

The Corner Office

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Adam Byrant writes a leadership column for NYT. He interviewed 74 CEOs for this book. He focussed on how a CEO does it rather than what he does.

**The most important
quotes are attached in
this summary**

“What you measure is what gets accomplished. Most businesses fail because they want the right things but measure the wrong things and they get wrong results.”

Good CEOs try to use questions more than statements, so that their employees take ownership of their roles rather than simply take orders from the CEO

Many successful CEOs reward honesty and input and show their interest by holding town hall meetings and seeking feedback from all levels in the organization.

The qualities that take someone to a CEO job are : **Passionate Curiosity; Battle hardened Confidence; Team smarts; A simple mindset; Fearlessness.**

Good CEOs ask big picture questions. They seem like eager students who devour insights and lessons and are genuinely interested in everything going on around them

The CEOs are not necessarily the smartest people in the room, but they are the best students.

Jen Hsun Huang of Nvidia says “ I don’t like making decisions with analytics. I actually like making decisions with intuition.I like to validate the decision with analytics.I don’t believe you can analyse your way into success.’

Though CEOs are paid to have the answers, their greatest contribution to their organizations may be asking the right questions-a skill that starts with passionate curiosity.

‘The CEOs help define *locus of control*. In general this refers to a person’s outlook about what leads to success and failure in their life. Do they blame failures on factors they cannot control or do they believe they have the ability to shape events and destiny?’

Attitude is the one thing that anyone can control, even if it seems like everything else is outside of their control. If you tackle challenges, building a track record of success, then battle hardened confidence will follow.

Understand what you control, don't be a victim. It's a way of perceiving the world that will help you avoid disappointment of failure and stay in the right frame of mind to plow through adversity. Challenges becoming learning opportunities rather than disappointments

The most effective executives are more than team players, they know how to create a sense of mission and how to make people feel like everyone's getting credit.

Team work is built on one to one interactions with people, has nothing to do with biz cards , org charts or titles.

Teamwork is about reliability, that they won't let the team down and they will hold up their end of the bargain. I'd rather be on a team that has no bad people than a team with stars.

Teamwork can be built by being explicit about the roles people play and insisting on rules and routines.

The people who truly succeed in biz are the ones who actually figured out how to mobilize people who are not their direct reports. Everyone can get their direct report to work for them, but getting others who don't report to you to work is something B schools don't teach you how to do.

CEOs want the same thing from people who present to them : be concise, be brief, get to the point, make it simple.

Simplifying the complex is the CEOs job and CEOs do it all day long. They are paid to create order out of chaos, to identify the three to five things that needs employee focus.

‘I don’t micromanage, I have micro interest. I do know the details.I do care about the details.I feel like I have a good knowledge of whats going on, but I don’t instruct people what to do’.Tachi Yamada

Fearlessness – is the ability to shake up their lives and jobs is a quality many are looking when they interview for CEO roles.

**Prepare for a career, don't plan it.
By focusing on broad experience,
you will be prepared for any
opportunities that come along**

Be patient, focus on doing your current role well and promotions will come, unbridled ambition is more likely to turn off people rather than impress them.

Once you get a job, you should act like you run the place. Not in terms of ego, but in terms of how you think about the business. Think about your piece of the business and the total business. This way , you will always represent a broader perspective.

I think people should understand that they learn more from a bad manager than a good manager. When you have a good manager, things go well and you don't realise why its so good.

CEO jobs are a very public form of on the job training – CEOs have to learn how to handle thw work under the bright lights of center stage as employees scrutinize every move.

Many CEOs said they learned the importance of presenting a consistent demeanor at the office so that employees are not confused by having to decipher the signals they send to people around them.

One thing I learned was that people impute all kinds of things to a CEO. People imagine the CEO has all kinds of designs or purposes that they may or may not have.

People like rules in meetings and they like them even more when the rules are enforced fairly.

**Silence is consent in meetings.
You cant come back later and say ,
I thought so, speak up in
meetings, aspiring CEOs make
impact through their ability to
speak up.**

To keep tabs on what employees are feeling, saying and thinking, CEOs have to make time to get out and walk around, and they have to find other ways to learn what people are really thinking.

The challenge gets tougher and tougher as you get higher in the organization to get people to be honest with you as the CEO.

As a coach, a CEO's job is to elevate individual players, make the team better and try to give guidance and input on the front end rather than take pot shots on the back end.

If a CEO deeply cares about his people, he needs to be constructive and honest in his feedback, to be as candid as possible. This feedback is like gold.

Too many leaders use only the annual appraisal process for feedback. On going feedback is good to ensure better performance.

If you want people to be at their best, and if you want the whole company to be on the same page all the time, you need to be willing to communicate directly with people.

**People report to
managers, they follow
leaders.**

Management is about results, from certain assets like people, money equipment etc. Leadership is an ingredient that gets people to commit more of themselves.

CEOs have to build glue and connect through small gestures and not fat cheques- the handwritten note, the phone call, dropping by to say hello, having lunch etc.

Using recognition is a great way to build a hi energy, fun culture and reinforce the behaviors to drive results.

There are two things about recognition – one it needs to be deserved and two it needs to come from the heart.

People leave companies for two reasons – one they don't feel appreciated enough and two, they don't get along with the boss.

To become a CEO, it takes a lot of ambition, impatience and a fierce determination.

Being respectful of people and earning the respect of your employees, your customers, your partners is important to do a good job as CEO.

One of the challenges for a CEO is to create a positive culture where employees are engaged at a personal level.

Some of the most successful CEOs have taken steps to create a culture that less hierarchical, where they learn from one another and the CEO is the facilitator rather than the focus.

In most companies where there is politics, invariably the CEO starts it, he pits one against another.

I think a CEO has to be comfortable with having the weight on his shoulders. And that's not for everybody.

Learning to lead is hard. You need to be comfortable in the role, strike the right balance of being friendly, managing, and learning to be a boss without being bossy.