



Stanford eCorner

Who Are Your Top Leaders?

Jerry Kaplan, *Winster*

October 01, 2003

Video URL: <http://ecorner.stanford.edu/videos/373/Who-Are-Your-Top-Leaders>

Kaplan talks about who his best leaders are, including Bill Gates, a character from a book, and Jeff Bezos, founder of Amazon.



Transcript

Yes, sir. I like your Top 5. It's great. So I'm going to ask you what your Top 5 leaders are that started as entrepreneurs and engineers and made the jump to manager, and then finally actually made the jump to great leader? Oh, man. I wasn't really ready for that. I think a lot of people who didn't make the jump well and who were great, really great entrepreneurs. So, I mean, twist that around a little bit. Nobody comes to mind. Well, I guess you have to say Bill Gates. I mean, Bill has done a great job managing his company.

And obviously it's grown and he managed to stay with it all the way along, which is very, very much to his credit. He was just a nerdy little guy, you know? How about Jeff? Well, Jeff's kind of a different case. He didn't really start with any kind of technical background. He didn't come from something other than investment banking. He actually worked for a friend of mine, Dave Shaw, who sat in this audience. At D.E. Shaw & Co. in New York. It was a fascinating story. He was an analyst at Dave's company and Dave was an engineer.

And one day, Dave wakes up and he says, "You know what? If I get enough mathematicians"--this is back to one of my points--"I don't know much about math, but I'll bet if I get enough mathematicians, we can figure out a way to gain the stock market. Do enough analysis and gain the stock market." He was one of those firms. I'd go write a book about it, but it was phenomenal. Almost brought down the New York Stock Exchange. Anyway. Jeff Bezos worked for him--he's an analyst--where I think he learned the lack of fear. So I don't know that Jeff made it--I kind of know where he was coming from something. He just kind of sprung full-blown on success in his organization, sort of like Britney Spears, you know? He's the right guy at the right time with the right set of values. And a good idea. So that's what happened then.

In terms of--my hero is SpongeBob, you know? SpongeBob is an entrepreneur in my book. And pretty soon we'll all be eating at the Krusty Krab. Nobody here sees SpongeBob, you know? Unlike--what's the term, bimodal? I'm too old for the crowd and I'm too young for the crowd. You guys don't have 10-year-olds. Nobody wants a SpongeBob. I'm not going back to Stanford. Forget it. Now if I did that at Cal, then we'd be going, "Yeah! SpongeBob! Come on, dude!"