

12 Tips for the New CEO (Chief Executive Officer)

1. CEOs are powerful.

Employees and team members hang on each word you say. You may be thinking aloud, making a comment on a video call, or over the coffee pot in the office, but someone may hear it and start a rumor. Be aware of where you are and what you say.

2. Hire an A-Team

Successful CEOs hire the best and most trusted team possible. In interviews with successful CEOs, this was the most common thread among them.

3. Always be Learning

Listen more and talk less. Ask questions to stay abreast of projects and activities. You can never know it all about everything, so learning can only improve your overall knowledge. Read books, attend peer group events, and network.

4. Motivate and Inspire

Know what motivates each functional group and team in your company. Engineers are motivated primarily by creative solutions and problem-solving, Sales is motivated primarily by money. QA, Quality Assurance is motivated by finding and identifying problems, and so on.

Inspiration can be different for each function, but this is more overall than motivation. Communicate regularly, do not be condescending but be open and honest, and always discuss successes by your team. Recognize the good work of your teams and people!

5. Lead with the highest integrity

As mentioned in #1 above, your team and employees are listening to every word and watching every move you make. Be honest, share what you can with the team, and be self-aware.

6. Eliminate costly mistakes

Listen, ask questions, always be learning, lead with integrity, be self-aware – your A-team can get things done in support of your vision. Communicate with clarity, stay focused on “the right things” and you will eliminate or minimize costly mistakes.

7. Communicate with clarity

Eliminate ambiguity when talking with your team in leadership meetings and always ask them to repeat back what was discussed and committed to and in many cases follow up via email. In team meetings, assign a scribe and they can send out the follow-up email with assignments, task owners, timelines and this will help provide clarity.

8. Understand your own philosophies and leadership styles how you apply them to your senior leadership team and company. Together, your background + your philosophies + your leadership styles will create the company culture. It may benefit you to hire a CEO coach or consultant, to provide a 3rd party perspective on how your culture has evolved. It is likely that you do not know everything going on and if something has soured or is brewing behind the scenes, you can get control of the situation and drive it back on track.

9. Set goals, using one of the proven systems to track such as SMART Goals, KPIs (Key Performance Indicators), OKR, or Scorecards. SMART Goals are Specific – Measurable – Achievable – Realistic – and Time bound. KPIs are Key Performance Indicators. OKRs are Objectives and Key Results. There are many templates available online or you may already have something. Scorecards are usually combined with one of the goal setting processes and reviewed monthly or quarterly.

Goals managed and tracked will support clear communications and minimizing ambiguity.

10. Know your numbers. Any CEO who does not know revenues, pipeline/forecasts, expenses and run rates, cost of goods sold, will put themselves in peril with investors and the board of directors. Major decisions require knowing the numbers.

11. Customers are critical success factors and communication with them should be built into your culture in some way. Sales are never done, as ongoing support, relationships, and exceeding expectations should be part of your mantra.

12. Be authentic. Do not try to be Steve Jobs or Satya Nadella, be your genuine self. People will see right through this, and you will lose respect.