10 Lessons Every Entrepreneur Should Learn About Their Business

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I co-founded a company 10 years ago, and in that decade we've closed seven M&As, expanded our operations, dramatically increased revenue and forged strategic partnerships. But of course this journey had its fair share of highs and lows. Here are 10 things I've learned that I think can be helpful to any entrepreneur.

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Know when to say no to a deal

Early on, an investor offered $25 million to acquire ironSource, even upping the bid to $40 million two months later. We turned the offer down. When you're in this position, it's critical to deeply question yourself and to be brutally honest. I certainly was. If your goal is to create something and then move on to your next challenge once your business grows beyond a certain point, then saying yes to a deal makes perfect sense. But if you believe in the long-term potential of your company and are someone who genuinely wants to see your vision through its different growth cycles, then don't be afraid to hang on. You'll be in for quite the ride.

Inorganic growth is unavoidable if you want to build a long-term business

At first, organic growth might seem like a viable long-term strategy, but relying on it alone simply doesn't cut it in today's fast-paced, competitive market. From very early on, we knew that the only way our company could grow and compete was to be aggressive about strategic M&As. Organic growth should be a fundamental building block of every company's trajectory, but it can't be the only element.

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Buy based on DNA, not (only) on numbers

Our approach to acquisitions is largely shaped by the culture of the acquired or merged company, due to my belief that numbers don't tell the whole story. We look for a fundamental alignment of interests as well as a shared DNA. Focusing on acquiring companies that share our vision has meant that the executives from these deals have, in most cases, stayed on board. Consider looking beyond spreadsheets and into the culture of the team at the other company. If there's a common DNA that will strengthen your journey forward, then you're headed in the right direction.

Create a culture that enables radical trust

I believe that trust — not just standard trust, but radical trust — is the best way to get the most out of talented employees and push your company forward. When I say radical

trust, I mean letting your trusted employees run with their visions and exercise their strengths. It is something that we apply to all areas of our company. It has led us to many failed ventures, but more importantly, it has delivered products and concepts that have become essential to its core. Creating and maintaining a culture of radical trust ensures that each and every one of your team members feel empowered and have the confidence and resources they need to leverage their strengths in an environment that radically supports them.

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Don’t wait for someone else to make the right decision

Contrary to popular belief, good things don’t always come to those who wait. In 2017, we launched ironWeekend, an initiative that gives employees an extra day off over the weekend every quarter. The government in Israel, where we’re based, had been considering legislating something like this for a while, but why wait for something you believe in? We rolled the concept out across all of our global offices, and three years later ironWeekend is still flourishing. Never wait for someone else to make the right decision for you.

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Have pointless conversations

Communication in genuine and unceremonious ways builds valuable and interesting connections. As important as it is to have actionable discussions that propel your company forward, it’s equally as important to have interactions with no set goal. In a world where every second of every day is optimized, invest in building real human connections. Having pointless

conversations with employees will help you get to know them on a personal basis, learn what drives them and discover their interests. Pointless conversations are somewhat of a rarity these days, but conversations are the building blocks of strong relationships.

Daughters know best

While traveling in the car with my daughter, I was on loudspeaker with a colleague who was putting pressure on me to go to an event that I was resisting attending. My daughter was paying attention (unbeknownst to me) and blurted out that the event sounded important to my colleague, and "if you help him now, he'll help you out one day when you need something." Important lesson learned from my 8-year-old.

In negotiations, know your red line

Human nature is such that the more emotionally invested we get into something and the more time we dedicate to it, the further we'll go to get it and the harder it is to stick to our boundaries. If you're in negotiations without pre-setting limits with yourself then, guaranteed, you will end up crossing the line and be disappointed with yourself later on. No matter what you're negotiating, it's always important to remember where you need to draw the line. And it's equally as important to know your limits (but not to share it with others of course). Set boundaries, be disciplined and you'll be able to come out of most negotiations well.

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In times of crisis, be flexible

As the current situation has taught me, it's critical to be open-minded and flexible when the unknown hits you. Take

internal mobility as an example. Although some roles in the company have technically disappeared or are experiencing a very reduced workload, I’m working with my team to see how we can reallocate our manpower to teams who need extra support with those who aren’t at full capacity. Not everyone will be a perfect match, but it allows us to retain our employees, which is massively important while we weather this storm. What’s more, it creates an opportunity for someone to try and potentially excel in an area of the business they would otherwise never have exposure to.

Don’t take yourself too seriously

…but do take your work very seriously. This is a deceptively simple formula that I try to live by, and that has trickled through ironSource to become a defining characteristic of our DNA. People who take themselves seriously are exhausting to be around. You spend time managing their ego as opposed to focusing on what really matters or what’s most interesting. And people who don’t take their work seriously are ultimately people who aren’t striving for excellence, aren’t focused on looking at the bigger picture and aren’t thinking about how to do better tomorrow.

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