SPEECH

FOR

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Hello everyone. On behalf of the management of New Horizons Computer Learning Center, an entity we all know really well because let’s face it, **it’s who we are**, I want to thank you all for a lot of things, not least of which is coming together tonight at this beautiful dinner to start the new year on a fresh and positive note. (**If there are people you want to acknowledge for organizing and coordinating the event, you can do that here**). Before I go any further I would like to take a moment to acknowledge the wonderful job that \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ did in planning and realizing this very special evening at this beautiful venue. It’s an honor to be here in this room, amongst all of you as we share expressions of appreciation and intentions for the future. We chose to have this dinner here in this space for a simple reason. It is, as we know, a five star (**Restaurant?**) considered to be one that radiates and inspires excellence in service and product, in this case dining, and we feel that is a fitting tribute to all of you as you bring so much to the jobs you do at New Horizons.

I am also very pleased to see so many spouses and partners here with us tonight. This evening could never have been this complete without the presence of those of you that keep our management, staff and teachers inspired, encouraged, respected, and loved. In order for anyone to be effective at what they do, the inspiration begins at home with the encouragement and support of good friends and loving family. We appreciate the sacrifices of time and attention that may result as our colleagues work so diligently to serve our students and we want you to know we appreciate your consideration, patience, and understanding.

Tonight it is our intention to acknowledge the **relentless** contribution and effort **everyone** on this team makes…. Although throughout the recent past we all may have been faced with our share of personal and professional challenges, this evening we look over our shoulders for the positive accomplishments. Every issue each one of us has endured or is going through currently is an **opportunity**… it’s a chance for us to learn and grow and recognize where corrections and revisions need to be inserted. It’s a chance to gauge productivity and applaud effectiveness. Although in so many other aspects there may be few “do-over’s” in life, where there is life there is the possibility of revision, improvement, and success.

This dinner is our chance to celebrate our great team. 2015 saw our company approach and weather storms with varying degrees of success, but the one constant that is gratefully present is the dedication and tenacity of all of you. Did we get wet? Yes we did. Did we drown? No we didn’t. Do we have a diverse and enthusiastic staff that works tirelessly to get us back on course? Absolutely. Each one of you has demonstrated an admirable degree of accountability and ownership in the well-being of New Horizons, and that positive attitude will go a long way in seeing us through the rough spots that always exist in life and in business.

We work to serve an industry whose main function used to be almost entirely relegated to back end maintenance and support, but that was in ancient times… like five or six years ago…or even less… (**Wait for the laugh**). I know that to the uninitiated it may seem that I exaggerate, but I am fairly sure we would all agree that thanks to the technological improvements and advancements that are coming at all of us faster than the speed of light, we have all found ourselves, as we work and teach in this sector that morphs into one that is on the front lines of a true and omnipresent revolution, more in demand than ever before. That demand **INSISTS** on knowledgeable and effective expertise and response. We are the team that teaches the teams to keep the corporate machine operational. IT support is more important in every segment of business now than it ever was and that means that our vigilance and knowledge base needs to be continuously refreshed and scrupulously current and even **ahead** of the curve. It is no longer enough to know the systems. We have to be able to **anticipate** trends and constantly update our skill sets and knowledge bases in order to be prepared for the learning curve. I **KNOW** we can do that.

In an article on a website called “The Big Think,” the authors teach us that “The doubling of computer processing speed every eighteen months is known as Moore’s Law” and “is an example of the greater trend that all technological change occurs at an exponential rate.” The article also mentions that when futurist Ray Kurzweil was an undergraduate at MIT along with his classmates, they “… all shared a computer … that took up half the building.” He goes on to offer this contrast… “ The computer in your cellphone is a million times cheaper and a thousand times more powerful. That’s a **billion fold** increase in price performance of computing!!” He goes on to remind us to apply that same dramatic increase to other critical fields that depend on information technology such as Energy, Neuroscience, Genetics, and Nanotechnology. In reality, with the work that we do and the industries our students will be a part of, this kind of massive growth applies to **every** industry. While computers used to take up entire laboratories, someone can now run the world…. or destroy it… from a Smartphone. And when not on a Smartphone there are infinite programs that people need to have fluency in for optimal functioning in business.

