

From The Blacktop To The Boardroom Newsletter

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The Blacktop Lesson

Have you ever been completely confident you understood something...
Only to later discover you were working from the wrong assumption?
It happens more often than most leaders realize.

One of the most common reasons capable people struggle in leadership, recovery, and life is surprisingly simple:

They trust what they believe... without ever verifying it.

The blacktop is where many of us first learned competition, resilience, and grit. For me, that started on the basketball courts of Gary, Indiana. In pickup games, reputation is built fast, and accountability is immediate. Excuses don't last long. Your performance tells the story.

What I later discovered is that the same lessons that determine respect on the blacktop also determine outcomes in leadership, in knee-replacement recovery, and in life. This series explores one simple idea:
Unverified beliefs quietly control behavior.

When those beliefs are wrong, people and organizations get trapped in what I call **the Belief Loop**.

And the cost of getting this wrong is significant.

Trust But Verify

Early in my leadership career, my Vice President, Rudy Racine, used to say something that stuck with me.

"Trust, But Verify."

Simple. Direct. Memorable. At the time, he was teaching a leadership lesson about accountability and operational accuracy. But over time, I realized that phrase explains something deeper. It explains why many people get stuck in leadership, recovery, and life.

The Belief Loop

In my role as Director, Performance and Quality Assurance and overseeing 2 QA Managers with staff and 3 contract sites, I dealt with compliance and operational issues. What fascinated me was this: Most violations were **not caused by bad intentions**.

Employees were confident they understood the Standard Operating Procedures. But when we reviewed the SOP together, line by line, the facts often told a different story. **I saw this pattern repeat itself again and again.**

Belief

→ Behavior

→ Violation

→ Correction

→ Resistance

→ Return to belief

This pattern isn't just corporate behavior. **It is human behavior.**

The Cost of the Belief Loop

When beliefs are never verified against truth, the cost shows up everywhere. In organizations, it appears as:

- repeated compliance violations
- HR interventions
- lost productivity
- legal exposure
- management time spent fixing preventable mistakes

Gallup estimates that disengaged employees cost organizations more than **\$500 billion annually** in lost productivity. Often, the root cause is surprisingly simple. People believe something that isn't actually true.

The Same Pattern in Knee Replacement Recovery

Many people believe: "If it hurts, I shouldn't move." But medical science shows the opposite.

Controlled movement is often what restores strength.

According to the American Physical Therapy Association, nearly half of patients do not fully follow their rehabilitation programs.

The result:

- slower recovery
- prolonged pain
- delayed progress
- lower long-term functional outcomes

The surgery may be successful. But recovery stalls because belief and behavior are misaligned with truth. The physical capacity exists. But the belief guiding behavior has never been verified.

Three Principles That Change the Outcome

Across leadership, recovery, and personal growth, three principles appear consistently.

1. Identity Determines Behavior

People act according to who they believe they are. Employees who see themselves as responsible professionals follow procedures more carefully. Patients who believe they are rebuilding strength approach recovery differently. Identity drives behavior.

2. Truth Must Govern Belief

Beliefs must be verified against a clear standard. In business, that standard may be an SOP. In recovery, it may be a medical protocol. In faith, it may be scripture. When belief is not verified against truth, errors multiply.

3. Understanding Activates Power

In **Ephesians 1:17–19**, Paul prays that believers understand three things:

- the hope of His calling
- the riches of His inheritance
- the greatness of His power

The power already exists. Understanding activates it. The same principle appears in leadership and recovery. When people understand how something works, they participate differently.

The Real Problem

Most people are trapped in what I call **the Belief Loop**.

Belief

→ Behavior

→ Result

→ Interpretation

→ Reinforced belief

If the belief is wrong, the loop reinforces the problem. The loop only breaks when **truth interrupts the belief system**.

One Question

Before you move on, consider this:

What belief in your life or leadership have you trusted... but never verified?

The lessons that build grit on the blacktop are often the same lessons that determine outcomes in the boardroom. See you in the next issue.

— Coach K
Kevin Jerry

Blacktop Principle #1

What you believe but never verify will eventually control your results.

Future Series

Leadership Problems → Belief Loop

Compliance Failures → Belief Loop

Rehab Failure → Belief Loop

Faith Misunderstanding → Belief