



EXCELLING

THROUGH

THE CHAOS OF

**COVID-19**

THE | **PERSIMMON** | GROUP

# INTRODUCTION

As a consultant and executive coach for leaders, my passion is helping individuals and organizations thrive through chaos. From workforce trends to changing technology to generational shifts, the Age of Disruption has just reached a new level that has impacted every single one of us.

While constant change was the norm when we rang in the 2020 new year, we're now, just a few months later, experiencing change like we've never seen before with the occurrence of COVID-19. This pandemic is disrupting any semblance of "business as usual" and confronting us head on with a whole new level of uncertainty and discomfort -- with no clear sign of when it will end.

The question is: How will you and your team respond?

I am proud to introduce The Persimmon Group's response to the COVID-19 crisis, a leadership guide titled, *Excelling Through the Chaos of COVID-19*. In it, you will find:

## THOUGHT STREAMS

A 3-part article series to highlight recommended lines of thinking to help advise you on the action to come. They are designed to help you lead, especially in uncertain times. Investing in your Thought Streams (and not just your Work Streams) can help you maximize your potential for success, no matter what is going on around you.

## Q+A WEBINAR WITH LEADERS

Recognizing the critical impacts that COVID-19 is having on our organizations and teams, I hosted a webinar on what organizations are and should be doing to prepare for remote work. During the session, we explored best practices regarding our work habits, decision-making, communications, and technologies.

## COMMUNICATING DECISIONS IN TIMES OF UNCERTAINTY: WHAT WE'RE LEARNING

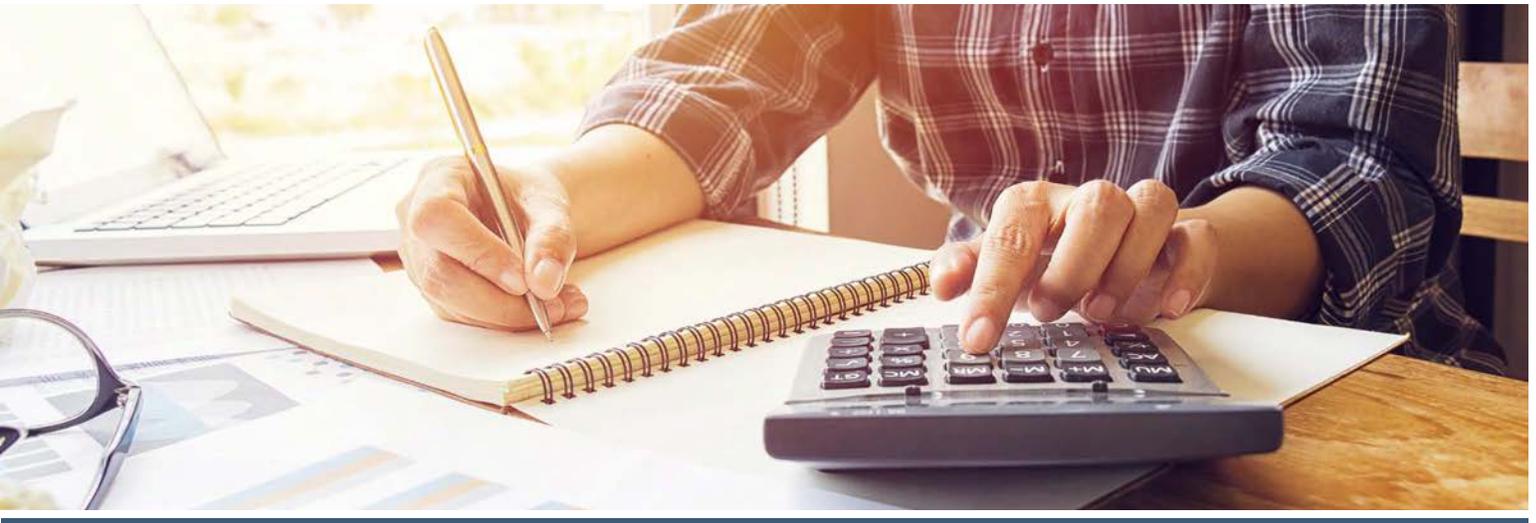
It's been four weeks since Sara Gallagher became President of The Persimmon Group. "Global pandemic" was definitely not on her list of things that could go wrong in the first month. This is an inside look into the last 96 hours for us as a company, including the two real emails we sent to our team members Friday and just 48 hours later on Sunday.

