

PART

2

From the Battlefield to the Boardroom



A NAVY SEAL'S GUIDE TO
Business Leadership Success

A collection of articles by Brent Gleeson

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About

Brent Gleeson is a Navy SEAL combat veteran with multiple tours to Iraq and Africa where his team's primary objective was running capture or kill missions working in conjunction with the CIA. Upon leaving SEAL Team 5, Brent turned his discipline and battlefield lessons to the world of business and has become an accomplished entrepreneur, writer, and acclaimed speaker on topics ranging from leadership to entrepreneurship and marketing.

Brent is the Co-founder and CMO of Internet Marketing Inc., a full service digital marketing agency recognized by the prestigious Inc. 500 and the San Diego Business Journal as one of the fastest growing private companies in the country the last three years in a row.

Brent has also starred in several reality shows including NBC's 'Stars Earn Stripes' where he and Chris Kyle of 'American Sniper' along with other former special operations professionals were paired with celebrities like Nick Lachey, Dean Cain, Todd Palin and Terry Crews to compete and raise money for charities like Wounded Warrior Project.

In his leadership presentations Brent shares lessons from the battlefield which he applies daily to growing and leading high performance teams in the business world. Brent was recently honored with the leadership award at the Brand Diego Awards in San Diego for his outstanding leadership achievements in the community. You can learn more about his leadership philosophies in his weekly columns on Inc.com and Forbes.com.

Gleeson earned his undergraduate degree in Finance and Economics from Southern Methodist University, studied at Oxford University in England, and earned master degree in real estate finance and development from the University of San Diego.

Brent is on the Board of the Naval Special Warfare Family Foundation and the San Diego Ad Club. His family is an Ambassador Family for March of Dimes.



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Preface

This eBook contains a collection of articles from my regular contributions to my columns on Forbes.com and Inc.com. This is in no way a memoir of my times in combat as a Navy SEAL although there are a few references to those experience to provide context for key points.

The core focus of these articles is to draw similarities between my experiences as a Navy SEAL to those of my experiences as an entrepreneur and business leader. Using the guiding principles learned in SEAL training and applied in combat, I had achieved relative success in growing and leading great organizations.

That said, these articles do not contain a long list of successes but rather critical lessons learned from both success and failure. Wisdom comes from learning from our mistakes, of which I have made many. But applying what we learn from those mistakes can lead to a constant state of improvement.

The reader can choose to read this eBook straight through or simply choose the articles they find interesting and relevant. I hope you enjoy the articles and of course, feel free to share with your team!



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Leadership And The Art Of Making Tough Decisions.

Without a doubt, the toughest decisions I have ever made were in combat as a Navy SEAL. And those who have served know that the impact of those decisions can last a lifetime.

Unfortunately, making tough decisions amidst chaos takes practice. In the past, I had a tendency to avoid conflict, put off making difficult decisions and even sugarcoat reality. Those behaviors are of little use when holding a position of leadership.

My experiences in the military, prior to becoming an entrepreneur, have helped me formulate a better perspective on decision-making. But it is never easy. My "wisdom" as a leader has primarily come from getting feedback from a great team, persistence, and learning from failure. And my training is never complete.

Now, I make a rigorous effort to face the tough decisions head on, before they become even larger obstacles. Here are some tips for being a more decisive leader. These go for leaders at all levels, not just at the top.

In the absence of orders, take charge.

A great line from the Navy SEAL Creed referencing leadership and decision-making at all levels says, "In the absence of orders, I will take charge, lead my teammates and accomplish the mission. I lead by example in all situations." When tackling the challenges of leadership within an organization, you won't always have someone there to guide every decision. Use the information at hand to make the best possible decision and adjust accordingly.

Stop avoiding those difficult conversations.

This was always a big obstacle for me. As entrepreneurs, we have enough anxiety and stress as is. Then as our companies grow, the obstacles become even bigger and our decisions have greater consequences. Whether it's your business partner, a direct report, or even your manager, it doesn't do any good to put off



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much needed conversations. When we do that, things fester and get even worse. Don't put it off. It won't fix things and it's not fair to the other person.

