

5 Key Leadership Principles for Driving Growth



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The proliferation of documentaries on Silicon Valley's most notorious leaders has, in some ways, vilified the role of the corporate executive officer. Sure, outliers do exist, but these media portrayals ignore that plenty of great entrepreneurs build startups with integrity.

Business leadership that stands the test of time requires finding the right balance between benefiting clients, customers and team members. Most entrepreneurs have a growth mindset, but it takes integrity – doing what's right every single time – paired with courageous action to get there. It takes people, processes and technology to lay a solid growth foundation. Supporting each of these investments is one of the essential traits of an effective leader.

I founded Zotec in 1998 when I saw the healthcare industry starving for technology. My experience as a CPA and a leader within the insurance industry helped me prioritize company growth while providing value, pursuing our purpose and enhancing the healthcare financial experience for patients and providers.

I'm able to motivate my team and partner with the providers we serve because of the trust I've built by delivering on the promises I've made.

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Essential elements for a hit – instead of a flop

My company employs more than 1,400 team members today through a mix of strategic acquisitions and organic growth. Each hire is an integral part of the team that provides relationship management, proprietary technology, insightful data and industry expertise to healthcare providers and patients nationwide.

Our team members build trust with clients, partners, patients and the community by following and making decisions from five principles: people, passion, persistence, perspective and predictability. These characteristics have led to success and can apply to any person, organization or team looking to achieve growth.

1. People

One of the most shocking themes of many of these docudramas is how the executives focus on their motives instead of prioritizing company culture. If your people don't trust and care about each other or aren't committed to excellence, the

game is over before it starts. Nearly 60% of employees believe management teams are responsible for putting engagement practices into motion.

People should have a sense of belonging to the team. They should be compensated fairly, provided well-being opportunities and offered training, education and resources to advance. The focus on people should start at the top and be instilled throughout the organization. Mutual compassion, respect and care should drive all interactions. When people hold themselves accountable to the mission, you've got a championship team.

2. Passion

What made many infamous corporations so successful initially was the passion of their founders. I love what I do – it's how I stayed in business for so long. When I was building the business, my kids would instantly know if I had a tough workday or a day that didn't feel like work. I was (and still am) committed and eager about what's next on the horizon.

Seventy percent of respondents in one McKinsey study said their work defines their purpose, yet only 18% said they received as much purpose as they'd like from their jobs. Companies must realize the power of inspiring their teams with strong missions and creating environments that cultivate purpose and collaboration. Especially as employees join virtual teams, they need to fill the void of a physical work environment. Great communication, recognition and a common purpose help fuel passion regardless of location.

Create valuable growth and learning opportunities and make space for employees to work on projects that meet their purpose-fulfilling needs. Offer ways to give back with actionable steps to enhance your internal culture and the community. You'll find your company full of not only employees, but also passionate advocates.

3. Persistence

Albert Einstein famously said, “It’s not that I’m so smart, it’s just that I stay with problems longer.” I believe the most significant asset we have is our inventory of mistakes – if we learn from them. In business and life, mistakes bring opportunities for growth and can be investments in the future. Even successful companies must guard against the fear of failure by embracing the positives from losses and critically thinking about how to win the next time. Many of these on-screen founders were trying to prove they were intelligent, but nothing beats hard work.

In a University of Texas study, entrepreneurs remained persistent with their business efforts when they continued to challenge themselves to achieve goals. The concept of corporate or departmental goals is only a first step. Tap into what drives your team members personally to make specific goals. Without knowing where you are going, you don’t know what road to stay on and, therefore, can’t persist through the forces that try to send you off course.

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4. Perspective

These shows about fallen tech titans give insight into each founder’s lack of perspective. Research shows that around half of leaders fail, often due to self-serving views. A company has many constituents – vendors, clients, partners and team members – with different needs, and effective leadership means balancing each of their perspectives in all decisions.

Understanding other perspectives means setting aside one’s ego within the negotiation process. Always look for unique viewpoints. The next big idea is usually sitting right inside

your company. Many consultants make a living by listening to your team and putting a different perspective on those ideas. Try to be your own consultant to unlock fresh points of view.

5. Predictability

What each of the founders also has in common is that they were too unpredictable, which contributed to their labels as “bad entrepreneurs.”

Action speaks louder than words. When I say I’m going to do something, I do it. People’s careers are in my hands when they commit to joining our team, and I give them my commitment to care for them and do the right thing in return.

Predictability incites trust in leaders. Especially in unpredictable times, employees look for stability in their leaders, expecting consistent decision-making, follow-through, values and work ethic. Being unreliable in any of these areas can break down any company leadership and eventually any company. When you have clearly articulated expectations and structure, everyone knows their purpose and value.

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Effective leadership in the real world

They might make for fascinating on-screen stories, but the tales of many of these tech entrepreneurs also show us how endeavors turn out when one turns away from the fundamentals. While the list of “who’s who” and what not to do as an executive continues to be popularized, many more leaders are doing business the right way. Their lessons can help us take the right steps toward building businesses with integrity and driving success.

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