## TPG GUIDANCE

This 1-page document is a set of considerations and principles that we ask our team to consider as they make decisions—decisions about how to interact with customers, how to manage their time, and how to work with each other.

It all starts with your decision making. As a leader, how you make decisions, especially in times of chaos, can make or break you. To thrive during disruption, you need to stand out as someone your team can look to as being calm, proactive, and discerning. Unfortunately, so many well-intentioned leaders make knee-jerk decisions that can worsen situations, costing time, money, and possibly the future of their business. But take heart in knowing this: There is a better way.

Many leaders feel like they have to know everything in order to control everything, but the greatest leaders will come with questions.



## THOUGHT STREAM 1

# ARE YOU VALIDATING YOUR DECISIONS WITH SOLID DATA POINTS?

## BILL FOURNET

Leaders who react out of fear, panic, and assumptions don't fare well in times of big disruption, which is why you're going to focus on a new way of being both decisive and well-informed.

This could be one of the biggest lessons in times of massive disruption. The leaders who know how to ask better questions will discover better answers in times of great uncertainty. The foundation for this is your team. Train your team to be your eyes and ears, bringing you the most helpful intel of what's happening, focusing on facts, to inform your decisions. Discernment leads to better decision making. The data feeds the discernment.

For example, what is your team seeing and hearing from customers? Not only what are they seeing and hearing, but how can they communicate it to you most effectively? Imagine a team member telling you, "I think X customer is upset" versus, "I think X customer is upset because they raised three issues that were escalated to their leadership." The first scenario could lead to a

series of back and forth emails, or lengthy conversation, simply to determine the data the team member is trying to share. In contrast to the second scenario that paints a clear picture right from the start. You need your team to communicate helpful intel quickly: however, your team may not know how to communicate on this level unless you've shown them how to do so. Encourage your team not only to share with you important observations, but to also share those observations with specificity and context.

Your impact is amplified not only by your ability to source valuable data, but also by how you use that data to work through a well-thought out decision-making process. You need your team to communicate helpful intel quickly ... Encourage your team not only to share with you important observations, but to also share those observations with specificity and context. In fact, the following question is one of the most important questions you can ask yourself as you navigate an important, urgent, or high-stakes decision(s).

What are the questions we need answered to make a well-informed decision? I used this question a few days ago when my team and I were set to discuss how we want to manage upcoming trainings for our clients in the wake of COVID-19.

**This “what questions should we ask” prompt sparked a new set of questions:**

- How do we ensure that we are practicing what we preach, balancing adaptation with a semblance of normalcy?
- How do we balance living up to our values while supporting our customers and community?
- What are the financial or revenue implications?
- Who are the people involved, and what is the impact of making the proposed change?

Ultimately, this led to a productive discussion that resulted in making a decision to reschedule classes occurring within the next two weeks, to assess those for the next 2-6 weeks for the potential of being taught virtually, and to offer disruption-specific online sessions. We based this on reasoned conversations around the

questions above that balanced facts with risks and speed. This simply could not have happened if we were responding from an emotional “cancel everything” or “cancel nothing” paradigm.

This could be one of the biggest lessons in times of massive disruption. The leaders who know how to ask better questions will discover better answers in times of great uncertainty. Now you’ve learned the power of this first Thought Stream and how to implement it to generate decisions from discernment rather than fear.

