



Stanford eCorner

Leadership Characteristics at eBay

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Reedy talks about the leadership characteristics at eBay - understanding the eBay DNA, always creating a compelling sense of purpose, setting clear objectives, building a strong team, knowing how to prioritize, how to multi task and understand when you need to have a sense of urgency, diving deep and solving problems quickly, making and meeting commitments, leading and not being a victim. As a leader, she says, you have to have the right strategy and then execute.



Transcript

The last one I want to talk about is--so we've talked about kind of Meg's top principles, we've talked about what is success in engineering. I wanted to talk about the leadership characteristics at eBay. So if you took a manager or a director or a VP of Engineering, what are the 10 criteria by which they'd say they needed to execute to be successful? The first one is understand the eBay DNA before you assume what you've done in the past is appropriate. A lot of executives are hired directly into eBay, as well as kind of growing through the ranks. And it's important to understand what is successful. And the best example I have of this is really Meg Whitman herself. A successful executive when she came to eBay, she took the first three months actually understanding the company that Pierre had built and understanding the unique position of the community. And to this day she puts the community front and center and she takes all of her wonderful expertise and experience that she had in prior companies and morphs that to work for eBay, which is unique and special. The second one is always create a compelling sense of purpose, whether or not you're the CEO like Meg and you're creating the sense of purpose for the entire company or whether or not you're running a division or even just a department. In the case of Meg, once again, a good example is, one of the analysts meetings a couple of years back, she actually announced that we were going to be \$3 billion in revenue by 2005.

I think what happened was the entire exec team at that point left and said, "Oh my God, how are we going to do that? We don't have a clue." And what it did was it actually set a very galvanizing statement out there that said, "How do we do this?" And actually it turns out that we will almost be \$3 billion by the end of 2004, so we will have beat that. I can tell you, and Meg will say this, that if she had not set that goal, we would not have attained it. The next one is set clear and measurable objectives. I think that one's pretty straightforward. You have to know what you want to achieve and people have to have clear roles and responsibilities and what's expected out of them. Build a strong team. When you such a high growth as we have, you can't be hiring for today. You have to be hiring two years out. So we're looking for managers, executives that really have done it before and have probably done where we're going to be two to three years from now, so that today they know the things that they need to do to get us to be where we're going to be in two to three years. So absolutely hire ahead of the curve.

The next one is, when you're in a high growth, know how to prioritize, know how to multi-task, and understand when you need to have a sense of urgency. These are a must. Without these, you cannot work in a high-growth company. The next one is have a pulse on your organization and can deep-dive. And I think Stephanie is going to go through a lot of these things. But one thing that is truly--I don't know if it's unique about eBay, but you have to be able to juggle a lot of balls and you have to understand that could have a problem. And if you think it has a problem, you need to be able to dive deep, understand what that problem is, put the action plan in place, and then go back to the level that you should be operating in. If not, you will be taking the company down a lot of expensive diversions and problems that you could have actually found a lot quicker and put

back on the right track. The last couple. Make and meet commitments.

I talked a little bit about that, but that is key to a high-growth company. You've got to make commitments and then you've got to meet them. Lead. Don't be a victim. You know, obviously when a thousand things are happening at once and you've got a high growth and you're trying to hire ahead of the curve, you can sit there and say, "Well, these three things weren't perfect." That's not what we need in a high-growth company. What we need people is truly out there leading, finding innovative solutions to issues that we have. So I kind of want to end it with, it's kind of the mantra of "Have the right strategy and then execute, execute, execute."