Make that decision you should have made months ago. As business leaders, we have a tendency to focus on growth and the next big opportunity. We shy away from dealing with decisions that take us away from those more "exciting" activities. Then when we finally face the music, we realize we should have handled the situation a long time ago. Whether it's letting a team member go, firing a client, or turning down an opportunity you know won't be good for the company, do it now. Not tomorrow. Making a decision feels much better than not doing so. And it's better for the company and your team.

Know that most problems are never as bad as they initially seem. Nothing is ever as bad as it seems. Especially if you maintain high levels of emotional maturity and a positive mental attitude. It is all about the perspective you decide to take.

Actively decide to be a better leader. Continually developing as a good leader doesn't just happen. It takes constant personal and professional development, regular feedback from the team, self-reflection, and execution on the feedback received. Success as a leader is a conscious decision. It's our job to earn that role every single day.

Remember that you are not alone. Well, most of the time. The decisions that are ultimately yours to make don't have to come without getting direction and feedback from your trusted advisors. In Navy SEAL Mark Owen's new book 'No Hero,' he tells the story of an Army Ranger Colonel who orders them to hit a target that his

team knows is suspicious. The SEALs relay this feedback, advising the Colonel to wait and gather more intel. The Colonel ignores the subject matter experts' advice and commands them to hit the

“Slap on a smile, lead the team with positivity, then go home and suffer in silence.”

target anyway. As it turns out, it was rigged with booby traps and bombs. They all could have been killed in a split second. You put the team in place, so listen to them.

Make a decision to be positive, no matter what. We also make a conscious decision each day to be positive or negative. Sorry, but as leaders we don't have the luxury of wearing our emotions on our sleeves. Becoming frantic or angry when things don't go your way shows weakness and instability. Slap on a smile, lead the team with positivity, then go home and suffer in silence.

Have a positive mental attitude, have those difficult conversations, make those tough decisions, and keep moving forward. Pretty soon those issues will be an afterthought and you will be looking forward ready to face the next inevitable challenge.

5 Ways Elite Teams MUST Be Led.

“We expect to lead and be led. In the absence of orders I will take charge, lead my teammates and accomplish the mission. I lead by example in all situations.”

— Navy SEAL Creed

Most great leaders have a passion for building and leading an elite team. Who wants to lead a team based on mediocrity and moderation anyway? That would be a direct negative reflection on who? The leadership. But leading elite teams takes persistence and a consistent pursuit of personal and professional development. Constant personal reflection and taking action based on regular feedback.

I try to constantly study the art of leadership and have drawn many comparisons from my time in the Navy SEAL teams to my experiences as an entrepreneur leading a growing company. Here are five tips for leading an elite team.

Create an environment of leadership.

At all levels. When you consider the caliber

of team members you find in the military your first inclination might be to wonder how they recruit and develop such selflessness. Such an attitude of service and loyalty to the person to your right and left. But with further consideration, one will realize that it is more about the environment and culture that creates these feelings and makes them a reality.

Elite teams have leaders at all levels.

There are many successful organizations out there where the most senior leaders are absolutely not leaders. They are authorities. And because they are authorities, people do what they say. But those people would never truly follow them. And then there are people at the very bottom of the totem pole that are true leaders. Emergent leaders that take charge in the absence of orders and inspire those around them.

Make the team feel safe. Management and leadership are different disciplines. You cannot manage a team into combat. They must be led. It is hard to think that anyone would feel safe in a combat situation. It is all about trust and loyalty. When you trust the leadership and the team members to your right, left and rear, you have an overwhelming sense of comfort. When bullets start flying, politics go out the window. You are fighting to protect your teammates and nothing more.

Imagine if everyone on your team embodied this kind of philosophy. What an unwavering sense of loyalty that would create. And therefore a distinct competitive advantage over your competition. This starts at the top. When the team feels safe and supported, they will do everything in their power to execute their responsibilities and go above and beyond to help achieve company goals.

Actively manage through adaptive change.

