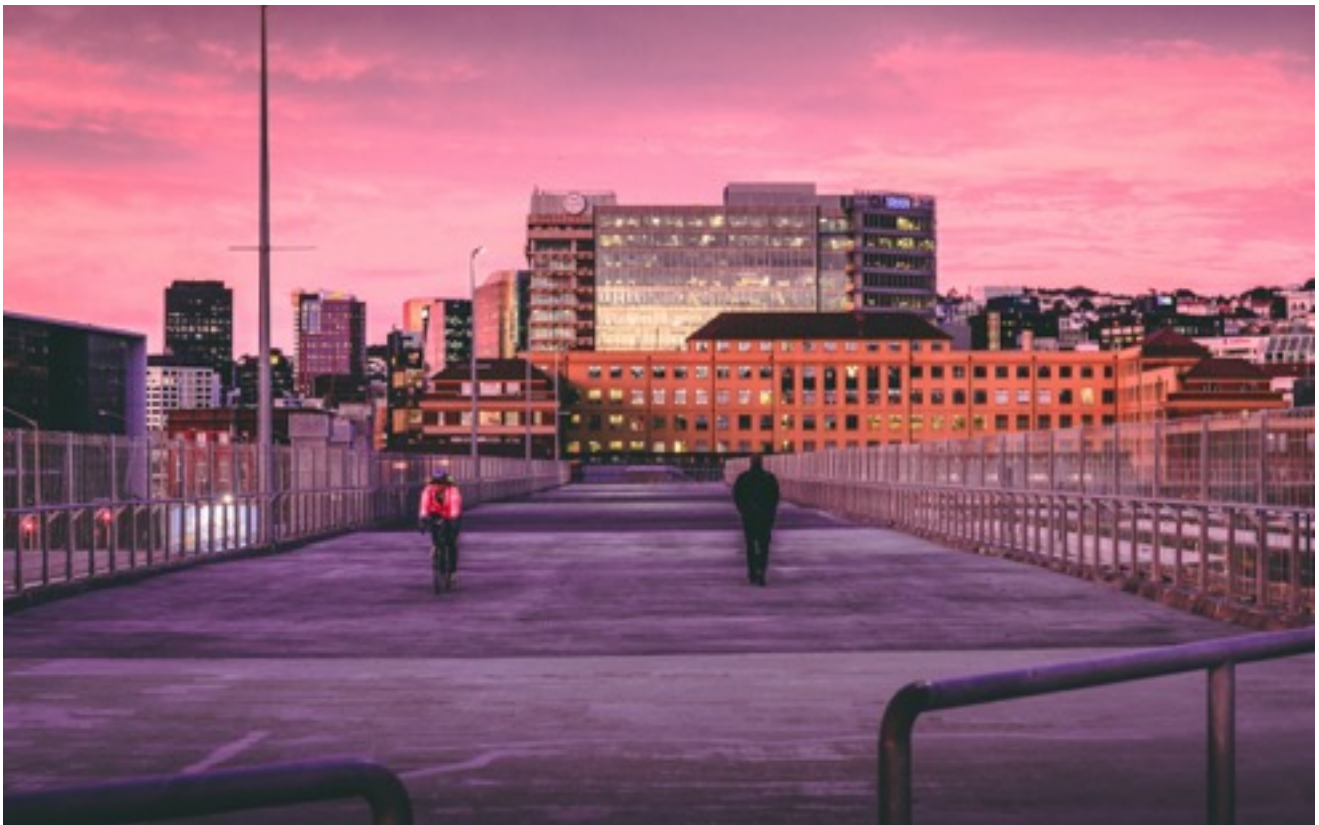

Leadership Development

A handbook for entrepreneurs, CEOs, and startup founders.



Companeur, LLC

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About the Author

Brandon was recently selected to represent Google, as a Google Small Business Advisor, and has authored several business and digital marketing classes on Google's Primer App.

Brandon has considerable experience in streamlining business processes to maximize productivity, working with executive leadership to come up with new ways to grow the business, forming enterprise content marketing strategies, analyzing data to make more informed educated business decisions, and creating personalized marketing and lead generation campaigns that get results. Brandon helps his customers be accountable, consistent, and accurate, in every aspect of their business.

From me to you.

My goal is to empower you with information, so that you can do better, today. Everything I share is simple, and easy to understand. No junk, no fluff, no nonsense. I only share high-quality, proven information.

