



Stanford eCorner

Make Yourself Available as a Leader

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SecondMarket Founder and CEO Barry Silbert articulates the importance of leaders making themselves available to employees. He believes this is especially true in young, growing firms that are in the process of scaling their operations. Silbert also acknowledges the continual learning process he experiences as a young CEO.



Transcript

My leadership style I think was... it was honed a little bit when I was an investment banker. So I was at Houlihan for 5-1/2 years and I was like the associate that they will put on deals that were like really hard and they would give me analysts that like sucked. And so I was the one that would have to like meet them to like perform well. I don't know how I got that role but that was... that's a bad way to manage people and it took a few years of kind of a bottom-up review. The senior people loved it because I get... the analysts will work really hard and we'd be successful. But it took me some time to realize that ultimately, the key to success for any business, it's the people. And I, as a CEO, as a first time CEO, and I'm learning everyday, but early on I didn't value the importance of me being involved in a lot of the hiring decisions.

I certainly didn't appreciate the fact that once we got to a certain point maybe a hundred employees, people just didn't know me anymore. And it was... it blew my mind that I started hearing that there were employees that were intimidated by me. I was thought that I was very approachable so what I had to do was start having more town halls, start having more one-on-one conversations and really make myself available as a leader because I'm passionate, passionate about what we're doing and everybody who's joined SecondMarket, they joined us because they want to change the world. And they see me speak on TV, they see presentations like this and... but they've not had the exposure. So as a leader I've really had to... I got rid of my big fancy office, I now sit with everybody else and, look, I'm still learning. I have 140 employees, we're growing very, very fast I'm going to have to continue adapting but it's really kind of been about hiring great people, having great lieutenants and just being accessible.