This is critical in combat as in business. All businesses experience change, especially growing businesses in dynamic industries. Great leaders



know when it's time for change, even if it means reinventing your business. This can be a scary thing for the team and often things get worse before they get better.

Change management requires a few key things from the leadership. First, you need to communicate what the change is and why it is necessary for the company to continue to be successful. Second, you need to ensure that each team member regardless of rank or position understands how this change impacts them and what is required of them for productive implementation. Third, you need to make the team aware of what the leadership is doing in order to provide support and resources during the transitional period of change. And fourth, over communicate consistently during this time and get feedback. In the SEAL teams we say "pass the word." Simply put, this means tell me what the hell is going on. Make sure to tell your team what the hell is going on.

Be a servant to your team. I am currently reading Steven Pressfield's book 'The Afghan Campaign' about Alexander the Great's invasion of the Afghan kingdoms in 330 B.C. And Alexander, in all his ambition and arrogance, was at heart, the epitome of a true servant leader. He led from the front affording himself no additional comforts that his men didn't have during their brutal trek through the Hindu Kush Mountains.

Great leaders embrace the concept of servant leadership asking nothing of their team they haven't already done or aren't willing to do themselves. And while you can't always be in the trenches side-by-side with your team members, making a conscious effort to do so periodically goes a long way. Then, when you're out there steering the ship they know you still care intimately about their specific roles in achieving the company's vision.

Always eat last. Traditionally, in the military the officers eat last at chow time. This is a simple but impactful gesture of leadership. When you sacrifice for your team, they will sacrifice for you. It is the team that must execute on a daily basis and therefore it is imperative they have the resources to do so, even before you do.

Earlier I referenced the book "The Afghan Campaign." When Alexander was leading forced marches through treacherous and unforgiving mountain conditions, eventually the food ran out. He could have easily had a personal supply train providing him with food and all the comforts of home, but he didn't. When his men didn't eat, neither did he. Yet he still projected strength and positivity despite seemingly impossible odds. These five elements of leadership are not easy to execute on a consistent basis. It requires a daily focus and attention. Asking yourself, with each move and decision you make, am I being the best possible leader I can right now? If not, adjust accordingly.

How Great Leaders Know When to Quit.

Knowing when not to act is as important as knowing when to push forward.



When thinking about the qualities of great leaders we might use terms like vision, ambition, discipline, and inspiration. But leadership is also about restraint and knowing when to quit.

As a young Navy SEAL, my first combat deployment was to Iraq in the spring of 2003. No one in my platoon had any combat experience. Before moving into Iraq we spent a few weeks of preparation at Ali Al Salem Air Base in Kuwait.

While at the air base, we were tasked with our first mission. Intel came down that retreating Iraqi forces were planning to destroy a hydroelectric power plant and dam in order to slow the American advance. Our assignment was to fly from Kuwait to Northern Iraq, take control of the dam and await further assistance from conventional military forces. My platoon would assault, clear and take control of the power plant while SEAL mobility teams and Polish Special Forces would secure the buildings along the perimeter of the property.

One of the key complications was the distance of the flight for insertion to the target. The weather had to be perfect. And although time was of the essence, our leaders decided to abort the mission three times in a row. It is incredibly stressful sitting in a helicopter on the tarmac with the blades spinning only to then hear that the mission is getting postponed 24

“ ... I understand that selecting the right opportunities that align with your vision and goals is critical. ”

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hours. On the third day, we got the green light and the mission was a success. Most good leaders have the drive to keep pushing forward and tackling new obstacles. Great leaders also practice restraint when necessary.

Here are four signs that it's time to quit and rethink the plan.

1. You haven't done your due diligence.

It's not uncommon that an organization will move forward with a new project, customer or strategy without having taken the time to plan accordingly. As a young entrepreneur, I remember every opportunity sounding great. The fact that a customer wanted to work with us or another company was interesting. The fact that a customer wanted to work with us or another company was interesting. The fact that a customer wanted to work with us or another company was interesting. But now, as a more seasoned business owner and leader, I understand that selecting the right opportunities that align with your vision and goals is critical. Not doing so costs you money. Every single time.

