LEADER SHIP FOR STARTUPS

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Start ups either have that "it" factor or they don't, and some founders spend so much time trying to figure out exactly what that "it" factor actually is. They want to be successful, but when they follow the money they end up losing sight of their original mission. They want to be able to grow and scale quickly while creating an inclusive culture.

After working with hundreds of start ups, I noticed something.

There are two kinds of CEOs: ones who leave their job because they're sick of it and envision starting something new, and those with an MBA degree who want to build their own startup straight after that. Therefore, many startup CEOs struggle with people-centricity and what it really takes to orchestrate a team. Leadership is not taught in these areas, and many times the chemistry just doesn't exist within the team itself. This can cause a business to fold.

It's not easy to manage a team and ensure everyone is happy, but there are ways to help your company grow outside of the "hustle" and "task over humanity" approach. Here are some tips for startup founders to make an impact within their organization and ultimately become memorable leaders.

Focus On Value

Providing value to your customers and your audience will take your company much further than trying to get them to check out your company through promotion. Most people don't want to be bombarded with promos. Instead, they want something that is insightful or changes their perspective. They want something that will bring more awareness to them and what they're doing. Money likes those who like what they do.

When I first started my business, I didn't do it for the money. I had a hunger to help businesses turn their target audience into passionate buyers and believers. I had already built a strong track record of helping companies achieve their goals, including my own. After a while, I decided it was time to venture out and focus on being the best provider. For me, it's never about getting new clients. It's about providing value in ways that make them want to come back. These companies usually refer me to other clients as well. As a leader, your end goal is to be the best provider and bring value to everything you put your hands on.

Get Your Team To Think Outside The Box

We all have to get a lot of different tasks done, but what are you doing to help your team think better? It requires letting go of control, trusting your team and basically getting out of their way. When I was working in my first startup, my boss would follow me around like an ex who won't let the relationship go. It made me feel nervous and I would drop everything to make him happy, which meant I wasn't getting my actual work done. I realized this environment wasn't for me. I felt like I was stuck in this box that didn't allow me to spark my creativity and spread my wings. We could have done amazing things, but limited thinking got in the way. I eventually left and gained greater perspective. I wanted to work in a place that encouraged more freedom. Those are the kinds of places that spark the most creativity. Thus, I decided to advise startups that had a more flexible policy and watch them succeed.

Listen And Actively Ask Questions

Throughout my experience with startups, I've run into many entrepreneurs who just simply want to give their two cents on everything. Unfortunately, this creates a roadblock for effective communication among a team because employees are not able to provide their opinions and feedback. Ultimately, the team could not even be listening to the speaker at all.

Listening is essential to effective communication. The art of listening is magical. It gives people a sense that you actually care about what they are saying. One of my mentors used to always tell me that, "If someone is nodding their head while you speak, they are not listening to you." Everything is going in one ear and coming out the other. If you want to be an effective communicator, then you have to learn how to listen and ask first. I used to have a habit of being accusatory and jumping to conclusions without listening. It didn't work for me, so I had to change my mentality to support my goals. I had to focus on the end result and whatever it would take to get to that point. This resulted in a happy team environment instead of the hostile-feeling team environment I was working in previously.

Encourage An Entrepreneurial Spirit

Think of an entrepreneurial spirit as the water that makes a plant grow. When I transitioned into the startup world, I left being CEO behind but I never lost my entrepreneurial spirit. I love pouring my whole heart and soul into my endeavors, so that came easily for me. And besides, the companies I worked with that came from an entrepreneurial background had more success than those that didn't.

Adopting an entrepreneurial spirit means that you constantly keep the business's best interests in mind. You act with confidence, knowing that if the company succeeds, so do you. We all want to be a part of something greater than our-

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selves; that's why we are all entrepreneurs at heart. Companies that nurture this spirit will have a better chance at succeeding because they are developing a fully invested team that is committed to propelling the business forward.

Whether you've worked your up to a CEO position and are venturing out to create your own startup or you're a recent graduate with an MBA eager to start your own company, juggling an entire team, fostering good company culture and being a lucrative leader is difficult but worth it.

The Young Entrepreneur Council (YEC) is an invite-only, fee-based organization comprised of the world's most promising young entrepreneurs. In partnership with Citi, YEC recently launchedBusinessCollective

Being a leader is about so much more than being in charge of people. It's a whole new level of responsibility that not everyone is cut out for.