**You need your team to communicate helpful intel quickly ... Encourage your team not only to share with you important observations, but to also share those observations with specificity and context.**



**LEAD FOR TOMORROW**  
**EXCELLING THROUGH THE**  
**CHAOS OF COVID-19**  
**WEBINAR REPLAY**

**CLICK TO PLAY**

## Q+A WEBINAR WITH LEADERS

Recognizing the critical impacts that COVID-19 is having on our organizations and teams, I hosted a webinar on what organizations are and should be doing to prepare for remote work. During it, we explored best practices regarding our work habits, decision-making, communications, and technologies.



## THOUGHT STREAM 2

# HOW ARE YOU MANAGING YOUR SHORT-TERM DECISIONS, WITH AN OPPORTUNITY TO RE-ASSESS AND ADJUST OVER TIME?

## BILL FOURNET

Before we go deeper, let's explore the consequences of failing to ask this question. In a situation that is unprecedented and constantly changing, the best solution in the short term can turn out to be problematic in the long term if it no longer aligns with the desired outcome.

A fluid situation requires fluid solutions that can be adjusted when needed, and as many times as necessary. But in order to adjust, listening and adaptation must be incorporated into your leadership process. This is your opportunity to inspire, from the top down, a well-informed and more confident team. So, how do you do it?

## INTRODUCING: STAND-UP MEETINGS

During a time where in-person meetings are not an option, Stand-Up Meetings are frequent, or even daily, virtual meetings between leadership and the team. Stand-Up Meetings can change the game for you, particularly during these times.

**Before I describe how to make your Stand-Up Meetings most effective, let me first tell you just a few of the problems they solve:**

- Leaders feeling that they have to know everything in order to create a clear path forward
- Team members feeling lost or confused because of

- changing orders or lack of instruction
- Anxiety, lack of productivity and sharp drops in company morale
- Precious time, energy and resources being invested in the wrong things
- Missed opportunities or avoidable mistakes that further increase challenges

In times of heightened chaos, I recommend scheduling consistent 15- to 30-minute meetings between leadership and the team (an “all hands” call). For larger organizations, you have two calls: one between leadership and managers, and one between managers and their teams/ departments.

### Stay on time and focus on answering the following questions:

1. Is there any new information of which your team should be aware? This is your opportunity to inspire, from the top down, a well-informed and more confident team.
2. Are there any specific team or customer needs that leadership should know about? This is an opportunity to inspire more confident and well-informed leadership from the ground up.
3. Are there any previous decisions that need to be re-assessed? This is an opportunity to make sure your current decisions are still aligned with your ideal outcomes.
4. Are there any potential issues or risks that are emerging? As you hone the potency of these meetings, you will be able to use any potential

“buffer time” before meetings conclude to share valuable lessons and prepare for and prevent potential risks.

## A LESSON OF ADAPTATION AND HOPE FROM THE GREAT DEPRESSION

When the Great Depression began in 1929, the film industry was still in its infancy and increasing in popularity. But as national unemployment quickly skyrocketed, Americans had to make choices on where

and how to spend their limited funds. As a “luxury”, movie houses were pummeled, and many closed their doors. Faced with an early extinction, the film industry innovated: They cut movie prices by more than 50%, allowed people to see two movies for the price of one, and quickly produced cheaper B movies. Theater owners created promotion nights with product giveaways and community events to increase attendance. The result? Box office revenue slowly increased, enabling the industry to not only survive the Depression, but to become

a pillar in our culture. (For more examples, see Ethan Trex’s 5 Great Depression Success Stories.)

Nearly 100 years later, at a time where reactionary thinking will be the norm in most businesses, you can set your organization apart by how you invest in Thought Stream #2. When this current crisis is over, not only will you have weathered the storm, but you may emerge stronger than ever before.

When this current crisis is over, not only will you have weathered the storm, but you may emerge stronger than ever before.



### THOUGHT STREAM 3

## WHAT CHANGES WILL LIKELY RESULT IN LONG-TERM IMPACTS ON YOUR ORGANIZATION AND HOW YOU OPERATE?

### BILL FOURNET

Keeping eyes and ears focused on the long-term future implications of what is happening could allow you to turn your greatest challenge into your greatest opportunity. We are all in this together, but it is up to each of us to make an individual impact by keeping our leadership skills front and center.

