URL: https://stvp.stanford.edu/clips/making-great-leaders

Dan Rosensweig worked with a number of industry leaders before becoming the CEO of Chegg, and his experience taught him to recognize practices of successful leadership. He suggests that aspiring entrepreneurs think big and optimistically. Solve problems, but don't whine about them. Surround yourself with people smarter than yourself, and give them the freedom to execute, trusting them to course-correct as they learn and improve. A great CEO doesn't need to be the smartest person in the room, states Rosensweig; they just need to know where to find an expert on any subject.

Transcript

A lot of the interesting presidents, CEO, people in Silicon Valley, LinkedIn, Groupon, the president of Microsoft Online, all worked for you at Yahoo! What makes a great leader? Receding hairline? I think some of them still have their hair.. I think what makes a great leader, and I'm particularly proud of the fact that, as you know, they're partners at Accel, and as you said, CEO of LinkedIn and the president of Groupon and people running lots and lots of these companies and many of the people at Facebook that I've had the pleasure of working with over the years.. And the consistent thing is their value system, which is they want to think big.. They are optimistic.. They recognized that everything is not perfect but it's their job to solve it, not to whine about it.. For that, they surround themselves with people who are as smart if not smarter.. I mean, when I walked into Yahoo! for the first time, it was probably the first time in my career where everybody in the world was substantially smarter than I was about almost everything.. And that's a frightening thing.. And so, when you come out here and you meet really smart people like you, you realize that if you're in the technology industry and you're in an industry that's designed to change the world, you got to be willing to trust that people are going to figure it out over time.. And so, these leaders, what do they have in common? They execute..

They understand the value of technology.. They recognize that at some point they do need to build the business out of it.. They hire really talented people.. They give those people the freedom to execute.. They course correct.. They accept responsibility for their mistakes.. I mean, for every success you see, the number of mistakes made are the ones that you don't see unless you're in the company.. It's unbelievable.. I mean, a 300-batting average in baseball is higher than the batting average of the quality decisions.. And what they really do is they gather together a group of really talented people like what we're doing at Chegg..

The CEO doesn't have to be the smartest person in the room.. That was something that I didn't understand.. They just need to know who's the smartest person on that subject.. The CEO doesn't have to act like the most important person in the room.. Everybody knows the CEO has to play their role, which is at the end of the discussion, use their judgment to make the best decision and sell it through the organization, right? And so, all of these people possess a lot of those things, plus they're honest and they're transparent and they like to win.. They're competitive people.. It's hard to live in Silicon Valley and not be competitive.. It's hard to go to Stanford and not be competitive.. But to win is not you have to lose.. To win is did they set goals big enough to achieve them? And along the way, some people will get caught in the wake...