

URL: <https://stvp.stanford.edu/clips/build-a-team-that-challenges-you>

PagerDuty CEO Jennifer Tejada describes how she built a powerful team (and outwitted imposter syndrome) while managing marketing for i2 Technologies, a public company that focused on bringing manufacturing supply chains into the digital era. The key, she found, was to surround herself with the best people she could find - even if that meant managing people who were both older and more experienced than herself.



Transcript

And so, at i2, one, I learned how to work in a very disruptive company, in a company that was changing the rules of it's category and we were basically taking business from more traditional manufacturing providers out there, more traditional manufacturing software companies.. And, I learned how to get over fear because when i2 hired me they thought they were getting a marketing expert from Proctor and Gamble, I was like 12 years old.. Most of the time I didn't know what I was doing everyday at work and I was the most knowledgeable marketer in the place.. And the next thing you know, I'm running marketing for a public company, which is kind of like this, holy shit moment, every morning.. You know, they're like, you literally, people, you've probably all heard of imposter syndrome? Like, for me it was worse than imposter syndrome.. I was like, first of all these people must be idiots that they don't know that I don't know how to do this job and yet, so that, in and of itself, was a little frightening and then, at the same time, like, and yet they're still trusting me to bumble along and figure it out.. Took me a little while to get over that fear.. One of the ways I got over that fear was to take a lesson I learned from Proctor and Gamble and apply it there, which was, surround myself with the best people I could find.. Every person I hired into that team was better than me, smarter than me, more experienced than me, most of them are older than me, I think, I remember looking around the management table and every person in that room was older than me and had been at their particular job for far longer than I ever had, and I would just have to wake up in the morning and give myself the sort of courage and be perseverant to continue to lead them even when they push back.. So Jen, you're asking me to do this, but it appears you know nothing about this particular area and demand, Jen..

Why do you think I should do this, why? And I'm like, by the way, with adults in the workplace, because I said so, doesn't work well.. Doesn't work well with a 14 year old anymore either.. So, I learned a real lesson in leadership in that job because I was constantly challenged by my team, constantly challenged.. But I succeeded because of my team.. And so, if you take nothing away from that stint, it's the people who you surround yourselves by are the key to your success.. And, the weakest link, the lowest common denominator will also define where your ceiling is, so to speak.. So I think, often people will, there's an old saying, the b team hires the c team.. That's because if you're threatened or worried that if you hire someone who's as good or better than you, they're gonna hire somebody who's not as good as them and they're gonna hire somebody who's not as good as them and the next thing you know, you have a suboptimal team in a big way.. If you have the courage to surround yourself with people who are better than you, and people who are smarter than you, the chances are you're gonna get better...