### A LESSON OF FORWARD THINKING IN TURBULENT TIMES

Returning to the film industry: In Part 2 of this series, I shared how it adapted—making short-term changes to ensure its survival. The movie industry listened to its audiences and theater owners; it discovered that it could become a foundational part of our community, and ultimately, the popular (or “pop”) culture. Through its product giveaway nights, the trend of “going to the movies” for a sense of normalcy and interaction (even though moviegoers sit quietly and hopefully not interacting during the show). It felt the pulse of the

nation—when we need to be united (war movies during World War 2), fight scary enemies (monster films during the early Cold War), and challenged (the politically and socially provocative films of the Sixties). Keep your ears open to listen to your team and customers for potential long-term impacts and opportunities for your organization.

You can be a better, stronger leader right now. You read that correctly. Even now -- by staying calm and discerning while others organizations give into the chaos, and modeling to your team what a resilient spirit, strategic thinking, and great communication can really do. You may just turn the chaos into something bigger, better, and more valuable than ever before. We are all in this together, but it is up to each of us to make an individual impact by keeping our leadership skills front and center.



## INSIGHTS FROM OUR PRESIDENT

# COMMUNICATING DECISIONS IN TIMES OF UNCERTAINTY: WHAT WE'RE LEARNING

## SARA GALLAGHER

It's been four weeks since I became President of The Persimmon Group. "Global pandemic" was definitely not on my list of things that could go wrong in the first month. Our leadership team has been making decisions in the face of unpredictability and uncertainty along with everyone else. And along with everyone else, we're learning that there is nothing like a crisis to reveal the strengths of your team, as well as the cracks that existed in our previous ways of operating.

The outbreak of COVID-19 has taught us one thing already—many of the decision-making and communication patterns businesses have relied on for years are not what our teams need when facing uncertainty and disruption. When we were operating in a "business as usual" environment, we as leaders had time and space to thoroughly validate assumptions, craft clear messages, and issue complete guidance.

The speed of change we're experiencing now means

that we can't wait until we have all the information to communicate directly with our teams. Here's an inside look into the last 96 hours for us, including the two real emails we sent to our team members Friday, and just 48 hours later on Sunday.

On Friday in Tulsa, Oklahoma it was still the early days of information. There was, to our knowledge, no community spread in our area, but cases were growing and the arguments for social distancing were getting stronger. At that time, we were not ready to close our physical offices...but we also wanted to support any employee who felt uncomfortable working on location. Despite the lack of complete and comprehensive intelligence and knowing that the weekend may bring significant changes, we chose to meet with our team and send out an all-hands email on Friday (3/13/2020) explaining our current policy, our information sources, our plan to support clients, and our plan to support the safety (and feelings of safety) among our team. You can

see a copy of what we sent in the next section.

Sending this email was uncomfortable—so much was still unknown about the situation locally, as well as what other businesses and community leaders were doing and recommending. We wondered, as many leaders might, the right balance between being proactive and acting prematurely. As it happens, it was just thirty-six hours later that the situation changed rapidly on the ground. While few businesses at that stage had made remote work official, our state, national, and health leaders had begun emphatically pushing social distancing as the best tool in our arsenal to halt the spread of the disease.

In contrast to the confusion you might expect, our team acted with remarkable adaptability and speed. The reason? Our team had context for the new guidance. Had we waited until we had all the answers, the news

## Empowered employees are informed employees

that we were shutting down our physical offices and moving all work remote could have been much more disruptive to our team and to our clients.

This lesson has pushed Persimmon toward even more openness in the way we communicate. We have implemented daily all-hands stand-up meetings (15 minutes) with our team and we have published new guidance on decision-making so our team can take action and make aligned decisions even when a leader isn't "in the room."