Exponential growth is part of the world in which we live and as educators, we need to be prepared to anticipate, forecast, research, learn and teach as never before. New Horizons is an important link in a vital chain of education that is needed more than ever. As hardware gets more sophisticated and as software and mobile platforms become increasingly necessary in every aspect of personal and business interaction, we will be needed to teach people how to manage their lives in the ever evolving world of Information Technology.

I saw a cartoon the other day. It was a picture of a man staring and cowering in front of a closed door in fear and frustration. On the other side of the door, unseen, is clearly some terrified creature screaming, “I DON’T WANT TO GO TO SCHOOL!!! YOU CAN’T FORCE ME TO GO!!!!” And the caption gave the cringing man’s response… “But Sheila, you’re the **TEACHER**!!!” (**Wait for the laugh**). I don’t even have to see a show of hands to know that every one of you has felt that way at least a few times for each course…. or maybe even more often that that!! But here’s where your brilliance shines through…. You show up. You do your jobs to the very best of your collective and individual abilities, and you serve the students and the school **admirably**. That in and of itself is quite an accomplishment in the competitive and challenging climate we have been experiencing for the past year or so.

The author Napoleon Hill has said, “ Strength and growth come only through continuous effort and struggle.” I wish business was easier for all of us, believe me, but the truth is that the struggle makes this celebration and these acknowledgements that much more meaningful, deserved and ultimately that much sweeter. (**Give some examples of the people that will be receiving awards as a preliminary to the actual presentation**). There are some people within our group that have demonstrated qualities that really inspire. They have gone beyond their comfort zones to make sure that people learned, the students were satisfied, the needs of our business partners were met, and the placements made successfully fit the skill sets. I’m speaking of people like \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ who were able to \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ impressed all of us when she \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. And I am sure most of you remember when \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ was able to \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, which had a great and lasting effect on \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

(**Do you want the awards ceremony to take place as part of this speech? … This wasn’t clear in the instructions I received but we can adjust if necessary. If so, you can do the presentation at this point if you like**).

We have several awards to bestow tonight and I would like to do that now.

(**Present the awards**).

All of this year’s award winners are great examples of people that **really care**. They care about the quality of the work they do. They demonstrate a sense of ownership and partnership when it comes to the services we offer and the satisfaction of our clientele. They care about the students and are concerned that each person that attends our courses has a thorough working knowledge of the curricula we offer. It’s clearly not sufficient to teach a course by rote. Every student that enters our classrooms expects value, service, and up-to-date knowledge and leads in order to find future employment in Information Technology. We must never take for granted the time, effort and resources each student spends in order to have a positive and worthwhile experience here at New Horizons. As with people from every aspect of life, every student has a story, a challenge, a personal responsibility to be met. They attend our school to learn and to acquire valuable skills and knowledge so they can find their way in this increasingly competitive, challenging, complicated world in which we live.

New Horizons is a nationally accredited school as well as serving as a business-to-business training company. As such we have a mandate to provide excellence in all products and services we provide. I am confident that our team of professionals has everything necessary and MORE to carry us into the future. Every issue, every challenge is a gift and a great opportunity from which all of us can learn. Every downturn is an invitation to be vigilant. Every correction is an invitation to be even more observant, more present, more vigilant. Defeat is not in our vocabulary! Confidence, acknowledgement, diligence, determination, partnership, respect, consideration, teamwork… those are the keywords that will take this company into the future and the great news is that each one of you uses those same keywords to guide you every single day.