2. You don't have the full support of your team.

Great leaders assemble the right team. Then they obtain full (or at least majority) buy-in from the team before moving forward with the mission plan. The team will be the group executing the plan, and therefore must take ownership. If they don't believe in the cause or strategy, your chances of failure skyrocket.

In the SEAL teams the way leaders get buy-in from all stakeholders is to have good data, a great plan, and an even better contingency plan. As the saying goes, "NO plan survives first contact with the enemy."

3. External forces are working against you.

In that first mission, the weather delayed us again and again. But had we moved forward with the plan when all of the elements were not in line,

“Great leaders use the data they have at hand in order to make the best possible decision.”

the potential for failure would have been very high. And failure in combat can mean injury or death.

In business, it is the responsibility of the leadership to identify what external forces are working against you, and either remove those obstacles or abort the mission and reset the plan.

4. The costs outweigh the benefits.

Managing cost benefit ratios is a basic function of good business. Is taking this action going to have benefits that exceed the cost of the investment? Will this plan generate a positive ROI? This could mean investing in new talent that has a higher salary requirement than you want to pay. It could mean large upfront costs for new technology that will make you more efficient down the road. Great leaders use the data they have at hand in order to make the best possible decision. They also learn from past mistakes and quickly identify when a decision will not have a beneficial outcome. That's when they abort the mission.

Restraint doesn't always come easy to great leaders and successful people. But taking the time to have a good plan, get buy-in from the team, and measure the potential outcome will save you the headache (and costs) of making the wrong decision.

Do These 3 Things and Be a Better Leader.

You can't earn your team's respect unless you're willing to get your hands dirty. Here's how.

The best leaders can lead from anywhere—the top, bottom, or middle. It may be counterintuitive, but any leader who doesn't dig in and get their hands dirty won't last long.

In the Navy SEAL teams, this philosophy is ingrained in each candidate from Day One of training, but especially for the officers. Naval officers attempting to successfully navigate the insanely rigorous selection process are taught to lead by example in everything they do. They are expected to be at the head of the pack during runs and swims and managing the obstacle course. This is the fastest way to garner initial respect from the rest of the class—willingly doing what everybody else does, only better. These standards only increase the further you move through the training funnel.

The expectations of great leaders in the corporate environment should be no different. There is a distinct and measurable difference when senior leadership is highly involved in providing support and removing obstacles for the team.

Here are the three key ways to get involved.

1. Learn from the bottom.

You should never assume you know everything. The minute you do, you've already failed. Professional development for any leader is critical, so why not leverage the amazing talent you've hired and learn from them? At our company, we have weekly "knowledge sharing" sessions and constant collaboration across all departments. If you're leading the team, you need to get involved and soak up as much knowledge as you can. You'll learn something new every single day, and you'll be better informed when making strategic decisions.

“ You got to where you are by doing some things right, so be sure to pass along your lessons learned so your team can avoid mistakes and excel.”

2. Share from the top.

On the flip side, part of the responsibility of someone in a leadership role is to give back through knowledge transfer. You got to where you are by doing some things right, so be sure to pass along your lessons learned so your team can avoid mistakes and excel. Nobody leads— or learns—in a vacuum.

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3. Be a servant.

Leading by example involves an element of servant leadership. As a SEAL, you are taught

“You train with your team and fight with your team, and you always remain loyal.”

to lead and be led. You train with your team and fight with your team, and you always remain loyal. Your team members will thrive when you provide them the necessary resources to succeed, and you won't know what those are unless you're with them side by side in the trenches and understand what they do every day. They will respect you

for your humility, and that respect will go a long way for fueling company growth.

When running a company, you can become consumed with unlimited distractions. Don't forget about the fuel that makes the company thrive: your team. Diving into the trenches and earning its respect will improve your ability to fulfill the organization's ultimate vision.



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7 Simple Ways to Lead by Example.

“I serve with honor on and off the battlefield...I lead by example in all situations.”