Contact Me

I'm more than happy to answer any questions and provide suggestions. Send me an email brandon@companeur.com or text (267) 702-3851 to get the conversation started.

Creating a Work Environment that Attracts Top Talent

The days of building huge fabulous and amazing offices so that top talent can spend 2-hours commuting there everyday is long gone. Top talent wants to spend time working, not sitting in a car or train for hours on end listening to every audiobook ever published. Here's the bottom line, if you want to hire top talent, and you want them to actually stick around, you need to change the way you run your entire work environment.

Investing in top talent is what's going to keep your company going for years to come, so it's absolutely vital that you create a work environment that suits them best. So here are a few of my go-to tips for creating a work environment that attracts top talent.

Be flexible with work hours.

Top talent doesn't want to be tied to an office, or stuck in boring meetings that they really have no business being in. They want to work from wherever they are in the world, whenever they want to. Does it really matter if your top programmer is working from Thailand while away on vacation with his wife? No, of course it doesn't. What matters the most is that your getting the most return on investment, for every project you need to complete. You need to come to grips with letting top talent work, whenever, and wherever they work best, and just let them run with it, or they're never going to stick around.

Invest in technology.

Top talent wants 24/7 access to everything that anyone in the actual office has. There's absolutely no reason for an employee not to have access to everything they need, regardless of where they are in the world, or what device they're on. Technology is the key to keeping top employees connected so that they can work when they want to work. Using some old clunky outdated email system that makes you carry around a 10lb. laptop wherever you go, is just flat out crazy. Not having online access to data, whether it be on a desktop, laptop, or mobile device, is even crazier. Everything we do in business is based around data, and top talent knows that by using data properly, it's gives them a competitive edge, so give them what they want, by investing in technology.

Provide private workspaces for when they do show up.

Top talent employees like to work. They don't like to mess around, chat about, and hang out by the coffee machine all day. When they work, they work smart and hard, and by you setting up a few private workspaces for when they do show up, you'll be letting them know that you appreciate what they do, and that you're rewarding them for their hard work. You definitely don't want to have your top talent talking openly on the floor about the new product or service you're launching before it's public information, so be sure to give them all the privacy they need, so that they can work in confidentiality.

Join a collaborative workspace.

There are tons of places around the world that offer collaborative workspaces, so be sure to join one of them so that your top talent has a place to easily go if they need to host a professional conference call, or entertain prospects or clients. Most of the time, the collaborative workspace will not be used, but it's always good to have a place for top talent to check into, whenever they want to. Plus, you never know when you may want to pay them a quick visit, so their collaborative workspace, will be your collaborative workspace, whenever you're in the vicinity.

The idea behind investing all these freedoms into your top talent, is so that you keep them, but you also want to keep them on a short leash as well. It's a two way street here, you're giving them the freedom, but they're going to need to deliver, and big time. You're not looking to hire undisciplined top talent that's just looking to take advantage of a unique opportunity. You're looking for top talent that is willing to bust their hump, and get paid well to do so, while having the freedom to work from wherever they are, whenever they want. Yes, adjustments will need to be made along the way, but if you commit to changing your work environment, by letting your top talent do what they do best, you'll definitely reap the rewards for years to come.

Adapt and Evolve to Stay Relevant and Competitive

Thinking you're fine just doing what you're doing today, tomorrow, is lying to yourself. You always need to be adapting and evolving on a daily basis, that is, if you still want your business, to actually be in business, years from now.

There's nothing worse than seeing a once powerful business giant fall to the ground ungracefully, but it's part of reality every year. If only they had taken the steps to adapt and evolve, all that money may not had been wasted, but with complacent behavior, comes sub-standard results, and with sub-standard results, comes big losses of money, and with big losses of money, come job layoffs and cost reducing measure, and with all this, comes your weakness to your competition, and they ultimately end up driving you to the ground and out of business.

This is the fact of business life. If you want to run a business that's profitable, and that delivers a cutting-edge product or solution, you need to adapt and evolve, and you need to do it on a daily basis. So here are some steps you can take to ensure your business adapts and evolves as needed.

Hire very smart people.

A person doesn't have to be book smart, or have graduated from an ivy-league school to be smart in this sense. The person only needs to know what people want and like, and in some instances, not looking at the business data over the past twenty-years, and just being able to predict the future in some sense, is well beyond good enough.

