

URL: <https://stvp.stanford.edu/clips/be-a-servant-leader>

SendGrid's Sameer Dholakia describes the concept of "servant leadership," where the traditional organizational chart is inverted so that the CEO is at the bottom of the pyramid supporting all the hard work being done by everyone else. "It is the 'golden rule' applied to leadership," Dholakia says. "Try to be the kind of leader that you would want to work for."



Transcript

- The role of the leader, of the entrepreneur, the founder, CEO, it is not the typical org chart with the CEO at the top that cascades to the exec team that cascades to the VPs, and down out to the organization in that pyramid, I actually believe it's inverted.. It should go this way, with the CEO and the executive leadership team at the bottom.. They're supporting the hard work of the people that actually do the hard work of the company everyday.. Because, let me be clear.. For those of you who will be founders and entrepreneurs I am not trying to dismiss how difficult that job is.. If you're the CEO of a company, trust me, I'm with ya, it's hard.. We have to do a lot of things right.. If you go back to that boat analogy I would argue, we've got the rudder.. We're steering, we gotta steer into the right markets, right? We've got to make sure we've got the right product set, the right portfolio, are we competitive? Do we have the right cap structure? Can we keep playing? We've gotta do a bunch of things right, but remind yourself of this.. You don't take the phone call when a customer is pissed..

That's somebody in your technical support organization, right? You don't have to hit the quota that your sales rep does.. You don't have the pressure that the software engineer has to deliver on that project by this deliverable date so we can get that out into the market.. And remember, en masse, those are the folks who do the hard work of your business everyday.. You may make some hard decisions in the steering, but they do the hard work, so I believe our jobs as servant leaders should be to remove obstacles, and help them go and do their best work.. I believe in our company if we remove those obstacles, and we let 420, some odd people, do their best work, and have career highs at SendGrid, there's no one that's gonna stop us.. We're gonna continue to build an extraordinary company.. Because you unlock and unleash 420 owners going after something that they wanna accomplish and they care about each other to go do it, that's a force to be reckoned with.. And I love it.. So I think that this model is incredibly powerful, I do think it's actually super simple to understand, it is in effect the golden rule applied to leadership or management.. Imagine, try to be the kind of leader that you would want to work for...