— Navy SEAL Creed

Navy SEALs are trained to be leaders, regardless of age or rank. To put it another way, they are trained to earn trust. As I learned with the SEALs, and relearn continually in business, people truly follow only those they trust.

One of the best ways to build trust with the team is to lead by example.

Here are seven ways to lead by example and inspire your team.

Get your hands dirty. Do the work and know your trade. You don't have to be the most advanced technician on the team, but you must have an in-depth understanding of your industry and your business. Leaders have many responsibilities, but it is important to work alongside your team. This is a great way to build trust and continue to develop your own knowledge and skills.

Watch what you say. Actions do speak louder than words, but words can have a direct impact on morale. For better or for worse. Be mindful of what you say, to whom, and who is listening. Always show support for all team members. If someone needs extra guidance, provide it behind closed doors.



Respect the chain of command. One of the fastest ways to cause structural deterioration, foster confusion, and damage morale is to go around your direct reports. All team members need to respect the leadership at every level. If the senior leaders don't respect the chain of command, why would anyone else?

Listen to the team. As leaders, sometimes we are so consumed with providing directive, giving orders, and, well, talking that we forget to stop and listen. If the recruitment and training engine is functioning well, you should have a whole team of experts to turn to for advice. One sign of good leadership is knowing that you don't know everything. Listen and get feedback from your team regularly.

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Take responsibility. As the saying goes, it's lonely at the top. Blame roles uphill. Great leaders know when to accept that mistakes have been made and take it upon themselves to fix them. It doesn't matter if one of your team members messed up or you did. If you are the leader, you need to take responsibility.

“**Communicate the mission, vision, values, and goals. Then step back and let the team innovate.**”

Let the team do their thing.

Stop micromanaging. Communicate the mission, vision, values, and goals. Then step back and let the team innovate. Setting this example for the team will encourage your other managers to do the same.

Take care of yourself. Wellness and fitness are essential for good leadership. The more you take care of yourself, the more energy you will have and the better work you will do. The only way to build a fitness oriented culture is to lead by example. Get in shape and lead from the front.

These are only seven of the many ways to lead by example. This style of leadership must be practiced continually and be performed in and out of the workplace in order for it to be genuine.



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Earn Your Leadership Role Every Day.

“My Trident is a symbol of honor and heritage. By wearing the Trident I accept the responsibility of my chosen profession and way of life. It is a privilege that I must earn every day.”

— Navy SEAL Creed



Many entrepreneurs and small-business owners struggle with the transition from being the “visionary with a business plan” to the role of manager-leader. If your business grows, however, you will inevitably reach this point, and you better be ready to step up the plate. You have the position, but that doesn’t necessarily mean you have the skills. Business leadership, like leadership of any kind, needs to be worked at every day.

Here are six ways to earn your leadership role every day:

Listen and get feedback. Anyone can lose sight of the big picture when embedded in the day-to-day craziness of a growing company. Leaders have to remember to stop and listen every now and then. You probably think you are on the right track and that everyone is on the same page. That doesn’t make it so. Get feedback from your team and ask for their input regularly.

Motivate the team. Motivation isn’t about running around trying to pump everyone up. It’s about knowing your team as a whole, as well as understanding what motivates each individual. Whether it’s giving praise, encouraging innovation, providing great resources, or allowing flexible work schedules, know what drives the team and fuels great morale. Then act on this daily.

Be disciplined. Keeping a team or organization moving in the right direction all the time takes discipline. Discipline of leadership and discipline of team. This takes focus and determination, but if you act with discipline each day you won’t find yourself scrambling to catch up later.

Always be learning. Learning and professional development are paramount to leadership. As our organizations grow, our industries evolve,

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and technology becomes more advanced, team leaders have to stay on top of their game to stay relevant. Spend a few minutes every day developing your knowledge or skills. Never stop training.

