



## What is a *Great CEO* and How You Can Be One

According to the popular press, people like Jack Welch of GE, Jeffrey Bezos of Amazon, Eric Schmidt of Google, and Alan Mulally of Ford, are icons in the world of CEOs. Articles in publications such as *Harvard Business Review*, *Barron's* and *Forbes* rank CEOs on results in shareholder return and market value. CEOs like these clearly stand out but are they truly great?

Unfortunately, while these and other leaders return the “best results” according to popular reviews, 75 percent of the employees in this country are unmotivated at work according to recent studies. How great can results be, when over two thirds of the people are producing below their potential? How high could shareholder return and market valuations go if employees were truly motivated? What a *great* CEO does is build a team of highly motivated individuals who in turn, produce these results.

The great CEOs know that the extent to which their company will excel in each of these areas is directly proportional to the number of people on their team motivated to make them the best they can be.

Anyone who has ever played on a successful sports team knows that great teams result from a group of individuals who love what they do. They love it because they enjoy their role, they are good at it, they are needed by the team to be successful, they benefit from it personally and, their coach is personally dedicated their success. In direct contradiction to a recent article in HBR, great CEOs are not always those born with the right skills, but they are always those committed to being one.

Putting great teams together is an art and talent that can be learned, practiced and mastered. As a great CEO, you will create an organization in which all of your employees experience these benefits:

- Enjoy their work and workplace
- Are good at, or can become good at their jobs
- Feel rewarded and fulfilled
- Know and like the purpose they serve
- Know where they stand and how they will benefit from their performance

Why do most companies fail and most CEOs never achieve greatness?

- Lack of clear vision, known and understood throughout the company
- Lack of skills, roles, purpose alignment
- Lack of performance management skills by managers/supervisors
- Lack of systems and processes that connect people
- Misused performance driving practices (lean, stretch goals, annual performance reviews)

Most CEOs rely on performance driving practices to make the difference in the long run. While programs such as the lean process have potential, the short term benefits mask the need for vision, alignment and management skills that can truly create a peak performing organization.

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Stretch goals challenge employees to prove how much they can produce, appealing to their competitive nature. Like the lean process, however, the personal reward for achieving these goals is ultimately limited and, the pain and cost of failure is significant.

Annual performance reviews were an improvement 20 years ago for companies who never talked to their employees. Today, the practical effect of most annual performance reviews is de-motivational. Employees can see clearly what they do well and not so well through good job descriptions and performance tracking programs. Great supervisors ensure these programs are in place but also help their employees define what they need and want to achieve in their job and how. They ensure their employees have the tools, training and continuous support to reach their goals.

Does this mean that all employees care about is themselves? No. They care about many things including the company but, their behavior is driven by what instinctively makes sense, as Maslow's theory describes. People are drawn by their own interests and expectations or driven by someone else's. Which would make you more productive?

Here are some questions to ask in seeking to be a great CEO:

- How much more productive, innovative, confident and successful am I doing what I like to do rather than what someone else wants me to do?
- Do I look forward to going to work every day? Am I leading the way by getting excited about where our business is going and what that will mean to my goals?
- What if every one of my employees felt this way every day? How much more would they do, solve, create, produce, attract?

So, what are the requirements of a great CEO?

1. Know what you want this organization to look like when your vision is achieved
2. Know how to build your team
3. Understand that *your* success comes from *your* team

**Know what you want this organization to look like.** Each employee needs to be able to see where the company is going, what they will do to take it there and what it will look like when it gets there, in tangible, physical and, emotional terms they can understand. This is the first and most important component of motivating people to action and building a high-performance team. Whether articulated as a vision, mission, principles or images, if every employee can't or doesn't see it and understand it, the CEO has failed in their primary responsibility and will fail to lead the business to its highest potential. Walt Disney is the best example to this day of a CEO who established this picture clearly, defining everything the company would be, do and become through the image of the castle, that his company has become one of the most successful, high-performing companies the world has ever seen.

**Know how to build your team.** One of the first things people learn in the military is that great teams are *not* lots of hands on the same mop but, a group of individuals, each performing the part of the job their skills and interests are best suited to. First, great CEOs define the vision, outcomes, and functions that need to be performed and then they hire, assign or train the people with the best skills for the role and interests that match the company. Second, regardless of how well aligned a person is

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in their job, great performance will not result until their supervisor is also the right person in their job. People *work* for their supervisor. To build a great team the CEO must hire or assign the right person or people for the job/s immediately below them, with the right strengths, skills and interests. Those positions will then hire, assign and train based on the same criteria. The process repeats itself until the entire organization is made up the right people in the right roles, each performing at their peak.

**Understand that your success comes from your team.** Great CEOs create an environment that makes clear to each employee that they can reach higher than they ever thought was possible, that the company will help them achieve these goals and that their success is what results in the success of the business. The primary responsibility of a great CEO is to know how their employees *feel* about their job. They ask their employees the right questions. The number of motivated employees tells them how successful they are and will be but the same assessment tells them where employees are and aren't motivated, why and, the source of both the strong and weak results. This is the measurement and guide to the success of the great CEO.

So, do you and your company have a clear vision, known and understood? Is your team made up of the best people in the right jobs, performing the right functions with the right systems from the CEO to the shop floor? Are all of your employees motivated and engaged?

Decide what you want your business to look like; survey *all* of your employees to see what the company looks like now, *to them*; align the roles needed with the strengths, skills, interests, practices and rewards that produces a team of highly motivated individuals. The results this team delivers will be maximum shareholder return and market value. This is what a *truly* great CEO is and does and, how you can be one.