

How has your mentor prepared you to lead?

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I HAVE BEEN EXTREMELY FORTUNATE TO HAVE NUMEROUS MENTORS THROUGHOUT MY CAREER AND MY LIFE. WHILE MANY OF THEM COME FROM DIFFERENT BACKGROUNDS, I HAVE ALWAYS SEEN TWO COMMON THEMES.

First, there are no shortcuts to success. We have a saying at Schupan that I have seen proven countless times over the years: “Effort beats ability more times than not.” Many times, people see only the glitz and glitter of success. It is easy to forget the enormous investments in time, resources, and most importantly, failures along the way that served as the foundation for success. I am a firm believer that people need to fail faster to succeed sooner.

Second, there is nothing more clever than honesty and sincerity. At the end of the day, people want to follow a leader they can trust and whom they know will stand behind them. People sense when someone is sincere, and that allows for real relationships and better problem solving. This lesson also serves well in times of adversity. In life and in business, mistakes and misfortune will always be present. Admitting your shortcomings and surrounding yourself with people who fill in your gaps are imperative to building a successful team.

MY MENTOR, MY FATHER, SETS A GREAT EXAMPLE OF LOOKING FORWARD, SEIZING OPPORTUNITIES, AND FINE-TUNING THEM AS THEY PROGRESS.

As a leader, it is easy to get bogged down with management tasks, but he has encouraged me to keep the big picture in mind. His leadership has shaped my ability to lead.

YOU CAN'T EVER UNDERESTIMATE THE IMPORTANCE OF CONSTANTLY WORKING AT BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS—BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS THAT GO BENEATH THE SURFACE—AND UNDERSTANDING WHO YOUR TEAMMATES ARE, WHERE THEY'VE BEEN, AND WHERE THEY HOPE TO GO.

When I first joined the team, my mentor and leader quoted her mentor to me, who said, “We are all going to disappoint each other at some point, and it is much tougher to forgive one another if we don't have a solid relationship built. If we truly know and value one another as human, then we can more easily forgive and come out stronger because of it.” The foundation we have built has given her the ability to allow me room to take risks on my own and grow immensely, while also showing me what it looks and feels like to have trust in and feel supported by your leader.



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THE FIRST THING THAT COMES TO MIND IS LEADING WITH AUTHENTICITY.

Authentic leaders build trust, but being authentic doesn't always come naturally. It takes work. It requires awareness of your strengths and your weaknesses as an individual. It requires being comfortable with and knowing yourself. Secondly, a leader must look at the team collectively and appreciate the diversity of talents. But more than just appreciating talents, it is imperative to leverage the talents of the team to achieve a greater purpose—to propel the business forward. Finally, a leader must remember that there is life beyond work. A leader must support a healthy work-life balance, and be a living example of that, encouraging others to be involved in their families and their communities.

MY MENTORS HAVE INSTILLED IN ME THAT THE MOST IMPORTANT ASSET OF ANY ORGANIZATION IS PEOPLE—THEY FOCUSED ON THE PEOPLE ON THEIR TEAMS FIRST.

Understanding an individual's strengths and weaknesses not only provides an environment for a person to succeed, but it also allows leaders to identify what motivates their team, creating a more efficient and effective workforce. People-focused teams give an organization the best opportunity to innovate, solve problems, and exceed the needs of its employees and customers. By putting people first, organizations and leaders can perform at the top.