Napoleon Hill had other great thoughts and words of wisdom and I want to share some more of them with you. He has said, “The majority of people meet failure because of their lack of persistence in creating new plans to take the place of those which fail.” To that I say, remember you are innovators. You are creators. You are “inspirers.” Individually and as a unified group, we have what it takes to find the solutions that lead to success. As a team we have the ability to assess the full picture, devise effective solutions, and implement them. As a company we have the will and determination to succeed. Hill also said, “Think twice before you speak, because your words and influence will plant the seed of either success or failure in the mind of another.” We have to consider what we say, empathize with the listener, and deliver our massages and lesson in the same manner that would work to inspire **us**. As more and more particles of information and data have to be shared, it’s critical that we make sure our thoughts and intentions are understood, and that holds true whether we are speaking to students, coworkers, family or friends. Effective, positive, motivating communication is the key to success.

Our next sessions are about to begin. This dinner serves as a form of completion for our accomplishments and performance in 2015. I want to make sure all of you understand that we are tremendously proud of the team we have built here at New Horizons. We have gone through some changes, but there will always be change. That is the one thing that is definite. Success is defined by how those changes are handled and how we adapt. Your dedication, passion, and enthusiasm have inspired students and local businesses to maintain faith in our company, and while everyone has done an admirable job, I know that in 2016 our collective performance will manifest in even more positive results. The key to any effective worthy business is to remain hungry. I will always be hungry for results and performance, customer success, employee accomplishment, and improved finances. My intention for this company is that it builds into a continually evolving entity of innovation, improvement, achievement and growth.

We would not be here tonight if it weren’t for the inspiration of our employees that motivates us on a daily basis. Inspiration is not always found in grand and sweeping gestures. it is also found in daily achievements that may seem insignificant but are not. (**Name some examples of smaller accomplishments of people that may not have won anything- just to inspire them to greater performance**) When I think of people like \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ , who has been with us for just \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ years and how she \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, I smile at the dedication she demonstrates. When I hear that someone in \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_’s \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ class overcame limitations to understanding \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, I know we have fulfilled our purpose as educators. When I hear that (**Name a former student**) \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ went on to land a job with \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and both the company and the new employee are working together to meet IT demands, I know that with ingenuity and determination, we can and will work out the challenges… and that will make way for **NEW** challenges and **NEW** solutions!! **That’s great!!** (**Say that with enthusiasm and wait for the laugh**).

Every day presents us with a golden opportunity for a fresh start and Monday morning will be the beginning of the future of New Horizons. Just as management will look at our performance in 2015 to see where to find the opportunities for revision and innovation, I know that each one of you will be doing the same. And all our efforts will come together as an expression of a strong, dedicated, and committed team. There are new lessons to be learned for all of us. Adversity breeds fresh thinking and I know that as we prepare to innovate in the future, our connection with one another will also grow stronger. It is important that no one loses sight of our potential as a team.

There’s an expression that teaches us, “I am part of all that I have met,” and I have to say that I am very proud to be a part of all of you and of this team. We have all worked so hard to build strong foundations in every aspect of this business. We have done some great work with the students. We have supported or business-to-business partners well. Our students have excelled from the training, guidance, and encouragement they have received under your tutelage.

Although there may appear to be some soft spots in our foundation that still have to cure and set, we have a lot going for us. There is so much in life that is unpredictable and out of our control. We never know what global conditions and events might happen to irretrievably shape our lives, but what we **DO** know is what we have right now, and that is the potential and the opportunity to take our work to the next level.

I want to thank all of you for the invaluable contribution you have made to New Horizons. I also want to be something of a trend forecaster and visionary myself. I want to take a moment to thank you for the future contributions you will make. I want to envision next year’s awards dinner at which we look back on 2016 with a tremendous sense of accomplishment. I want us to share the sense of pride in an incredibly well done job that saw student enrollment and placement increase as exponentially as the data that will become available. I picture a dinner in which the acknowledgements are almost too many to share. I want to envision a shared sense of gratitude for each other and unprecedented effectiveness, growth, and satisfaction professionally, personally, and as a community. And you know what? I think it’s highly likely that we can be in that place and share that vision next year at this time. I have faith in this team.

I want to thank all of you again for your dedication to New Horizons and may 2016 be our best year ever!! Thank you all!