**Bottom Line—empowered employees are informed employees...and we at Persimmon suspect this is a lesson we'll be taking to heart even after the crisis has passed.**

# EXAMPLE E-MAIL 1

Team,

You likely heard that a case of COVID19 was reported in Tulsa last week. At this time, TPG is not planning any cancellations to existing networking events, classes, etc. or any immediate changes to our client delivery. However, we do want to make all of you aware of five practical steps we are taking to ensure that TPG (both our business and our team) is ready and resilient should any disruption to business occur over the next few months.

The great news is that all of these steps are general good practices that have potential to push our team to find new and better ways of working together and with our clients—some of them have been on our “bucket list” for a few months anyway, so this is a potentially useful push to get them done. If you have any questions about these—or any additional ideas you believe would be helpful, please reach out to me or anyone else on the ELT.

## **Five Steps to Better Resilience, Adaptability, and Agility!**

### **1. Prepare for Potential Remote Work (Responsible Party – Everyone)**

The most likely disruption to business that could occur are periods of time where members of the TPG team and/or our clients must conduct work remotely. To that end, please consider the below items on an individual and family basis: If you are concerned about your family’s ability to weather an extended “work from home” period, please consider reaching out directly to a member of the ELT so we can determine if there is a way TPG can support you.

- ✓ Do you have a place in your home where you can effectively work remotely with a solid internet connection?
- ✓ Do you have a headset to effectively conduct conference calls and/or video calls?
- ✓ Do you have a few weeks of basic supplies which would allow you to stay close to home (e.g. avoid grocery stores or pharmacies) if you or a family member is sick?
- ✓ Do you have a person on the TPG team who is “up to speed” enough on your project that they could help out if you or a family member become sick?

If schools are closed or a child becomes sick, we understand that working from home uninterrupted may become very challenging. Please just stay in good communication with us about what you need (including flexible hours, presence of children at virtual meetings, additional PTO should a family member become seriously ill, etc.).

### **2. Stay Home When Sick With *Anything* (Responsible Party – Everyone)**

If you or a family member is ill (with COVID19 or something else, particularly involving respiratory symptoms and/or fever), PLEASE exercise an abundance of caution and stay home. Let someone in the office know so that we can clean the surface areas around your desk.

### **3. Step Up Sanitation of Training Areas (Responsible Party – Class Preppers and Clean-Uppers)**

For the time being, please add wiping down tables and the kitchen before and after every day of class. While we trust our own team members to stay home if they aren’t feeling well, we can’t always rely on the same transparency from clients. Facilitators, if you see that someone is ill, please kindly suggest that they go home and rest—give them their certificates. We will allow them to attend the next offering of the class for free.

# EXAMPLE E-MAIL 1 - CONTINUED

## **4. Build Better Ways to Work Together Remotely (Responsible Parties – See Sub-Bullets)**

Here are a few practical steps we are taking or exploring related to this.

- ✓ **Kanban Remote Preparedness (Responsible Parties – Dylan and Sam as Point People)**
  - This team is a great place to practice remote work in the short-term.
  - Kanban Team – please start transitioning now to a **digital board solution** for the short-term, as well as ensuring a **Skype bridge is set up for all meetings** until this situation has abated.
- ✓ **Team Business Meeting and SITREP Meetings (Responsible Parties – ELT)**
  - At this time, these will be in person with a Skype Bridge.
  - We will be prepared, however, to host these 100% virtually if needed.
- ✓ **Transition to Microsoft Teams (Responsible Parties – Dianne, Aaron, and Amy)**
  - We will be exploring the logistics and risks/impacts of making this transition sooner rather than later.
  - This platform is better supported by Microsoft, which would reduce technical issues with clients.
  - This platform has better collaboration tools in place, with the ability to set up channels for work teams to collaborate.
- ✓ **Other App Recommendations (Responsible Parties – Everyone)**
  - If you have ideas of other collaboration apps (e.g. Marco Polo, which allows leaving video messages like a voicemail), please let us know ASAP so we can evaluate whether they could improve our ability to work together remotely if needed.
- ✓ **Virtual Meetings- Best Practice**
  - As you may need to lead internal or client meetings virtually, here's a great article from the McChrystal group with wonderful practices to consider: <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/leading-organization-through-uncertainty-covid-19-part-fussell-1e/?trackingId=>
- ✓ **Classes and Speaking (Responsible Parties – See Sub-Bullets)**

