

5 Leadership heroes for growth companies

Great leaders inspire their teams to conquer big challenges. They deal in hope even in adversity. They are a rare breed. It's hard to nail down what makes them stand out.

Developing leadership skills is hard. Many CEOs strive to be themselves with more skill. Yet it is hard to picture what good leadership looks like. For early stage CEOs, who lead through turbulent uncertainty, I don't believe there is any single role model. There is no cookie cutter answer. No MBA class you can take.

Some days you need to strive to be like Mandela, some days Kennedy, others Clinton and on occasion, Welch or Jobs. Like great CEOs, each hero had genius and each was flawed. Sometimes these heroes might help you unlock more of your leadership potential and grow your company faster.


1. Personal Credibility - Nelson Mandela

Nelson Mandela had integrity, honesty and ethics. He practiced what he preached and kept his promises. He showed vulnerability and knew his own strengths. Mandela had self-discipline and took responsibility for his mistakes. He coped with pressure and stress; and did not get disheartened by setbacks. He conveyed a sense of purpose and inspired foe and friend with the courage of his convictions.

2. Interpersonal Skills - Bill Clinton

Bill Clinton built positive working relationships. He showed interpersonal sensitivity and empathy. His charisma and strong social presence helped him build

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Insight in brief

Growing companies demand a high degree of leadership skill. However the paradox is that they often have less experienced CEOs and have no time to devote to leadership development.

Taking some role models and starting a practice of getting regular feedback from colleagues can improve awareness of where to start.

Insight in Action

1. Consider whether getting some feedback from your team would help your development as a leader.
2. Ask those that you trust the following three questions:
 - o What should you start doing as CEO?
 - o What should stop doing as

instant rapport. He was good at breaking down barriers. A master communicator – he brought others to his point of view and resolved interpersonal conflicts.

3. Forward Looking - John F Kennedy

Kennedy focused on the big picture and generated new ideas. His high levels of drive, energy and enthusiasm were infectious. He encouraged others to display passion and pride in their work. Kennedy was self-motivated and committed.

4. Team Builders - Jack Welch

Jack Welch argued that leaders should articulate a vision and then energize others to execute it. He fine-tuned the ideas of others. He inspired teams to deliver through stretch goals. He hired outstanding individuals. Welch coached others to improve and rewarded superior performance.

5. Deliver Results – Steve Jobs

Jobs translated future vision into concrete action steps. He challenged others to the limit. He drove his team to see tasks through to the end. Jobs approached problems in a rational, intellectual manner. His attention to detail was legendary. He set the highest standards for himself and for others to follow.

Reflect on the above, get some feedback from colleagues and perhaps develop your leadership skill. Perhaps you might adopt a hero or two to help you.

CEO? What should you keep doing as CEO?

3. Thank all for the feedback. Don't react but reflect and decide on one or two strengths or development areas that you might work on to grow your business.

