Most companies have practices in place to ensure employee alignment and high performance. 15Five is no exception. More than software, this continuous performance management platform practices “Best-Self Management” by supporting people in becoming their best selves—not just the best workers. Founder and CEO David Hassell says that when you create an environment like this, you create a loyal, passionate team that cares deeply about the company mission. Then, performance takes care of itself.

Hassell’s mission is to help companies create positive, high-performing cultures. 15Five does this by facilitating ongoing employee feedback via its streamlined software. The company’s 117-person team uses the software themselves and credits it with supporting their incredible workplace. In the company’s eight-year history, only three people have ever left voluntarily. In company surveys, employees often make comments like, “I can’t believe a place like this even exists.”

Live by values
Hassell left corporate America because he thought the only way to work at a fulfilling company was to create one. Then it dawned on him: why shouldn’t everyone, not just founders, find fulfillment in their work while contributing to the company’s overall success? 15Five’s deliberate effort to create meaningful work for its employees, and to treat them as whole people, earns it a spot on the Inc. Best Workplaces list.

15Five software helps management teams create a positive environment in which employees feel heard, appreciated, and supported in doing their best work. But it takes more than software. Core values are critical. 15Five abides by 10 principles, including “Embrace Freedom & Flexibility.” This means managers don’t require people to be glued to their desks. They know self-directed employees do their best work when they can set their own schedules.

Another core value is trust and transparency. “If you are good enough to get on our team, we grant you trust from day one—you don’t have to earn it,” says Hassell. 15Five also values resourcefulness and challenges people to look for creative ways to do a lot with a little.

Hassell says the company has produced twice the capital efficiency compared to other successful software companies of the same size and stage. He credits this to the value system, as well as employees’ sense of purpose.

Practice relationship hygiene
Part of managing for one’s best self is paying attention to interpersonal health. 15Five does this in multiple ways. The executive team begins Monday meetings by rating their state of mind. If someone rates low, colleagues ask how they can make things better. They also deal head-on with interpersonal issues by inviting people to air grievances. For the company, 15Five runs three all-hands meetings a week on Zoom. Mondays begin with a short moment of gratitude, before updating the company on financials and OKRs. On Wednesdays, a different employee who’s been selected for that month leads a 5-minute meditation before department updates are shared. On “Question Fridays,” employees break up into random, virtual groups to discuss a different personal question. These sessions allow people to build trust and rapport.

The benefits of these rituals extend beyond employee well-being. Because people feel connected to the company, they are more likely to act in its best interest. Because they feel connected to each other, there is less interpersonal drama. Hassell recalls meeting a CEO who vented that his number one job was “chief firefighter.” Hassell can’t remember the last fire he had to put out.

Hassell hopes to encourage other founders to give Best-Self Management a try. He advises that if you genuinely care about your people, they will feel it. And that will drive loyalty, motivation, and engagement.