



Stanford eCorner

Keys to Creating Awesome Teams

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"Awesome teams are the secret ingredient of every success," says Cyriac Roeding, co-founder and CEO of Shopkick. Here Roeding describes his keys to building awesome teams: individual brilliance, inflexible shared values, extreme diversity, and a collective mission that everyone can believe in.



Transcript

The other thing that I think is interesting is when you start a company is the team. So that's one of the things that I am very passion about. If I could only do one thing, you might have figured out by now that I am passionate about mobile. Despite that, I am actually even more passion about building awesome teams. So if I had to choose one thing only, I would choose that. Why?because awesome teams are the secret ingredient of every success. It doesn't matter whether your idea was great if you don't have an awesome team to execute on it. If you have a mediocre idea and an awesome team you have a chance to find a good idea later. If you have an awesome idea with a bad team, you're done. And apart from that, I simply love growing great teams because it's so awesome when you see the dynamics kick in and people are building things together.

It's just very rewarding. So what makes an awesome team? And I wanted to share that philosophy with you. I don't know if it will make sense to everybody, but it's what I've lived by and what has worked for me and so I wanted to share that. I have never shared that outside of my own company. So I think an awesome team is made up by four things. The first one is individual brilliance. And when I say individual brilliance, I am talking about 10x very good. I am talking about outliers. I am sure there are a few of you in the room. Individual brilliance is very rare.

So it means you are just amazing at what you do. And by the way, this is not limited to intellectual skills and so on. I don't know if you've ever been to a coffee shop where a barista who made your coffee was just amazing. And they were just so much better and nicer than anyone you've met before. Have you had that experience before? Or you flew an airline and a flight attendant was just unbelievably great or somebody at a store helped you and they were just so much better than anybody else. Or you had a teacher and they just stuck out of the mass and they were just so much better than all the others. Do you know that feeling? Outliers. Individual brilliance. Now here is the problem. If you take individually brilliant people and you put them in a room, there are likely going to kill each other.

So what do you do to solve that problem? That's where the second circle comes in? First one is individual brilliance. The second one is a set of shared values that are very unflexible. Very unflexible. So for example, integrity, high aspirations, change-the-world attitude, can-do attitude, work hard, play hard. Those are values that all the people that are these individually brilliant people need to adhere and agree to. And only if everyone agrees to change these values then we'll change them, otherwise we're not. And this person needs to either adapt or leave. In other words, not flexible at all. So now, the third one. The third one is outside of these individual, very unflexible values, extreme diversity.

So in other words, you have people who are very different. At my company right now - at shopkick we have people who come from the fashion world, they worked at Vogue before and you have hardcore developers who are absolutely outstanding in their field, some of the best engineers you will have ever met yourself. And you have people in business development who

are unbelievably good at striking deals, right? They are very different people. They look different too, as you can imagine. One worked at the Vogue, other one didn't. So, in other words, very different but outside of these values they are completely diverse but inside they are very aligned. And because they are so aligned on what matters, it works. And then the magic kicks in. And then the fourth one comes into effect because now if you don't have the fourth one, then people might just go crazy at awesome things but they all don't help the company. So you need a mission and a vision that people believe in.

And if they all believe in the same vision, it's like a wind blowing into one direction. And then it gets really powerful.