Lead and be led. Nobody is born a great leader. Yes, some people have certain traits inherent for leadership, but great leadership is learned over

“You will never get everything done unless you enlist the help of the great talent you put in place.”

time. It generally starts with being led by someone else. Find a mentor and learn as much as you can from him or her. The best way to learn how to give orders is to first learn to follow them. Even when you make it to the top of the food chain, make an effort to do a little “following” each day.

Delegate properly. As Theodore Roosevelt said, “The best executive is the one who has sense enough to pick good men to do what he wants done, and self-restraint to keep from meddling with them while they do it.” The art of delegation is usually an obstacle for budding entrepreneurs and new leaders. You will never get everything done unless you enlist the help of the great talent you put in place. Otherwise, why did you hire them? Let go. Get out of the way. And let them execute. Do this every day and you can't lose.



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Why Great Leaders Never Stop Training.

“We demand discipline. We expect innovation. The lives of my teammates and the success of our mission depend on me. My training is never complete.”

— Navy SEAL Creed

Becoming a Navy SEAL involves a year of the most intensive physical and mental training the U.S. military has to offer. But once you make it through, and join the ranks of the “elite,” you realize you are just another new guy in an already well-established organization. And it only gets tougher from there. The training never ends, and every single mission is rehearsed.

It's no different in business. Leaders usually know that their people need training and development. The smartest leaders understand that the same applies to them--and that the need is ongoing. Here are five responsibilities that ensure leaders can never stop training:

1. Leaders define the mission. A clearly defined mission starts with the leadership, is ingrained in the team, and is constantly reviewed. Mission

success relies more on training than it does on planning. Rarely is a plan executed exactly as it has been laid out, because external forces prevent this. Thus the leadership and team must be ready to adapt. Adaptation requires ability, and ability comes from training.

2. Leaders set, and reset, the vision. It's up to leadership to know when shifts in a company's vision must happen. The organization's ultimate direction may not change but how you get there most certainly will. That means having a keen understanding of industry trends, economic cycles, and competitive movement. Leaders must be constantly acquiring knowledge and looking to the future.

“If you find the right people and train them accordingly, they will stick around and the business will thrive.”

3. Leaders build the team. As a company grows it will require different types of talent. If you find the right people and train them accordingly, they will stick around and the business will thrive. It takes good leadership to identify who to hire and the roles to put those people in. This too requires ongoing knowledge development.

4. Leaders embrace the necessity of growth, both personal and professional. If the mind and body are not in a constant state of growth, eventually things stagnate and progress stalls. Instilling the importance of learning in the team is one thing, but leadership has to embrace this

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“Great leaders are always seeking knowledge, developing their minds, and maintaining their bodies. Mental and physical wellness is essential for optimal leadership.”

first. Great leaders are always seeking knowledge, developing their minds, and maintaining their bodies. Mental and physical wellness is essential for optimal leadership.

5. Leaders execute. An organization's strategic plan means nothing without exceptional execution. As a company grows, the methods of mission execution will change. So will the way in which products and services are provided. The leadership has to build this into the culture, provide the team the proper resources, and remove obstacles. Companies that fail do not fail because the plan wasn't good enough. They fail because the leaders didn't execute.

These five responsibilities require leaders to be in a perpetual state of development. Get on it!



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Servant First, Leader Second.

“We expect to lead and be led. In the absence of orders I will take charge, lead my teammates, and accomplish the mission. I lead by example in all situations.”

“I humbly serve as a guardian to my fellow Americans always ready to defend those who are unable to defend themselves.” -- Navy SEAL Creed

Servant leadership. That’s a concept that comes easily to a Navy SEAL, because a SEAL is trained to lead and to follow. Team leaders are strong and bold, and have the ability to make hard decisions under the most extreme conditions imaginable. But they also encourage their team members to step up, share the power, and not hesitate to take care of business without waiting for further instruction.

Servant leaders are not afraid to share the power. They want their teams to make independent decisions and keep moving forward until they feel they need assistance. As leaders, our job is to encourage and support team members in order to help them unleash their full potential. Let them do their jobs. They most likely can do it better than you. That’s why you hired them, right?

