URL: https://stvp.stanford.edu/clips/culture-stems-from-your-belief-in-the-product

Accuray founder John Adler asserts "you can tweak culture at the margins, but ultimately the culture stems from your belief in the product." He echoes the sentiments of his son Trip Adler, CEO of Scribd, who says that product development should remain the top focus at all times.

Transcript

You are now building your company.. Are there things that you think about everyday like building the culture? Are you thinking about that as you build the company or are you just trying to get the product out the door? And if so, how do you go about doing that? Building the internal organization in that culture, in the business? Trip Adler: There's different styles of leading a company and I'm a very product focused founder CEO.. I really believe that if you just make the product good, everything else falls into place.. So, I say there's lines of people wanting to work for us and all these investors trying to invest.. I get an email from a venture capitalist every two days asking us if we want money and we are not even raising money.. And the reason why that's true is that we have a good product.. And as long as you just keep focusing on a good product, you'll get users and you'll get users, you'll make money and if you make money, then everyone wants to invest and work for you.. So, that's my attitude.. So, I'm just focused on that.. In terms of building a culture, I personally haven't really thought much about it..

Everyone tells us we have an amazing culture and they love working in our company.. Perhaps my cofounders thought about this but I think if you have a successful company, you're going to attract good people and everyone's happy.. So, my personal attitude is folks and the product and everything else falls into place.. OK.. So, the fact is the culture symptom that takes care of itself if the company is successful.. Yeah.. You could think about the culture.. At this point, now that I have some more experience, I have a better idea of what kind of people we look for and I look for culture fits and I might even hire someone even if they have the worst resume but I think they're really good culture fit, I'm more willing to hire them.. But I think that's a secondary importance to just building the product.. I agree with Trip really..

I think you can maybe tweak culture at the margins but ultimately the culture stems from your belief in the product and your core mission.. And the one difference again with my particular business is that it's very outward facing.. You can make the best product in the world again but unless the docs embrace it and actually learn to use it.. I equate the CyberKnife to like a Stradivarius.. You're going to make the best violin in the world but unless you have Isaac Perlman or someone to kind of play the thing, you're never going to know what it's capable of.. So, you really have to develop, including your culture the physician community.. And that was kind of my major contribution in the last five or six years to Accuray...