Lead by Example with a Start-Up Mentality

by Scott Siegel

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Foster an entrepreneurial attitude through leadership example

While many large, mature organizations try desperately to act like a start-up or foster a culture that encourages thinking unbound by traditional business barriers, most fail miserably to capture true entrepreneurial spirit.

For public companies, the goal is often to deliver 5-7% growth to pay dividends. As a starting point, this is a comparatively low bar that may itself stifle bold thinking. Instilling an entrepreneurial essence takes just one simple, but elusive capability: leadership. Leaders must share information, promote inclusion of ideas, empower managers, and not only encourage risk-taking, but even more importantly, not penalize failure.

So often companies talk of their desire to celebrate failures or learn from mistakes – a simple tactic that any company of any size can employ that would change the culture overnight – and yet very few can actually do it. Start-up entrepreneurs by comparison often try, fail, try again and reinvent themselves en route to greatness.

To realize growth rates that are on par with many smaller or start-up companies, employees must be allowed to suspend consideration of how new ideas will be funded, approved or moved through the system – something that is counter to any corporate mentality. Leaders must recognize this reality and lead through action to change this restrictive dynamic.

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