8 CEO Mindset Quotes That Keep Me Honest and Inspired

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Quotations are popular for a reason – sometimes a short piece of wisdom is exactly what's needed to inspire you, keep you honest or ground you in your values. The ones that tend to stick with you might be large ideas contained in small pieces of text or simple advice that helps you remember something important. They can feel inspiring and give us principles to remember to live by.

I'm known to wear a variety of printed T-shirts with words of motivation on them to help me remember something important to me and to inspire others around me because I love to share an inspiring message. So here are eight of my favorite quotes for CEOs and why I think they're useful to remember:

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1. "If you don't have an assistant, you are one!" – Cameron Herold, author and coach

One of my favorite quotes that got me to take action was this one from Cameron Herold. This quote represents one of the most important lessons for an entrepreneur to learn – your time is your most valuable resource, so spend it on the tasks that are most important. That means delegating anything that doesn't require your level of expertise. Would you pay someone your salary to do the work of an assistant? If you don't have one,

you’re already doing that!

2. “It’s okay to admit what you don’t know. It’s okay to ask for help. And it’s more than okay to listen to the people you lead — in fact, it’s essential.” — Mary Barra, CEO of General Motors

Strong leadership requires some level of vulnerability. Admitting when you don’t know something, asking for help and listening to your employees are markers of an effective leader. The leader who tries to do it all on their own will never accomplish as much as the leader who values the expertise of others.

3. “All our productivity, leverage and insight comes from being part of a community, not apart from it. The goal, I think, is to figure out how to become more dependent, not less.” — Seth Godin, author and speaker

One of the most important leadership lessons to learn is that your greatest business asset is your team. Each person brings a unique perspective and skillset, and the best innovations happen in collaboration. Your community extends beyond just your team as well — friends, mentors and family members all provide valuable, enriching relationships. Don’t neglect them.

4. “No legacy is so rich as honesty.” – William Shakespeare

If there’s anyone who managed to set a remarkable legacy, it was Shakespeare. More than what you accomplish, people will remember the way you behaved. And your legacy doesn’t just start after you die; it’s already in action, in the way people associate with you. A legacy and reputation as an honest person will take you far.

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5. “You can’t use up creativity. The more you use, the more you have.” – Maya Angelou

As the CEO of your business, your creativity is one of your most valuable skills, so it’s worth taking the time to practice it. I’m known for dedicating a day each week to creative endeavors to help keep my creative muscles in shape. And I highly encourage everyone to make intentional time for creativity, because the more often you do it, the more easily ideas will come to you.

6. “A pessimist is one who makes difficulties of his opportunities and an optimist is one who makes opportunities of his difficulties.” –Harry S. Truman

Stop letting your thoughts get in your way. It’s easy to adopt a pessimistic attitude under the guise of “realism,” but the reality is that it’s optimists who tend to get the best

outcomes. Why? Because they're not easily discouraged, so they're more likely to learn from their mistakes and keep trying. As opera singer Robert Breault said, "The realist sees reality as concrete. The optimist sees reality as clay."

7. "What looks like multitasking is really switching back and forth between multiple tasks, which reduces productivity and increases mistakes by up to 50%." – Susan Cain, author

If you're anything like the majority of entrepreneurs I know, you're always trying to do more with your time. Time is your most valuable resource, so it's important to use it wisely – which is exactly why multitasking is a bad idea. You'll always get more done when you dedicate your focus to a single task and give it your all.

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8. "The best way to drive performance in an organization is to create an environment in which information can flow freely, mistakes can be highlighted, and help can be offered and received."

— Simon Sinek, author and speaker

Creating a productive workplace culture can seem dauntingly complex to many executives, but the core of it is collaboration, where each employee is given the resources to perform their best. And in order to have strong collaboration, you need a creative and judgment-free environment where people can bring their ideas, perspectives and expertise to the table, communicate freely, take ownership over their tasks, ask for help when needed and have the freedom to make mistakes. When you create a culture of collaboration, that’s where innovation begins.

If you found one of these quotes particularly inspiring or helpful, write it down on a sticky note and put it somewhere you can see it regularly. Sometimes these short reminders are exactly what we need to refocus and maintain our perspective.

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