We wanted to see if there were any common threads shared by leaders from different startups in the UK, so we sent out a questionnaire to some of our friends at Accelerate Places.

Here's what they had to say.

What one quality do you feel is most important to be an effective leader?

"Probably listening. Part of being a leader is assimilating inputs from all sorts of sources and distilling the patterns and insight from it. Your team are inevitably closer to customers, delivery, billing, in fact pretty much any aspect of the businesses. Unless you're properly open to listening to what they are reporting to you, both directly and indirectly, you will struggle to help them effectively navigate the business."—Adam Bird, Cronofy CEO and co-founder

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"I think there are two… humility and decisiveness. It is important to listen and take on board ideas and viewpoints of others, but as a leader you need to be able to make decisions—sometimes the buck does stop with you."—Mark Sanders, Accelerate Places

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"Integrity—doing the right thing for the right reason."—Phil Randall, Userfy

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"Humility. You need to defer to your team as much as possible whilst providing a strong vision for them to get behind.
You can't, and shouldn't, know every little detail of everything but you need to know enough to create a cohesive team.
You have to realise that you are as dependent on your team as they are on you, if not more so."—Garry Shutler, Cronofy CTO and co-founder

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"Listening; understanding the difference between what you're saying/selling and what people are hearing/buying."—Richard Baker, BakerBaird

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"Decisiveness."—Antony Broadbent, Salary Finance

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"Caring. Caring about your business' mission, making your customers lives better and your employees lives better. You have to put the business and your team before yourself."—Olly Betts, CEO and co-founder of Bizfitech

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"There are a lot of qualities that are important when you want to lead. And there are many different types of leaders. Some lead by example, others excel at delegating and using the strength of their team. As a leader you want to be honest, approachable and inspire your team. But I believe that it all start with being a good communicator. In a professional environment you meet and work with people from varied backgrounds who have different motivations and skills. As a leader of people it's a critical part your role to to understand the strengths and weaknesses of the individuals who work with you in order for them to achieve their full potential. It is also your job to motivate your team by understanding what matters to each of your subordinate. I have found that being able to explain how specific projects fit into the company's wider strategy isn't always as straightforward as it seems. I don't think there is such thing as too much communication but never forget to listen more than you talk and ask your employees for their opinion!"—Jérémy Bourhis, Cronofy Marketing Manager

What one trait do you feel is the most detrimental to a leader?

"Dogmatic self-belief. Part of being an entrepreneur is harnessing your ability to see the world differently and navigate a contrarian approach to success. Being repeatedly told your wrong by customers, investors, journalists can make you put up barriers. It's crucial these barriers are down when leading your team. You have to be able to listen and be humble to properly guide them."—Adam Bird, Cronofy CEO and co-founder

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"Poor time planning. There will be many demands on your time, so you need to be disciplined about what you spend your time doing."—Mark Sanders, Accelerate Places

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"Selfishness."—Phil Randall, Userfy

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"Suspicion. When things go pear-shaped, it's usually down to a lack of trust within the team. Being suspicious that you're not getting the whole picture leads down the path towards micro-management and then you stop seeing the wood for the trees."—Garry Shutler, Cronofy CTO and co-founder

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"Telling instead of showing."—Richard Baker, BakerBaird

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"Lack of humility/arrogance."—Antony Broadbent, Salary Finance

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"Indecisiveness. The best leaders realise that a wrong decision may be better than no decision at all."—Olly Betts, CEO and co-founder of Bizfitech

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"People managers need to understand that they have hired employees for their expertise in a specific area. I think some managers feel like they can only lead successfully if they are involved with every project or task that their team works on. In my experience this is a recipe for disaster. You want your team members to feel empowered and show that you trust them by giving them responsibilities. Micro-management doesn't help subordinates feel like they are being valued. It can also lead to burnout as there are not enough hours in the day for one person to do the job of three or four."—Jérémy **Bourhis, Cronofy Marketing Manager**

What's the best piece of leadership advice you've ever been given?