Here are four tips for becoming a better servant leader:

1. Stop talking and listen. This has been said time and time again, but part of being a good communicator is being an active listener. And, a large part of being a successful servant leader is putting the needs of others first. So, listen to what your team is saying. You don’t need to be prescriptive. Just listen, and only give guidance when the time is right.

2. Increase your awareness. Situational awareness is essential to making good decisions. Have a keen understanding of the current reality and communicate it to your team. In addition, it is important to have great self-awareness. This is probably the most difficult challenge for a CEO, because leaders rarely want to acknowledge their faults. By doing so, we can make adjustments and better serve our teams.

3. Start conceptualizing. All too often we get so caught up in the day-to-day minutia of running



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the business that we lose site of our ultimate goals. This is where delegation comes in. Let your people do their jobs, so you can be freed up to focus on both short-term and long-term operating goals. Stop working so much in the business, and start working more on the business.

4. Be a true steward to your team. The only way the organization will develop quickly is if the team develops even faster. Provide your team members with support and development opportunities. This takes time and often a dedicated budget, but if you encourage your team to keep learning, they will be more engaged and will provide greater value to the company, and employee retention will flourish.

Today, when you interact with your team, start by truly listening. Don't interrupt. Just listen.

“ Today, when you interact with your team, start by truly listening. Don't interrupt. Just listen.”

Then, ask your people how you can help, and follow up on your promises quickly. If they don't need your help, don't force it on them. Encourage them to carry on with your full support. Step back and let them take care of business.



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Never Too Young to Lead.

“We expect to lead and be led. In the absence of orders I will take charge, lead my teammates, and accomplish the mission. I lead by example in all situations.”

— Navy SEAL Creed

My first combat mission with my Navy SEAL platoon was to secure a hydroelectric power plant in Northern Iraq. My role on this mission was to guide the helicopter pilots over the landing zone and manage the fast rope insertion for our assault team. At the time, I thought this was a lot of responsibility for a new guy. What I figured out after we nailed our landing, and after many other successful missions, is that age has very little to do with leadership ability.

The SEAL Teams are a relatively flat organization. Everyone goes through the same grueling training, and everyone is trained to lead regardless of age or rank. In the business world, emergent leadership is about team members taking the initiative to accept more responsibility and perform work outside of their general roles. If we, as leaders, encourage and promote this type of drive, our young team members will be ready to

rise within the organization, and our companies will be better off for it.

Here are four ways we can prepare our young people for leadership:

Showcase their talent. Don't hide your young leaders. Show them to the world. Let them be the face of your company. Encourage them to contribute to the company blog or industry publications, take training courses, speak at conferences and trade shows, and collaborate on ways to improve company systems and offerings.

Manage them, not their work. If you have the right people in the right jobs, don't micromanage their efforts. Set boundaries and then back off.

Allow them to be innovative and develop systems, processes, and methodologies that will get the job done. Doing this will not only result in a more confident team and better retention, but will give your team members a sense of ownership that they wouldn't get by simply following orders.

“Any successful entrepreneur knows that they have gained the most wisdom through their mistakes.”

Let them fail. While providing guidance and leadership, we must also allow for failure. Encourage your young leaders to take calculated risks when appropriate. When things don't go as planned, use that as a coaching opportunity

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to help them understand how to succeed in the future. Any successful entrepreneur knows that they have gained the most wisdom through their mistakes.

“ Let’s encourage our young team members and provide them the resources for success. ”

Link their effort to tangible results. Real leaders want to know exactly how their role affects the growth of the company. As you develop leaders, give them goals and milestones to hit so they understand the roadmap for success. Ensure that they know exactly how

their efforts and results drive the company forward. As they develop in leadership roles, they will know how they got there and where they need to go next.

Let’s encourage our young team members and provide them the resources for success. If we can build our emerging leadership teams from loyal employees who started at the bottom, then our companies will be stronger and have a more loyal foundation for growth.



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To book Brent for your next event or to learn more about his leadership training programs, please contact us today! Simply visit the website, click the Book Now button and fill out the form. We look forward to speaking to you!

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