



Stanford eCorner

Building a Company: Building a Legacy

David Neeleman, *JetBlue*

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I build companies, it's what I love to do, says Neeleman. I want to build a legacy--something that will last for a long time, he says. We came up with a simple model of bringing humanity back to air travel, and making a difference, he adds. Becoming a better company, being the best in a really bad industry, is his mission.



Transcript

I build companies. That's what I love to do, but I'm in a different stage in my life now where it's not the build and sell model anymore for me. Now, it's the build and create something and build a legacy, something that can be lasting for a long time. So we came up with a simple model of bringing humanity back to air travel and making a difference, and becoming a better company and being the best in a really bad industry. I think that's an interesting phenomenon. I think about that a lot and I'm not a guy that reads a lot of business books. There's a lot of guys that read business books they never do it themselves, and you can read all you want and unless you do it. But it's interesting when you've done it a couple of times or you're in the midst of trying to do it, which is what we're trying to do at JetBlue, we're so early in the process. From time to time, I get someone who calls me up and it's like a new idea for someone, hey, I want to write a book about JetBlue. No, I just say no thank you.

Why not? It's a good story. I'd say it's three years old. Call me back in 15 or 20 years and then we'll talk about it. We're so early in the game that it seems almost ridiculous to even talk about. So you invited me, that's why I'm talking about it, but I'm telling you that we're humbled by the daunting task that we have ahead of us. Even though we want to be perfect and we want to continue to take care of our customers, we're only as good as what we did yesterday. Today's a whole new day and we have to earn our wings, so to speak, every single day.