Take suggestions.

The power of suggestion is everything in business. Some of the best business improvements to products and services have come from simple suggestions. However much you think you

know, you can always know a lot more. Take suggestions to heart, the more open your mind, the more ways to success you'll find.

Get uncomfortable.

If you're only doing what you know to work, you'll never grow. There's no such thing as failure because even when you fail, you learn what doesn't work, and the faster you learn what doesn't work, the faster you can stop wasting time and money, and keep testing other methods out until you find a few things that do work.

Pushing the limits.

The biggest lessons in business will come from pushing the limits, but if you don't push them, you're eventually going to stop learning, and when you stop learning, you get complacent, and when you get complacent, your business starts to go down the tubes

Invest in technology.

Not investing in technology, is flat out ineffective and inexcusable. It's also one of the fastest ways to make your business non-relevant. Invest in right technology, and you'll have good profit, and you'll have excellent potential for big-time growth. Don't invest in technology, and your overhead will continue to rise, you'll have low profit margins, and your competition will eat you up. It's extremely important to make the right technology decisions. Just because your competition is using a certain software solution, it doesn't mean that the same one is good for your business. Try out different technology, see which one fits best with the way your business functions, test it out for a month or two, get an implementation plan together, and then execute it. Jumping into an enterprise Oracle solution, may not be the best fit for your mid-size company. Over invest in technology, and you're done as well. Balance is everything.

Don't beat yourself up.

There's no sense in beating yourself up over business decisions that ended up being incorrect. Just rack them up as learning lessons, keep your head up, and rock on through the future.

Remember, commit to adapt and evolve so that your business, stays in business, for years to come. There's a big difference between book-smart, and business-smart, whatever type of person you are, recognize it, embrace it, and then higher the counter opposite of what you are as your top employee so you balance each other out.

Creating a Positive Work Environment

Without a doubt, work is a huge part of our lives — nearly 1/3 of our time will be spent in a work environment, so while you're there, you may as well make the very best of it. I look at it like this, "If I'm going to be there, I'm going to do the best as I can in my leadership role," and one of the most important ways I do that, is by creating a positive work environment for my employees.

All successful leaders create positive work environments, and you can too. To help you out, I've put together a list of positive work environment traits that some of our most successful leaders embody, in the hopes that you'll implement them into your personal leadership development plan in the near future as well. Read them, implement them, put them on your list of goals for the year, and see how great of an effect they have on the growth of revenue and employee leadership development at your company. I know you'll be very happy with the results.

Focus on what employees are doing right, and build upon those strengths.

Turning something that an employee does good, into something they do great, will have far more reaching benefits, than turning something that an employee does bad, into something that they do good. You get what I'm saying here — focus on their strengths, and form a team that's built on what they do great.

Dump the 1980's style micromanaging.

Stop with this nonsense type of management because it flat out leads to resentments, unhappiness, and the employee ultimately leaving. The workforce today doesn't need to have someone looking over their shoulder, they've been brought up to work independently, and can get the work done, as long as they have clear directions. Remember, just because you did things a certain way when you were growing up, doesn't mean that those ways are still correct today.

Always be considerate of how changes in the compensation plan are going to affect employees.

It's tough for employees to work for free, especially when they have families and bills to pay. Make sure before you go hijacking the compensation plan, you think about who it's going to affect the most, and make sure that you're not going to lose any employees in the process. For me, I love paying someone when they do a job well, so I always look to pay the people that excel within my organization, the most money.

Never allow any type of hazing or bullying.

This may sound stupid to have to say in an adult workplace, but unfortunately it still happens. Immediately stop any type of activities that may be construed as hazing or bullying. Yes, cutting the new guys tie after his first deal is hazing. It's ok to have fun, but there's a big difference between causing uncomfortableness vs. taking an employee out to lunch as a team as a congratulatory event. If you have to think about whether what you're doing, is right or wrong, it's probably wrong, so stop in your tracks, and don't do it.

Keep the human element in every interaction.

I always talk about the human element because it's so vitally important to understand. When you cut yourself, you bleed, it doesn't matter what gender, race, or ethnicity you are — so treat everyone the same. There's never any room for ignorance. We're all human, we all have emotions, and we're all eventually going to mess up at some point — the key for you in your leadership role, is to be understanding and help employees through whatever they're going through.

