



Stanford eCorner

How a CEO Spends Time

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Jensen aims to spend his time on what he believes will have a long lasting effect on the company. Numerous meetings and events often take up a CEO's time and it is important to regularly take that time back for product and strategy planning. Communication time with employees is also important -- the most important responsibility of the CEO is being a custodian of the company culture.



Transcript

The first question is how do I spend my time. I try to spend my time as much as I can on the things that I believe will have long-lasting influence on our company. As a CEO, your time is not always yours. And so you need to have the discipline to make it yours. I will often come into the office and tell my admin to clear my calendar just so I can have that time back. And oftentimes, you also come to the conclusion that as a CEO, not sleeping is a good choice. That's always a good option. You create some more time when you don't sleep. And so your training from school is, I think, very helpful here. So I spend my time on things that have long-lasting impact on the company.

One area is product planning. Strategy planning. It also happens to be an area that I enjoy a great deal. I enjoy talking to customers the purpose of selling your products clearly, but also hearing what's wrong with our products. People will hear me go right to right away is, "What are we doing wrong?" And the goal for that is obviously by understanding what's wrong with our company, what's wrong with our product, I can come back and fix it. And those are rather engineering behavior. The perpetual desire to fix things is a bit of an engineer's habit. OK? And so I think that that's a fine thing to do. Your company is constantly a fixer-upper, if you will. And so I think that's a good habit to have.

Then the rest of the time, you're communicating with your employees. I spend a lot of time talking to our employees. People are surprised how much time I spend eating in the cafeteria, whether it's lunch or dinner. People are surprised how much I spend in meetings of all kinds with all the employees. And the reason for that ultimately is I need to come back to my Number 1 job function and what I believe is the most important responsibility I have, which is to be the custodian of the culture. And if you want to be the custodian of the culture, you can't do it through CNN. You can't do it by Forbes magazine articles. You have to do it one person at a time, unfortunately, or large crowds at a time. And so I spend my time that way. In terms of competition, some of the competition is rather obvious, but I think the most challenging thing about any company, any large company is we don't know what we don't know.

That is, in fact, the most troubling of all. In terms of the obvious competitors, Intel is a competitor of ours. Sony is a competitor of ours. ATI in Canada is a competitor of ours. We have competition from all over the world still. In the market footprint that we have, it's approximately a \$10-billion market, and my sense is that you don't have about 20, 25% of that market. And so what we need to figure out a way to do simultaneously, as the irony has it, you want to simultaneously discover a larger market footprint, therefore reducing your market share while re-increasing your market share. And so that constant discovery of expanding your market footprint while capturing market share through competitive products is a 24-hour job. And

it's fun. And in terms of what I don't know? My odds are if I were to place a bet, the company that will hurt us are likely the people that are still in school today.

And they're the ideas that haven't been discovered. Or a change in fad or a change in fashion or a change in the way people do things around the world. The day that people no longer care about computers is a pretty desperate day for us. The day that nobody cares about interactivity is a real problem for us. The day that everybody just wants to talk on their cell phone and chat on instant messaging, well, that's a pretty desperate day for all of us but it would be a pretty desperate day for me, too.