"Everyone is making it up. The only way to train for leadership is to attempt leadership. No matter how confident and adept other people appear, they're all just making up as they go along. Each challenge is different. Only by jumping in feet first will you start to acquire the necessary skills and become more able to cope with the challenges of leadership."—Adam Bird, Cronofy CEO and co-founder

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"You're always on show and your team will read a lot into your behaviour, so keep smiling! It is also a cliché but it is indeed a small world, so try to be nice to people on your career journey!"—Mark Sanders, Accelerate Places

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"Be yourself."—Phil Randall, Userfy

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"Consensus is preferable but not required. I try to encourage the principle of "disagree and commit".

"A level of conflict is healthy, it means you've avoided complete groupthink which helps generate more diverse ideas. However, once a decision is made, everyone should commit to it regardless of which side of the fence they were on. And no "I told you so"s allowed down the line, they aren't helpful and are generally negativity bias in action."—Garry Shutler, Cronofy CTO and co-founder

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"Approximately right is better than precisely wrong."—Richard Baker, BakerBaird

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"It is more important to make the decision right than to make the right decision."—Antony Broadbent, Salary Finance

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"When you get bad news or something or someone angers you…sleep on it before taking action."—Olly Betts, CEO and co-founder of Bizfitech

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"When I was promoted as a people manager I was told that I had to understand that leading people is really a full-time job, not an add-on to my existing one. This is especially true if you have been promoted from another position within the company. There can be a temptation to continue doing what you are comfortable with and just add the people management part on top of it. That simply doesn't work. You are no longer a Digital Marketing Executive, you are the manager of a marketing team. Let go on some of the day-to-day task and delegate these tasks to your team. Your team will rely on you for advice and guidance and you need to be there to help them make the decision that will help the business achieve its objectives. Leaders can't lose sight of what really matters, the people they work with."—Jérémy Bourhis, Cronofy Marketing Manager

to a clearly measurable deliverable is a different set of skills to that required to take people on a longer journey."—Adam Bird, Cronofy CEO and co-founder

"Figure out what you're really good at and develop that skill (assuming it creates value)!"—Mark Sanders, Accelerate Places

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"Become an expert in something and make a career from being very good at something."—Phil Randall, Userfy

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"Leadership can be found having a deep level of knowledge in an area. In the world of IT that can be being an expert in a tool, service, or framework; within a company that might mean being the owner of an operational part of the system or business."—Garry Shutler, Cronofy CTO and co-founder

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"Just follow your passion. Whatever you do, it has to be fulfilling, satisfying and something you get a kick out of. Don't be defined by a title."—Richard Baker, BakerBaird

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"Learn how to manage people in whatever way makes sense for you (doesn't have to be traditional). Or (less good) become very, very good at something technical that will keep you interested for the next N decades."—Antony Broadbent, Salary Finance

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"Have a clear view on your own leadership style. Ask yourself what type of leader you want to be and the example you want to set to your team. Then be true to your leadership style whatever challenges come your way."—Olly Betts, CEO and co-founder of Bizfitech

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"A leader doesn't have to be managing people to be recognized as such. And there is no shame in not wanting to manage people. That's not something that everyone want to do but I believe that businesses need to be better at providing alterna-

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tive career paths so employees can continue to progress in the organization. You can hold a leadership position in a company through your expertise in a specific areas that are critical to the business' mission and be someone the rest of your team or the business as a whole looks up to and listen to."—Jérémy Bourhis, Cronofy Marketing Manager
Sanders, Accelerate Places

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"Demonstrate leadership in your current role and the opportunity to lead will come."—Phil Randall, Userfy

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"Bring people with you."—Richard Baker, BakerBaird

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"Identify the person/people you think are the best leaders and take every opportunity to closely watch what they do and say, how they act and behave. Observe thoughtfully and learn."—Antony Broadbent, Salary Finance

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"Find what you are the best in the world at. Become an expert in a technique/market/customer group, experts are hard to find."—Olly Betts, CEO and co-founder of Bizfitech

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"I am a fan of lists so I'd recommend to make one! List your perceived strengths and weaknesses (don't be afraid to ask your colleagues for feedback) and what parts of your job you enjoy most and the ones you enjoy the least. This will help you get a clearer idea of what time of leadership role you want to pursue. If you want to manage a team I'd recommend talking to your manager to start planning how you can reach that goal. Some companies will offer you take a management course, if that's not the case I'd recommend reading and talking to managers around you in order to get firsthand accounts of what it really means to manage people. Start getting ready now it will be too late once you are promoted!"—Jérémy Bourhis, Cronofy Marketing Manager.

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