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Personality of a Company: Establishing Culture and Values Early On

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In companies, like children, personality is set early and expresses itself differently through the years but it doesn't change, says Kaplan. Entrepreneurs should establish values and culture early on and to remember that these values reflect the values of the founders, he adds.

Transcript

I'll go back to an issue about the growth of people. If you don't have a 10 year old, you probably haven't seen the spec. The personality is set fairly early. It just expresses itself differently as they get older. Some of them are nice, some of them are polite, some of them are mean, some of them are selfish; you see that. It's very interesting to watch children because in watching children, you gain great insight about the behavior of adults. And the same is true with companies. It starts out a particular way, and its expressed differently in more mature fashions as it grows. But the personality doesn't really change. That's one of the things.

I've seen a lot of those come back at that point. Successful entrepreneurs, the kind of guys that control a crowd at Stanford. We're really unhappy about the companies that they started because they're kind of a shame of some aspect of its values that they lost control. They feel like they lost control of them. And so few of them recognized it, they merely reflected their own values and attitudes. And all their seniors, maybe they're not such a great guy that I thought he was. There's something that's been taken away. And you've got to watch it. It starts right at the start and it's very, very hard to change the culture of the company.