Focus on team performance and employees working well together.

Have people with similar interests and skill sets, work together on the same team. The idea is to get maximum productivity out of every team. The power of like-minded smart employees working together is incredible. New ideas will be discovered, deeper more enriching and accountable relationships will be formed, and ultimately, your company will come out on top because your employees will feel that they're part of a greater whole.

Make sure employees have work-life balance.

Everyone needs to take a break and spend time relaxing or partaking in an activity that they love. As an employer, if you're pounding on everyone with the 24/7 work theme, you're not going to have happy employees for very long. Yes, people may buy into this philosophy at first because they're drinking the Kool-Aid, but after a while, they start to breakdown and realize that this way of, "all work and no play," just isn't what life is all about. Make sure your employees are taking time off to spend with their families, and make sure they're taking time to do what they love.

Stay way out in front of issues.

Without a doubt, there are going to be issue that come up. There are many different dynamics in business, some in your control, and some out of your control, and then you match that with different employee and management personalities, and you have a strong probability of issues arising. The best thing to do, is nip them in the bud, immediately. Letting issues linger will only create an atmosphere of animosity within your company. The faster you take care of issues that arise, the faster you'll move beyond them, and the more happy employees you'll have.

Provide continual education for employees.

Your employees are the lifeblood of your company. They're an extension of you, so invest time and money into making them the absolute best people they can be — not only in business, but in their personal lives as well. Education is paramount to continual employee growth. Employees may not want to take part in education opportunities at first, but once they've completed what they've been asked to participate in, they'll be thanking you.

Honor every employee commitment.

If you say you're going to increase pay for employees every year, than do it. Never commit to anything that you're not going to be able to stick to. Treat commitments like cement — strong, secure, and lasting. Breaking commitments, breaks trust, and when you break trust, you lose the ability to transfer messages to your employees because they're not going to believe in what you're saying.

Promote the right people, for the right jobs.

There's nothing worse for an employee to see a co-worker that's really not the best person for the job, actually get a job they have no right getting. This is a moral crusher and it will take away positive energy from your staff. If someone is doing a great job for you, but they don't have the same education or background that another employee has, who cares, put the person that's doing the great job in the spot. Reward employees that are doing great jobs, by moving them into new roles where they can continue to challenge themselves. If you promote the wrong people, you're eventually going to have to go back, fire them, and then hire the right people, so just do it correctly the first time, and you'll save a bunch of time and money.

Bring the best out in every employee.

There's no better feeling than seeing an employee that may have been a little rough around the edges, come through as your shining star. Great leaders have a knack for bringing out the very best out in employees. Look at it like this, "It's not what you did for yourself that people are going to remember, it's what you did for other people." Leave your imprint on the world, and your company, by providing an enriching work environment where people can learn, excel in what they do, and put some serious money in the bank.

There you have them, my list of positive work environment traits that top leaders embody. As I always say, "If you don't do anything with the information you learn, what sense is there in learning it in the first place." Let this information sink in, pick out one or two of traits above, and implement them in your organization, then pick out another one or two, and implement them. You need to be moving in a positive direction on a daily basis for best results. I challenge you as a business leader, to create a positive work environment that truly touches your employees hearts.

Reverse Engineer Business Decisions

Be selective, do your homework, and reverse engineer business decisions before you commit to anything. Making irrational and quick decisions will drive your business to the ground. You have to think your decisions all the way through. I'm not talking about getting paralysis by analysis, or having a team of twenty people help you make a decision. I'm just talking about taking a few minutes, looking at the end result that your decision is going to have, running some quick data checks, and giving yourself a few moments to walk everything through to the end before you jump into something that you may regret.

Before you make any large business decisions, ask yourself:

1. What are the implications of making this decision?
2. Is this decision going to end up costing a lot of money in the long run?
3. Am I helping or hurting my company by making this decision?

If you don't do your homework properly, you're never going to know the answers to these very important questions. Doing your homework puts you in the drivers seat to make the most educated decisions you can. There's no absolute way to know for sure that any decision you're making is one-hundred percent correct, but you can definitely help yourself out and put the odds in your favor if you understand the full picture.

Look at the end result.

One technique that I've found to work great in regards to making educated business decisions, is to reverse engineer my decision making process. I do this by looking at the end result I'm going to get, and then working my way backwards towards the resolution. It's like starting a race, but at the finish line, instead of at the starting line. It makes total sense when you think about it for a few minutes.