There are two areas of our business in the short-term that could be impacted by disruption. Here are the steps we are exploring to address this.
- ✓ **Exploring Virtual Delivery (Responsible Parties – Josh, Sara, Dianne, Jill)**

This team will be tentatively exploring the possibility (and tools needed to) deliver live classes virtually, either on an “as needed” basis or a proactive step to encourage registrations. This is something that the ELT has been tossing around as an idea for a few months anyway (pre-COVID) so this is a great time to expedite the research.
- ✓ **Speaking (Responsible Parties – Jill)**

Speaking engagements and conferences are also looking at moving to virtual platforms—Jill has already begun preparing our speaker roster for this potential shift.

Please reach out with questions, particularly if you are listed as a “responsible party” above!

## EXAMPLE E-MAIL 2

Team,

**Please read the below email in its entirety.**

**BLUF:** Effective immediately, TPG is following the advice of our national health leaders and closing its physical office until further notice and asking that all employees work from home. We are also recommending as a matter of social responsibility that our team self-isolate in their homes and not interact physically with others outside your family for at least the next seven days (likely the next fourteen) so that we can slow the spread in our community and ensure our healthcare facilities have the best chance they can to protect our vulnerable populations.

Based upon what we have seen and heard in the last 48 hours, it is becoming clear to us that rigorous social distancing is the best and most responsible way to protect our team members and community. For a great article which explains why we feel this is the socially and morally responsible thing to do, [please go here](#). We are asking our team to work remotely for at least the next 14 days, after which we will re-assess the situation. We will continue with our plan to have daily stand-ups, beginning tomorrow morning, as well as our regularly scheduled team meetings via Microsoft Teams.

**Picking Up Your Things.** If you need to get things from the office, please do so today or Monday and do not re-enter the office after Monday. We will be cleaning the office Tuesday or Wednesday. If you need to access the office after this date, please clear it with the ELT.

**Remote Work.** All of the items from this morning's emails related to working remotely still apply.

**Client Work:** **Please wait to contact clients with this news until after our stand-up tomorrow. We will be walking through our strategy for communicating this to clients (and supporting them virtually) in the morning.**

**Public Classes:** We are continuing to follow the same plan related to public classes as we reviewed Friday (and which is summarized in this morning's email.)

**Escalation.** Please follow the same escalation principles outlined in this morning's email.

**Social Responsibility.** To protect our community and reduce the length of time our city is impacted, please consider remaining isolated for the next 14 days. Even if you are asymptomatic, it is now understood that you are still capable of catching and spreading COVID19 to others. While it is fine to be outdoors, try to keep six feet away from those who do not live with you. Please consider not shopping, going to restaurants, bars, or other places where people congregate. Children sleeping over with other families is another way this can spread, so please consider keeping your kids at home.

**The goal is not to contain the disease—the goal is to slow its spread (“Flatten the Curve”) so that hospitals can adequately treat everyone who requires ICU care, when they need it.**

**Helping Others.** If you identify needs in the community that the TPG team can help with, or if you need the help of our team yourself, please reach out. This is a time to help each other!

**Stay Awesome, Stay Weird.** It's still really important that we connect with each other on a human and FUN level during this time. Text each other, call each other, use video chat whenever possible, send each other ridiculous memes...our culture is strong, and it isn't constrained to a building. ;o)

Stay well,  
Sara



## INSIGHTS FROM OUR PRESIDENT

# TACTICAL GUIDANCE

## SARA GALLAGHER

At Persimmon, we talk and write often about leading with outcomes over directives and teaching your team members “judgment” so they can make good decisions without you. One of the ways we do that in practice is our “TPG Guidance.” This 1-page document is a set of considerations and principles that we ask our team to consider as they make decisions—decisions about how to interact with customers, how to manage their time, and how to work with each other.

