



## Stanford eCorner

### Take Care of Your Employees

David Neeleman, *JetBlue*

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Video URL: <http://ecorner.stanford.edu/videos/288/Take-Care-of-Your-Employees>

Neeleman talks about how Herb Kelleher of Southwest had a strange saying: "I don't care about my shareholders, I only worry about my employees." In 32 years, Southwest has never laid off an employee. Neither has JetBlue, which has only been around for several years, but has experienced September 11th and a war. We have learned that it is all about taking care of our people, he says.



#### Transcript

One of the things that we realized was that people were the whole aspect of our business and that we started with this person. One of the things I learned from him and he had kind of this really weird quote that he used to always say and it makes people scratch their heads, particularly the financial community at first when he'd say, "I don't care about my shareholders. I could care less about my shareholders." That seems odd from someone who has given tremendous returns to their shareholders over 30 years. Then, he follows that up with, "I only worry about my employees because I know if my employees are taken cared of, my customers will be taken cared of and then my shareholders will be taken cared of." A lot of times in business, people focus so much on the shareholders that they forget about really what drives the business. There are so many businesses and particularly in our industry that are so quick to lay off. It's like let's lay off, let's lay off, and they're more concerned about the bottom line so we need to lay off 10,000 people and he'll lay off 20,000 people. But Herb in Southwest Airlines has never had a single lay off in their 32 years of business, never laid off a single soul in 32 years. Well, in JetBlue, we've never laid off a single soul in three years. That's not saying much, except for the fact that we have been through 9/11; we have been through the war; we have been through some very, very difficult times but we decided earlier on that we would not lay off a single soul. That that was a very important policy because it's all about people, it's all about taking care of your people.

It's not easy. It's a hard thing to do.