

URL: <https://ecorner.stanford.edu/clips/building-a-values-based-team/>

Dave Vasen, founder and CEO of brightwheel, advises founders to be uncompromising in finding employees who fit their values. He explains how brightwheel integrates their leadership principles into every interview, putting less emphasis on an applicant's resume and more on whether they are the right person for the role.



## Transcript

- For me, some big learnings are, well, one, 00:00:05,220 the biggest wins and misses for me have largely come back to people. And then two is you can have the most amazing idea, the biggest market, the best product, whatever it is. But if you can't bring the right people around you to go solve that, you're gonna be, you know, on your own and never get to that point every time. So for me, like the importance of people was something I didn't fully appreciate when I got into this journey. And figuring out really who we were going to be as a company and both, you know, through our wins and the things that we were doing well, as well as the times that we brought on folks who weren't a match, really taking those moments to be introspective and say like, well, who do we want to be? And I think I didn't fully appreciate it until this experience that, you know, you'll have someone who really is excited and thrives at company A like Amazon, and then they go to Google and they hate it and they bounce back or vice versa or whatever. And each company, rightly so, is gonna develop its own DNA that makes it's successful understanding that, actually defining it, reinforcing it, making sure it lives throughout the organization, particularly now being remote is one of the most important things that I'd have to do day today. And, again, I didn't fully appreciate that. So, you know, whether it's values or we call them leadership principles, the things that make you super unique as a company that are gonna allow you to achieve that huge vision, that huge mission. You have to be thankfully kind of uncompromising in those things and help people understand that. And one of the best things that we can do is in the interview process be very open, because some people are gonna come in and they're gonna be super excited about that and some people are not.

And we'd rather be very open about that and then help people understand what we value in terms of their growth at Brightwheel. - How do you test for that in an interview? 00:01:40,440 - It's tough because I at this point now, 00:01:41,730 like the standard thing is, oh, like, let's look at your resume, let's look at your LinkedIn, whatever it is, it's a match, let's go. We put way less emphasis on that now. And so we really try to dig in and say, okay, like, we have a leadership principle called think critically, move fast. And so we're gonna really probe and go deep on example or give you a hypothetical and really figure out are you a critical thinker? And at the same time, are you gonna just sit and think or can you take action and do you have a bias for action? You know, we have one that just is focused on customers and so we're gonna understand how you value customers and bring that into your process. So we have literally, we have these eight leadership principles. we divvy them up amongst the interview group. We put scores against those, we debate them. If we don't get enough data, we go back and get more. And so it's being really, really direct.

This is something I learned at Amazon, frankly. Amazon has 14 leadership principles. Emily That's great. 00:02:30,460 - Everybody splits them up, 00:02:31,830 you figure it out and you really again are uncompromising and like the bar is so high and you feel really great that by the time you get to hire somebody, they're really, you know, the right person for the right role. And so you know, in a more nimble maybe startup way, have brought that into Brightwheel...