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, our leadership added a supplemental section to guide our team through this period of uncertainty. You can read the full document in the next section.

Here are some of the principles we are asking our team members to operate by during this time:

**1. We want our team and community to be safe.** Safety should come first in all decision-making. Please consider how you can improve our team and community through this outbreak.

- 2. Communicating remotely is not just about technology—it is about new patterns of interaction.** Directness, openness, trust, immediacy, innovation.
- 3. Be our eyes and ears.** Share information, intelligence, and issues (escalation) as you get it for key insights such as client challenges in response to COVID, service opportunities in the community, business risks, or personal needs/health updates.
- 4. Stay awesome, stay weird.** It’s still really important that we connect with each other on a human and FUN level during this time. Text each other, call each other, use video chat whenever possible, send each other ridiculous memes... our culture is strong, and it isn’t constrained to a building.

In times of uncertainty, guidance must shift to adapt to conditions. Prepare your team to act without you. Establish guidance. Support their decisions when tied to the guidance. Provide feedback. Build judgment.

# TPG GUIDANCE EXAMPLE



## Tactical Guidance

**Be the bar by which all other consultants are measured.** Customers often have poor perceptions of consultants--from what they have heard or experienced. Change that viewpoint. Show them through our actions--and our results--that we help them achieve their goals through counsel, support, courage, and capability. Make every customer an advocate for us.

**Maintain situational awareness constantly.** Situations change, often evolving on their own. This requires us to be aware of that change, predict it and get ahead of it when we can, and constantly ask ourselves if we need to adapt to it, or guide it to where we believe it should be. Understanding the SA improves our communications' context, as well as determining our alignment to the overall outcomes (and customer value).

**Communicate with context.** Don't leave interpretation to the reader. Give them clear concise communications that are meaningful. The analysis should provide context to why and what is being shared. Challenge ourselves to adjust our communications when they aren't working well. Our team likes to be in the "know"--this extra time will increase our capability while potentially reducing wasted time (fire drills, "noise").

**Find value for the customer.** Our job is to help our customer. Constantly seek opportunities to provide value to them. That may mean changing what or how we deliver the effort--use your judgment, reflect on the question, and adapt. If the initial contact or sponsor doesn't get the value you are providing, then get creative to get them there or find another key contact who does. The lanes of latitude are wide here--stay transparent and engaged with the customer and TPG leadership to ensure no surprises.

**Identify outcomes from the start.** Use our "what does success look like" phrase to determine what we are trying to achieve. This may be customer outcomes, team outcomes, or Persimmon outcomes. How you execute the effort (tactics) may change over the course of time, but the outcomes (strategic) should not. Remind ourselves constantly of these. Measure progress to them.

**Fill the gap.** We are a team of people driven to act and improve. When we see a need inside our customer or within our team that we can help fill, we do. If we have a question, we ask it. We use our SA to recognize when to ask for forgiveness rather permission. We step forward.

**No islands.** Get creative to keep contact and culture with our team members who aren't in the office. Seek opportunities for them to collaborate through technologies, scheduling, and fun. Team members who on "islands" should send out "signals" when they are feeling abandoned or lost.

## Strategic Guidance

**Everyone is an asset—determine the assets you need.** Persimmon has a wealth of capabilities. Aligning the right level of capabilities to the right need--expertise up front, development throughout, short burst vs. a long haul--will enable us to maximize our team's efficiency and effectiveness, while developing future capabilities.

**Establish capability goals for our team members for each of our projects.** The way to develop our team for scale is to determine where their capabilities are when we start a project and where we want them to be during or at the end of the project.

**Projects will have a clear "owner".** Because several projects require or can use several Persimmon leaders, we have to be careful not to step on each other's toes and/or confuse the team as to who is in charge. To do that, we need clear owners who are responsible for the execution of the effort. If we really disagree with the owner's direction, then let's discuss offline.

## Supplemental Guidance (ref: COVID-19)

**We want our team and our community to be safe.** Safety should come first in all decision making. Please consider how you can improve our team and community through this outbreak.

