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When PagerDuty CEO Jennifer Tejada graduated from college, she veered from her intention to study public health management and instead took a job with Proctor & Gamble. She credits that company's "leadership academy" approach to many of her subsequent successes, and recommends that future entrepreneurs seek out opportunities to build fundamental leadership and management skills.



Transcript

When I got to my senior year I sort of thought, "Okay, geez, I better apply to that "Masters in Health program, or whatever, "that's going to get me into healthcare, "cause otherwise, I don't know how I'm gonna "get a job in doing that." So I did that, I did all the right things, I fill out the forms, did my interviews, got an opportunity to go into a Masters of Public Health, and then a really wise professor that I am grateful for to this day, said to me, "Are you really sure? "Why do you want to do that, "are you really sure you want to do that?" I couldn't give him a concrete answer.. I was like, "Well, I just, "this is always what I wanted to do." Well why, you ever heard of The Five Whys? Simon Sinek's, The Five Whys? When someone, if you're trying to figure out if you really understand something about yourself or something about somebody else, ask them why five times.. Well why do you want to go into healthcare? Well, because it's something I always wanted to do.. Well, why'd you always want to do it? Well, because my Dad did it and I appreciated what he did as a career.. Well, why'd you appreciate it? Well, and you get further and further and suddenly I realized there wasn't a lot of depth sitting behind what I thought my life's calling was.. So, this wise professor said, "Look, why don't you just interview "with a few companies that are coming to campus, "and kind of get, it's good practice anyway, "get the hand of it and see if, after you do that, "you still want to go get your masters in health." So I said, "Okay." So, I interviewed with Proctor and Gamble, they were my first on campus interview.. They were apparently very picky, I didn't even know I was invited to interview with them, because they thought I had some kind of leadership quality or something, and in talking to Proctor and Gamble, I was entirely impressed and besotted by the people that I met.. Really bright, super capable, high integrity, very articulate, knew their business, super charming and engaging.. I thought, these are the kinds of people I want to be around.. The same week, I went to orientation for this Master's in Health program and met people who were really quiet and really studious and very not so engaging and kind of self-centric and I thought, okay, there's this pot of people over here and there's this pot of people over here, I fit with this pot..

So, I decided that I would continue the interview process with Proctor and Gamble and accidentally landed myself a job as a person in their leadership rotation, in, I guess this was now 1993.. It was quite possibly the best accident in my life because Proctor and Gamble, it is what I think of as a leadership academy.. So back then, you had companies like General Electric, IBM, P&G, who would spend between \$250,000 and \$500,000 a person, training you to be a manager.. Teaching you how to manage people, how to lead people, different leadership models to learn and try and practice and demonstrate yourself.. And so, that was almost 20 years ago, maybe 30 years ago, a long time ago.. And, I sit here today in my day job, using lessons that I learned at Proctor and Gamble in 1993 to 1998.. Because they took the time to educate me.. And the reason I point that out is you may all go off to start your own companies, but if you don't or if you have time to intern between now and then, you should really think about working with a company that will build and develop your leadership skills.. That will teach you what a good manager looks like.. That will help you understand the fundamental basics that you need in order to be a great builder, a great leader of people, a great manager..

And by the way, there's a difference between a leader and a manager.. Because it's not easy, it doesn't come easy to everybody, the growth mindset will get you part of the way, but if you can get somebody who knows how to formally instill fundamental foundational skills in whatever area you want to go into, it will give you a massive headstart that will stick with you your whole career adventure...