Put the work in upfront.

Decision making is not difficult, although many people, and companies, do make it difficult for themselves because they don't do their homework and reverse engineer the process before they actually make a decision. If you put the proper decision making process in place upfront, you'll say tons of cleanup time later. Believe me, I speak from direct experience.

“Just because your friends company uses a particular product or service, definitely doesn't mean that the same product or service is going to be a good fit for your company.”

Every business has different workflows, different systems they work with, and different unique needs. Don't get sucked into the hype of the new best thing, because it may end up being your next worst thing. Remember, look at decisions from the finish line, and then run the race backwards to make sure everything is exactly the way you want it to be.

Companies selling to you, want you to look at things from the starting line, but if you do this, they'll be the ones crossing the finish line first, not you. With your business, especially with the service providers that you're paying a lot of money to on an annual basis, it needs to be all about you, so win the race, by doing your homework and reverse engineering every large business decision.

Magnificent Ways to Set Your Business Up for Success

If you're going to run a business, you may as well do it right. So here are some evergreen tips that will help set your business up for success. I can tell you from first hand experience, that there's a direct correlation of success with the companies that embody the traits shared below.

If you're already doing them, great, keep it up, and if you're not doing them, just commit to start doing them moving forward. It's only going to work if you take action and implement them.

Work as a team.

Sounds simple, but sometimes it's more difficult to do than expected. Match people that work well together so that they all can achieve maximum productivity. Make each team member feel a part of, and that they're combined effort is helping build a stronger front. People that feel a part of, produce better results and help make a happier work environment.

Get a good location.

I'm sure you've heard, "Location is everything," well it's not fully everything, but if you're in retail and you're not in a high-trafficked area, it's going to be tough. Set yourself up for success from the start by taking the time to find out what location is going to be best, before you just jump in hoping for the best.

Pick a growing niche.

If you're selling into a dying niche, "What in the world are you thinking?" Unless you have superpowers to bring people and things back from the dead, stay away from a niche that's decreasing in market size. On the opposite end, be careful of a trending niche that's on fire, as it may well be flooded and it may be too late to get any real traction.

Know your market.

I know you think you know what type of people or companies are going to buy your product or service, but that may not be the case in the end. Test out your product or service once you have it ready to go to see what market segment is most likely going to buy what you sell. I can tell you first hand, it's not always who you think it's going to be.

Have a unique idea.

Needless to say, if you're just copying another product, or making it less expensive, the path to long term success is going to be difficult. Be you, be unique, be exciting, be different, and look to position your product or service as being one of a kind. A bit of personal sweat equity in regards to creating a unique idea will go a far way.

Be flexible.

If there's one trait you can have that will give you an advantage over your competition, it's being flexible. I'm not talking about being too flexible, all I'm talking about is giving your employees and customers opportunities to be involved in the success of them working with you. Maybe an employee wants to work from home, it's ok, as long as they get their stuff done, or maybe a client needs special terms, that's fine, as long as they have excellent credit and have never stiffed anyone before.

Hire great people.

Great companies hire great people, it's that simple. Invest time into finding people that will get the job done right for you, the first time. Yes, you may have to pay them a bit more, but who cares, it's easier to overpay one person, than overpay three other people. In the end, having lazy employees is going to cost you way more than if you just hire the one person that works quickly and gets the job done, on time, every time.

Launch when you're ready.

No one has the ability to see into the future and tell you when the perfect time to launch is. If you wait for perfection, it may well never come, so at some point you just need to make the best educated decision you can, and just do it. I know companies that launched when they

thought it was the best time to, and it ended up being the absolute worst time to, so use your gut, and what you know about the market, and make the best choice you can based off the information you have in front of you at that time.

Get out of the gate strong.

When you do launch. Put all your effort into it and be like a circus clown that just got shot out of a rocket. Fly high, get out there, do every bit of PR work you can, and leave no stone unturned. Lock down deals, and form as many new strategic partnerships as you can, as fast as you can.

Have money to spare.

Blow all your money in product development, and you're in trouble. Be smart, you always need to have some reserves. The best way to have money to spare, is to make money selling your product or service. Again, if you're waiting for perfection, stop, it may not be pretty or perfect in the beginning, but you need to sell what you have so that you can keep the lights turned on and keep some money in the bank in case you need it.

