

Hi everyone,

I'm Sam, and today is my last day as your Operations Manager.

That sentence still feels a little unreal, so I'm going to do what I've done for the last 18 years—take a breath, look around, and talk about what we built together.

I walked through these doors in 2008 as a project coordinator with a notebook full of checklists and a lot to prove.

Back then, I thought success meant having all the answers.

Pretty quickly I learned it actually means finding the right people, asking better questions, and rolling up your sleeves together when things get messy.

In 2014, I moved into the Operations Manager role, and that's when the real fun started.

"Fun" meaning spreadsheets, forklifts, budget meetings, late-night calls, and the strange satisfaction of solving a bottleneck with a whiteboard and three dry-erase colors.

But also the joy of seeing a plan stick, a handoff run smoothly, a new hire grow into a leader, and a tough week end with people still laughing.

A lot of you remember 2017—the year we rolled out the Horizon ERP across five regions.

We had maps taped to the walls, pilot sites buzzing, and more acronyms than a bowl of alphabet soup.

We also had glitches, deadlines, and a few moments where it felt like the system was rolling us out instead of the other way around.

What I remember most is how every region found its rhythm—how IT partnered with ops, how finance stress-tested and fixed, how the warehouse teams gave blunt, lifesaving feedback, and how we took each go-live like a first performance, not a rerun.

That project taught me that change sticks when the people doing the work help design it.

From 2019 to 2023, I chaired the Safety Committee.

Not the flashiest line on a resume, but probably the one I'm proudest of.

Together we reduced incidents by 30%—not with posters, but by making safety a habit.

We changed how we did briefings, we listened when someone said, "This doesn't feel right," and we rewarded the quiet moments where someone slowed down, stepped back, and prevented something from happening.

Integrity isn't a plaque.

It's a teammate tapping your shoulder and saying, "Hey, clip in," and you listening.

If there's a single day that sums up why I love this place, it's that week in 2020 when the supply crunch hit.

Shipments were stuck, vendors were nervous, phones didn't stop.

We turned the break room into a pop-up command center—sticky notes on every surface, a whiteboard grid that would make a chess grandmaster sweat, coffee that could remove paint.

By Friday, every order was back on track.

No heroics, just a hundred small, accountable decisions made by people who cared about getting it right.

We celebrated with the fanciest desserts we could find at the corner store—those tiny frosted cupcakes—and I still have a photo of the whiteboard with a single note circled: "We've got this."

You did.

People sometimes ask what kind of leader I tried to be.

The truth is I never chased a style.

I chased the work and let the work teach me.

Servant leadership, teamwork, integrity, accountability—those aren't slogans to me.

They're the way we got through tough quarters, new systems, shortages, audits,

and the random Tuesday fire drill when nothing goes as planned.

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They look like admitting you messed up at 9 a.m. and getting it fixed by noon.

They look like elevating someone else's idea because it's better than yours.

They look like showing up early so someone else can get to their kid's game.

Over these years I've had the privilege to mentor 12 team leads.

Some of you started in roles where no one expected you to raise your hand, and now you run meetings I wish I had recorded.

If I had one goal as a manager, it was to help you become the person people turn to when the stakes go up.

And you did.

The best part of leaving today is believing—knowing—you're going to take it further than I did.

I want to thank the folks who never get enough thanks.

The scheduling teams who find time we don't have.

The warehouse crews who keep everything moving when the thermometer says "don't."

The buyers and planners who can smell a shortage three months out.

The drivers who make the last mile look easy when it never is.

The analysts who tell us the truth in charts we can't argue with.

IT, who saves us from ourselves and our passwords.

Finance, who asks the hard questions that make our answers better.

And our partners, who stuck with us when plans changed and then changed again—thank you for the trust and the straight talk.

On a personal note, you've all put up with my odd hobbies.

You've humored the occasional wood shavings on my jacket from the garage, the Monday morning photos from a muddy hiking trail, and the unsolicited sourdough loaves that looked better than they sliced.

Thank you for supporting my side passion with the community tool library; every time you donated a retired drill or asked how the weekend class went, you reminded me that work and community can feed each other.

People keep asking what I'll do with all this time.

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First, I'm going to enjoy slower mornings—the kind where you make coffee, abandon it to cool, and then warm it up without guilt.

Then I'm hitting the road for national parks with my spouse—no routing software, just a paper map and an unreasonable number of snacks.

I'm planning to teach a workshop at the maker space—basic joinery, shop safety, the zen of sanding—and see if I can pass on a little of what this job has taught me about building things right the first time.

And I'm keeping a simple promise to myself: stay curious.

If you need me—or if you just want a slice of bread and a story—come by for coffee.

You can reach me at cto@kuchventures.com.

I mean it; the door's open, the kettle's on, and I'm still grading croissants on a generous curve.

Before I step off this stage, I want to leave you with one small request.

Keep doing the unglamorous things well.

Keep saying “we” more than “I.”

Keep turning rooms—break rooms, board rooms, stock rooms—into places where problems get smaller because people get closer.

You don't need me to do that.

You already do it.

Thank you for letting me grow up here—from that checklist-carrying coordinator in 2008 to a manager proud of what we built.

Thank you for the trust, the arguments that made us better, the laughter that bailed us out, and the ordinary days that added up to something worth celebrating.

I'm not saying goodbye.

I'm just saying, “See you on the trail,” or maybe at the tool library, or—if we're lucky—somewhere under big trees with no cell service and time to spare.

Take care of each other.

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