

URL: <https://stvp.stanford.edu/clips/authenticity-is-a-leadership-superpower>

Stitch Fix founder and CEO Katrina Lake explains that she started her company with almost zero management experience. As a result, she couldn't lean on tested leadership expertise to gain respect. Instead, she built trust through authenticity and vulnerability. She urges other founders to do the same, suggesting that openness is a valuable tactic for creating connections and trust.



## Transcript

- I started a company 00:00:05,330 when I had literally managed nobody before.. Like I'd worked hourly jobs, I had two junior jobs after college, but I had managed one intern, and that was the only person, who I'm still in touch with, Dan, he's wonderful.. But I'd managed exactly one person before I started Stitch Fix, and now we have like 9,000 employees.. And so a lot of what I've learned, I've learned on the job.. And so, I think one of the good things, about knowing that you know nothing, (chuckles) is that the only thing that I had, and I didn't have some amazing resume.. I didn't have, I wasn't the best coder in the room or whatever.. I didn't have some accolade that it was like, "you should be the CEO".. All I had, really, was an ability to bring people along.. And being authentic with people about what's happening, about how I'm feeling, about being vulnerable about what I feel like I'm good at, what I'm not, what are my areas of development, all these things are ways that I can build trust.. And the ultimate goal is you might trust somebody because you think they're the world's best coder, or you trust somebody because you know who they are and you know their values, and you feel like you connect with them as a human..

And that's an even deeper level of trust.. And so, I think that, in retrospect, I'm so glad that that's where I always invested my time, because I think ultimately trust that you're building through the humanness of connection and being able to share some of yourself and understand that in others, that's a much more powerful foundation of trust, I think, than a lot of these other ones.. But really, I think it was just organically the way that I figured out that I could lead, that I think now, is one of the super power in leaders, honestly, is being able to be authentic and being able to be vulnerable and being able for people at all levels of the organization, to feel connected to you.. (upbeat music)..