**Communicating remotely is not just about technology—it's about new patterns of interaction.** Directness, openness, trust, immediacy, innovation.

**Be our eyes and ears.** Share information, intelligence, and issues (escalation) as you get it for key insights, such as:

- What clients are doing (decisions they make, challenges they are facing, etc.) in response to COVID.
- Service Opportunities (ways we can be of service to the community or to our clients during this time)
- Business Risks
- Health updates (you, a family member, or someone you've been in contact with becomes ill)
- Personal needs (you or your family is in need—we are a team, and we will support each other!)

**Stay Awesome, Stay Weird.** It's still really important that we connect with each other on a human and FUN level during this time. Text each other, call each other, use video chat whenever possible, send each other ridiculous memes...our culture is strong, and it isn't constrained to a building.

# WRITERS



## BILL FOURNET

Bill Fournet is the Founder and CEO of The Persimmon Group, the award-winning management consulting firm he founded in 2004. Bill loves to solve complex problems for organizations of all sizes, and remains hands-on at Persimmon, consulting clients of all sizes and in many verticals. A sought-after speaker on Generational Diversity, Leadership and Project Management, Bill believes “we are in the midst of a great transformation.” From technology to generational issues, Bill analyzes workforce trends to help you understand the future of work and how to stay ahead in times of uncertainty.

Bill’s experience in managing high-performance teams has directly influenced the unique business philosophy and atmosphere that has created one of the leading small businesses today.

The Persimmon Group was awarded the Blue Ribbon by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce for its success as one of the leading small businesses in America in multiple years. The Persimmon Group was also named multiple years to the Inc. 500/5000 list for the U.S. Fastest Growing Companies. The Persimmon Group has received the Families and Work Institute’s 2013 Effective and Flexible Workplace Award, and also received the 2016 Arrowhead Award for the Oklahoma Professional Business of the Year.

Bill earned a bachelor’s degree from Vanderbilt University and a master’s degree from Oklahoma State University. He has been honored as the Small Business Person of the Year by Tulsa’s Metro Chamber of Commerce and is a two-time honoree for “Most Admired CEO” in Oklahoma.

Bill currently serves as a Member, Board of Directors at Boy Scouts of America, Indian Nations. He and his wife, Christy, reside in Tulsa, Oklahoma and have three sons.



## SARA GALLAGHER

Sara Gallagher is the President of The Persimmon Group and has served on the executive leadership team since 2018. As a practicing consultant and global speaker for The Persimmon Group since 2012, Sara has helped organizations across many industries to thoughtfully select, plan, and execute high-stakes projects and business transformations. Her approach to solving business problems is interdisciplinary, focused on “leading with both sides of the brain” on the premise that even very technical efforts require innovation, strategic thinking, and emotional intelligence to execute effectively.

Sara is a Project Management Institute (PMI)-certified Project Management Professional (PMP®) who has delivered over 2000 hours of project management and organizational effectiveness coaching, training and speaking across the globe, including highly-attended speaking engagements at the 2015 PMI Global Congress and PMI-DC, the largest PMI chapter in the United States. Sara holds a BA from Emory University in Atlanta, GA; she also studied at the American University in Cairo and is an alumna of Leadership Tulsa, Class 54.



## THE | PERSIMMON | GROUP

The Persimmon Group is a multi-disciplinary management consulting and learning organization that helps business leaders solve complex business problems, improve efficiency, empower teams and implement long-term sustainable improvements. We are led by executives with real-world business experience that we put to work to solve difficult business problems and find the hidden opportunities that make you more efficient, more profitable and allow you to create sustainable growth. Recognizing that action alone does not equal results, we focus on outcomes. We want to understand what success looks like for your organization and provide solutions that drive the end result.

11 East 5th Street  
Suite 300

Tulsa, OK 74103

**P.** 888.392.7101

**P.** 918.592.4121

[thepersimmongroup.com](http://thepersimmongroup.com)