

## 7 Inspiring Leaders And Their Lessons

I recently scheduled time to tackle a few things outside of work to keep myself centered. From dabbling in mentalism and card tricks, to completing 150 extreme level Kakuro puzzles, to trying to run a mile in less than six and a half minutes (I missed that goal by 20 seconds), to spending more time with my children, it was a nice way to reset.

During this, I also began to consider the top attributes of the best leaders throughout the tech industry.

I'm sharing those thoughts here, in the hopes that we can strive for these together and make the world of business and beyond a better place:

### **Inspiring Every Stakeholder They Interact With**

It may seem obvious to consider Bill Gates successful, given that Microsoft holds the thirtieth position on the 2017 Fortune 500 list, but to me, it is his philanthropic work with the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation that has really made me see him in a different light. He applies the same laser-like focus that he used to build Microsoft to solving healthcare, reducing extreme poverty and expanding opportunities around the globe.

His approach has inspired other wealthy donors to contribute to the Foundation, thereby building scale. His involvement has also inspired some of the brightest technical and scientific minds to join the Foundation, thereby building a world-class organization to solve very difficult problems. Great people follow people they are inspired by.

### **Pairing EQ with IQ**

Many leaders rise in their fields because of their intelligence and drive, but great leaders match that with a high emotional intelligence. To me, Barack Obama epitomizes the perfect balance of IQ and EQ in his ability to not just make smart decisions but, just as importantly, spend time with his various stakeholders to involve them, hear their points of view, incorporate those into his vision, thereby getting the stakeholders' buy-in on the vision.

This combination of high IQ and EQ helped former President Obama drive the rebound of the country's economy from one of our deepest global recessions after the banking crisis, and he did this even when the Congress was held by an opposition majority bent on not cooperating with him. His intelligence, wit, and empathy never wavered.

### **Aligning with North Star Values**

Steve Jobs was undoubtedly successful, but his management style was not something I would want to replicate. Which makes the story of Tim Cook all the more impressive. He was handed the reigns from Steve, has continued to scale the company, maintained the pace of innovation, and has kept the notoriously passionate

Apple fanbase engaged.

And he has done all of that while staying out of the spotlight himself while keeping Apple focused on its mission and company culture. This ability to never lose sight of the North Star values of the organization while driving the company's success makes for a great leader.

### **Taking Calculated Risks**

Once upon a time, Amazon was an online bookstore that was on the brink of bankruptcy, and now it's the leading Internet retailer with the second largest market cap in the world. Along the way, Jeff Bezos has shown that he is not content to dominate one market when there are still other markets available to capture. In addition to winning the already huge e-commerce market, he decided to take calculated risks getting into any business that he believed was open to disruption, whether or not there was any apparent adjacency to the existing businesses.

Here are five examples. (1) Getting into the hardware business of Kindles, Echos, microwave ovens, with more to come, no doubt. (2) Taking a technology built for internal purposes and turning it into a stand-alone business (Amazon Web Services). (3) Getting into the offline grocery business to complement their online grocery ambitions as well as create an additional channel to sell its online products. (4) Streaming both video and music to become a one-stop shop for all entertainment. (5) Getting into space technology with his company, Blue Origin.

Bezos has shown an ability to take very calculated risks, and then commit to them wholeheartedly and it has served him and Amazon well.

### **Maintaining the Highest Levels of Integrity**

Whenever I hear that nice guys finish last, I know this saying is untrue because of Ratan Tata. He grew a multi-billion-dollar empire in India and around the world, but with an amazing level of integrity. He has shown a willingness to shut down projects in their advanced stages that required any questionable behavior.

He has made big bets on buying international companies of great repute, such as Jaguar and Land Rover, thereby only associating with brands that match the Tata brand in name and credibility. In addition, Mr. Tata has put more than 60 percent of his wealth back into his philanthropic pursuits. So, good guys can finish first.

### **Attracting and Retaining A Great Team**

The one aspect of Steve Jobs' leadership that I would actually want to replicate is his ability to attract and retain great talent. From Jonathan Ive to Tim Cook (mentioned earlier) to Eddy Cue to Jeff Williams, their average tenure at Apple has been north of 20 years, and their leadership has helped make Apple into the industry-changing company it is today.

Similarly, in his 2015 annual letter to shareholders, Warren Buffett included a picture of the office staff of the Berkshire Hathaway Omaha headquarters. It features the same 25 staffers in the same position from the last two Christmas parties. Year after year, these 25 people manage the inner workings of a \$329 billion company. And it is equally interesting that no

one had left in the intervening year, which in an industry that sees attrition levels in the teens, is very impressive. That says much about Mr. Buffett.

Once you have the right people, you can achieve anything.

### **Letting the Work Speak for Itself**

Lionel Messi is one of the greatest soccer players to have ever played the game. But I'm more interested in how he conducts himself both on and off the field. On the field, there is never any drama nor overt showmanship. Every time he is tackled hard, he tries his best to stay on his feet rather than dive and flop. He lets all of his goals and assists do the talking for him.

And off the field, he achieves different goals as a UNICEF ambassador focused on helping vulnerable children, based on difficulties he faced in his own childhood. Leaders that are secure don't have to toot their own horns, their actions inspire respect.

These people and their attributes are a source of great inspiration for me personally and I hope they inspire you to apply these principles to problem-solving, collaborating and thinking big.

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