete and turn them in.”

Again I ask, “Where is the PROMPT for them to complete the checklist?”

### Here's How It Works . . .

We start by giving an employee a Checklist with a list of PROMPTS to complete certain tasks or actions.

Sometimes an employee needs an “INCENTIVE” (a strong reminder) to complete task consistently. What's needed is a follow-up system that monitors—to ensure the employee has completed their checklist. We accomplish this by giving the managers Daily Routine Checklists—yes, a manager ALSO needs their own Checklist.

Now, on the manager's Checklist there is a PROMPT to do a simple review of the checklists that employees under their supervision are required to complete and turn in. If an employee fails to turn in or complete their checklist, then a "System Buster" form (a non-conformance reporting document) is submitted by the manager stating the employee's failure to complete the checklist. The PROMPT for that action is also on the manager's Daily Routine Checklist.

The System Buster Document is then received for review by the owner or upper management, and the root cause of the non-conformance is determined. It is then decided what action is needed to prevent this non-conformance from happening again—in this case, an employee not completing a checklist.

The manager, and the employee who failed to complete their checklist, will both sign the System Buster document which states that this was a personal error of non-conformance.

When an employee has been asked to sign one or two of these System Buster documents, they begin to see the big picture—the importance of compliance as a team member, to ensure quality products to the benefit of all. The System Buster provides the INCENTIVE to complete an action or task on a Checklist in a consistent manner.

Is consistent compliance, for the good of all, not what we're all looking for? Now can you see how PROMPTS work? This is how a prompt on one checklist can influence and be influenced by a prompt on another checklist—and round and round it goes. I call this completing the "full circle" of a system.

**Did I mention—Great Systems Work!**

**To invite Philip Paul Beyer to speak for your conference or other event...**

Contact Susan Beyer at Ebiz Products, 615-425-2652 or email [susan@ebizproducts.com](mailto:susan@ebizproducts.com). Philip Beyer's book *System Busters: How to Stop Them In Your Business* is available at [www.Amazon.com](http://www.Amazon.com). FOR MORE ABOUT SYSTEM100™ software, visit [www.System100.com](http://www.System100.com).