How to Lead Calmly and Effectively While Your Business Experiences Growth

Ben Ofiri is the co-founder and CEO of Komodor. He found himself in the spotlight after his company experienced explosive growth. He sat down with Jessica Abo to share his advice for anyone in the same boat.

Jessica Abo: Can you start by telling us what Kubernetes is?

Ben Ofiri: Kubernetes is a container orchestration platform. You can think about it as basically an operating system that allows companies to build very complex services on the cloud, using a unified and standard way that was developed by Google a few years back, released as an open-source project to the community. Now, it's one of the most common infrastructures for cloud-native organizations. Kubernetes became a very common and standard way for organizations to operate and build microservices and deploy them to the cloud.

What does Komodor do?

Kubernetes itself is a very complex system inherently. It means that you get a lot of power out of the box; you can scale your system as if you are in Netflix or Google, even if you are a 10 people team. But it also has significant downsides. One of the downsides is that when something is broken, when something is going off, when you have an alert, when you have an incident, it usually requires a lot of expertise and experience, working and operating these very complex issues. You basically need to be an expert, to do it efficiently.

What Komodor does is basically provide the needed observability and tools. When your company has an issue, has an alert, has an incident, they can immediately find the root cause, and even remedy the issue using two clicks, instead of sometimes hours of investigation that involves multiple people. So, you can think about it as an added layer on top of your Kubernetes. It basically makes sure that it's reliable, it's continuously reliable. And if there is an issue, you have a place in order to find out what's the issue and to fix it.

How did you come up with the name Komodor?

All of the Kubernetes-related terms are from the marine world. So, Kubernetes is, in Latin, basically the person who navigates the ship. Helm, and all of the other terms from Kubernetes, are also related to the marine world. And Komodor is basically our attempt to become captain of the ship, that basically can navigate the ship of complexity and troubles into safety.

And what do you want to say to the other captains, admirals, the founders out there about how to handle explosive growth?

The tip I can give is to try to surround yourself with people who are better than you in some things. It might be that they're doing better operations. It might be that they're smarter. It might be that they're more creative. But don't try to be the smartest person in the room. At least my motto is to try to be in a room with a lot of smart people and try to get some of them to work for you, and some of them to work with you. So this is at least one thing I can say.

The second thing is that once you have a talented team working for you, set the goals, set the principles and provide the tools, but let them lead. If you really want to grow significantly, you can't just do everything by yourself. So, you need to let your team lead. You need to let your management team lead, and take risks as well. It's a marathon,

it’s not a sprint. Founders are constantly trying to push the team to 120%, working 14 hours a day and working on the weekends. But we need to remember that the journey is very long. We need a team, and we need our investors and customers together with us for many years to come. And we need to make sure that we operate adequately.

What do you want to say to the other entrepreneurs out there who are suddenly in the spotlight?

You need to be humble. It’s not only about you. I know that it’s very easy to see all of the PR, and see your picture everywhere, and read all of the flattering blogs about the company and about yourself. But truth being said, the CEO is not the entire thing. The real thing is the employees, the customers, the investors and the family members who sacrifice a lot for the company to succeed. And you need to make sure that you give those people the right credit. And you also need to make sure that those people feel that they have a real impact on this journey. You always need to be in a learning mode. The fact that you raise a lot of money and the fact that you manage to get some paying customers doesn’t mean that you need to stop learning. In fact, it just means that you have a lot of new things to learn.

Try to remember why you did it in the first place. There are tons of reasons why co-founders decide to live their very nice life, and decide to drop everything else and do this crazy thing of founding a company. It might be for making sure that the family will have a better life, and securing their financial future. It might be that you want to do something that affects real people, or change the way they’re doing things. All of those reasons are legit, but try not to forget why you did it in the first place.

I just had a baby boy two months ago, and I became a father for the first time. And before I leave my apartment to the office, I just look at the smile of my baby and automatically

I remember why I did the thing, and what’s the really important things in life. And I think it’s very important to have those things, to give you some proportion, and then to go to work and do the best that you can in work.

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