Stanford eCorner

A Leader's Responsibilities

Joshua Reeves, *Gusto*

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ZenPayroll's Joshua Reeves shares his perspective on how a CEO's time is best spent on setting direction and strategy for a business, deciding how the company organizes in teams and communicates, and lastly, leading by example. Reeves also emphasizes the importance of becoming a strong interviewer.

Transcript

Another topic I get asked a lot about is how does the role of CEO evolve or change? What does it mean to be a CEO? And this is a question I asked myself a lot when I was at Intel as well where the CEO of Intel literally had I think at that point there were 70,000 employees and I wondered how does a person leading a 70,000 person company know how to spend his or her time. You could literally have like an hour free and call a head of state or call a journalist or hire someone or do all these different tasks, how does that not just overload your synapses. And the answer is in some ways it's all about delegation. It's about firing yourself from as many jobs as you can, that's a path I've been on since early days of the company. But what that leaves is kind of where I'm focused. These are the three things that I've concluded are really my long-term responsibilities as a leader in a growing company. The first is really making sure we have set good direction and strategy for the business. Everyone is looking to me to help facilitate but then ultimately drive what matters. Where are we focused? Why are we making this bet? Why is this the direction that's best for the company? And that's something that ultimately I have to be responsible for. The second is how do we organize? How do we communicate? How many meetings do we have? When do we have meetings? Why should we have meetings? And then also, how do we hire? Which roles should we create, which teams should we create? And what responsibilities do we give to those individuals.

And then the third one is again really personal. It's the chance to lead by example. It's basically my actions being what everyone reads into. And most of that manifests in the context of hiring where I spend 50% of my time interviewing people. It kind of might seem crazy to hear that, but that's the way it's been for two years now. And that's probably the way it will be for the next five or 10 years. And so interviewing is a really important skill. If you guys have any questions you can talk to me after, but the ability to interview I think is something that everyone should build as a skill set. When I was at Zazzle as a first job out of school, I was a PM, but I also volunteered to run all of our Stanford College recruiting. It's just like a muscle you have to iterate and get better at it through practice.

And interviewing again you can always get better.