Watch every dollar that's spent.

I always say, "The best time to put away money, is when you're making the most money," but people and companies don't. They think that they're going to continue to blow the cover off the ball, and when business slows down, they realize that they haven't been watching every dollar that they've been spending, and now they have all kinds of overhead that they need to immediately cut so they can stay in business. Be smart with your money.

Take care of your customers.

The customer is always right. There's always a way to keep a customer happy. Yes, sometimes you'll need to give a little to continue to be able to take a little, but if you stop giving, you'll definitely stop getting. Create a win-win symbiotic experience where both you, as well as the customer, are mutually benefiting from your business relationship.

Be a part of your business.

You need to live and breadth your business. I'm not saying put it in front of everything else in your life i.e. family, but when you're there, be there, be committed, be engaged, and maximize every second of the day. There's no time to waste eating long lunches. Pack a lunch instead and eat on the go. Your business is an extension of you, so take care of it, just like you'd take care of yourself.

Stay calm and cool.

Don't let your customers see you sweat. Getting fired up and acting crazy and irrational is going to push customers away, and that's not what you're in business to do. Be the firefighter that runs into the burning house, grabs the animals and people to safety, and then runs back in to fight the blaze. You need to be the quarterback of your team, and your example is going to set the precedent for the rest of your team.

Put forth maximum effort.

As the old saying goes, "Maximum effort, gets maximum results." Be the person that people look at and wonder how they do it all. One way to put forth maximum effort is to work smart. Learn how to automate and cut down on manual repetitive tasks. You truly get what you put in, so put in a lot, and you'll get a lot back, put in a little, and that's what you can expect to get back.

Be resilient.

I saved the best for last. You need to be able to get knocked down, get right back up, and get back engaged. The ability to recover quickly is vital for your long term success.

There you have it. Several truly magnificent ways to set your business up for success. Like I shared above, "If you're going to run a business, you may as well do it right." The best thing you can do now is implement what you've learned into everything you do in business. What I share here works, but only if you take action and work it.

Leading in a Chaotic Business Environment

Business today is flat out crazy. People are crazy, customers are crazy, and vendors are crazy. All this craziness naturally leads to a chaotic business environment, which can eat you up and spit you out if you don't know what to do, and how to do it. Yes, the odds are against you in terms of succeeding in business today, but there are certain actions you can take as a leader, that will put the odds in your favor, and I'm going to share them with you below.

Dump ridiculous rules.

If a rule is too hard to understand, or you need to make a rule, so everyone can follow another rule, it's never going to work. The simpler, the better. If a rule makes no sense, don't keep it, either update it, or dump it all together.

Talk directly to who you need to.

Why go round-and-round when it's easier to just walk over and talk to who you want to speak with. Hiding in an office makes no sense. Employees know how to act, and if they don't, get rid of them.

Take the shortest path.

There's no sense in taking the long road and driving an RV along the coastline for eight hours when you can cut through a mountain and be there in ten minutes. Business is fast, it's furious, so work as fast as you can, on as much as you can, so that you can achieve the most, in the least amount of time.

Keep everything as simple as possible.

Simple, simple, simple. There's absolutely no better way. If you're not able to explain what's going on in less than a minute or two, there's a bigger problem. Make everything you do super easy to implement and understand.

Only participate in high value activities.

There are a ton of people that work twelve hours a day, but accomplish very little, and there are people that work two hours a day, but accomplish a ton. The difference is the activities that they engage in. Work when you're at work. Play when you're not.

Get rid of useless meetings.

If you don't need to be in a meeting, walk out. It's not rude, it's actually effective. Crazy people sit in meetings all day wondering in their head why in the world they're sitting there. Productive people know better, and take action by walking out.

Don't talk just to hear yourself talk.

Listening is a way bigger asset than what you probably think. If you have something important to say, then say it, otherwise don't waste time pondering this-and-that and what-if type theories. Go with what you have in front of you for best results.

My recommendation, is to always keep things simple. I know of organizations that make everything so complex and difficult to understand, that their employees, as well as their customers, are lost most of the time. Leading in a chaotic business environment is about empowering employees to make decisions for themselves, so that they can prosper, while creating their own unique paths to success. It's about being accountable, and maintaining maximum productivity at all times.

I Want to Hear From You

My contact information is below in case you have any follow up questions, or are interested in booking me for a live speaking event.

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