



Book How to Become CEO

The Rules for Rising to the Top of Any Organization

Jeffrey J. Fox
Hyperion, 1998

Recommendation

Writing in succinct and serviceable language, Jeffrey R. Fox presents profitable information for anyone aiming for the top of the corporate world. Anyone in the work force, at any level, can use and appreciate his litany of commandments. Applying these suggestions appropriately and sincerely will help you succeed in your personal and professional life. Some of the commandments may surprise you. Many of them will make you reflect on what your mother taught you. Frequently, the suggestions challenge and encourage you to make positive life improvements and to enhance your interactions with your colleagues. The author’s no-nonsense presentation is an easy read. Each commandment entry is brief and to the point. *BooksInShort* recommends this book to those who want to rise to the top, and be appreciated and respected by others in the process.

Take-Aways

- All employees, on all levels of any organization, must recognize that the customer keeps the organization in business.
- Stay out of office politics. Don’t be a gossip or make unkind remarks about others.
- Go to work to work. Avoid office parties. Don’t drink with co-workers.
- Let those in your organization know that you value them by learning their names and something about their lives.
- Keep yourself physically fit to help you stay mentally alert.
- Listen carefully to others.
- Learn how to work hard and think reflectively.
- Always do more than you are asked to do. Always say "yes" to the requests of upper management.
- Carefully observe strong, effective leadership and emulate what you learn.
- Plan your own career; don’t expect the personnel department to plan it for you.

Summary

Career Decisions and Career Moves

The Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of any organization determines the organization's progress and success. Whether you are just starting to climb the corporate ladder or are already at the top, consider the following commandments.

Always take the job that offers the most money - If you already have a job, always take the transfers, assignments, and promotions that offer the most money. Your future bonuses and raises will be salary based, so start strong. A high salary makes you visible, so you can demonstrate your abilities. When two employees are considered for the same promotion, almost always the higher-salaried employee will be granted the promotion, regardless of talent or contributions. It is easier for companies to promote the higher paid employee, and the promotion of the higher paid employee confirms the wisdom the management.

Human Resources won't plan your career - Know what you want. It is your responsibility to develop and modify your plans. Your career growth is your responsibility. You must determine what skills and aptitudes are needed to rise to the top of the company ladder. The human resources department will not plan for you.

“In business, money is the scoreboard. The more you make, the better you're doing. Simple.”

Get and keep customers - In any company, the customer is indeed the king. Everyone on all levels in any corporation should be working to satisfy the customer. Customers can be demanding, fickle, and sometimes harsh. On the other hand, they provide ideas for product improvement, for new products, and for product quality. Every present and future CEO must recognize that in any business the customer is the king maker, as well as the king.

“To know your customers is to know your future. When the phone rings, twelve people ought to dive to answer it.”

Do not be discouraged by the idea killers - Idea killers operate at every level in any corporation. They say, "it won't work," "we've tried that before," or "we can't afford that." Do not be frustrated or give in to their negativism. Be a positive-thinking idea person. Use the idea killers' unrelenting negativism as a springboard to make your ideas work better.

Push products, not paper - Many modern organizations are caught in the red-tape trap of rules, forms, task forces, and out-dated policies - called "bureaucratic creep." Use the resources of time, money, people, and facilities in the marketplace, not in filling out forms, writing monthly reports, and reading meeting and trip reports. To improve a company, implement innovative ideas, embrace prudent improvements, and exercise entrepreneurship.

“Executives reorganize companies, eliminate jobs, and excuse the chaos by saying they are 'two or three levels closer to the customer.' Bunk! There are no barriers between anyone in the corporation and the customer.”

Be visible: practice WACADAD - Work on projects that make you visible. Teach training classes, work on management's pet projects, present proposals, and speak to the sales force. Don't talk about how good you are at something, show it by your actions. Practice WACADAD (words are cheap and deeds are dear). Few people in an organization actually implement new ideas, so those who do become visible and sought after to produce more ideas. Seek out avenues to make yourself visible and work hard to execute outstanding presentations.

When Things Go Wrong

Don't hide an elephant - Do not try to hide problems, mistakes, or errors. Report any irregularity to administrators and colleagues immediately. The longer you wait, the more severe the problem becomes. A problem can be turned into an opportunity to improve and grow. First, identify and explain the problem, then estimate what damage may have been caused. Suggest viable solutions. Ask for help.

“People who feel good about themselves and their jobs will contribute at high levels.”

Never write a nasty memo - Do not write any angry, unkind, cynical, or negative memos. The recipient could become an enemy. In the constant fluctuations of business life, this enemy could resurface at any time in the midst of job changes or company changes and affect your raises and promotions. Use your words, time, and energy positively.

Never panic or lose your temper - Strong leaders do not panic, have tantrums, make accusations, or get angry. These reactions show panic and lack of control. To stay in control, you must first control yourself. If a colleague makes an accusation or cruel comment, do not respond. Certainly, do not respond in anger, even if your anger is justifiable. Train yourself not to panic or get angry. Continually tell yourself to stay calm. If you have ten seconds to respond to a situation, contemplate for nine.

Staying Healthy

Keep physically fit - Being fit enables you to think better, rest better, and work longer and harder. When you are in top physical condition, your spirits will be higher and you will feel more motivated. You will be more productive and energetic. You will end your day with energy to spare.

“Customers are the lifeblood of any company.”

Don't smoke - To be successful in business, it is crucial to think of others and their needs; smoking interferes with this. Smoking is generally offensive to nonsmokers. Smoking during business exchanges exhibits your self-centered interests and tobacco's control over your life.

Maintaining Mental Acuity

Do something hard and lonely - Doing something solitary and difficult will prepare you for the battle of business. Study and read late at night, go for a jog before dawn, read War and Peace, plant a garden. Those who achieve great things have practiced solitary hours of unrewarded labor.

“Your brain will make you money, but your body carries your brain. The better your physical condition, the greater your capacity for productive, unrelenting work.”

Think for one hour daily - Spend one hour each day, at the same time and place, thinking about your plans, dreams, options, ideas, and goals. Write down your thoughts in a notebook. Do not try to do your planning while you are shaving, driving, or jogging. Don't try to do planning at work, where you could be interrupted.

Your Social Life

Don't have a drink with the gang - Do not go for drinks with others in your company. Getting drunk or tipsy with those in your work shows out of control behavior and weakness.

Skip all office parties - A business is a business; do not mix business life with social life. Do not attend office parties or gatherings. Do not criticize parties, just give polite excuses and don't go. Do not attend company picnics if you cannot take your spouse. If you are mandated to attend a company social function, then go, but drink only soda and stay for forty-five minutes. Make polite excuses and leave.

Office Strategies

Know everybody by name - Learn the full names of those with whom you work. Know something about their families and lives. Know what they do in their job and why their job is important to the organization. If you do this in a sincere manner, you will be a successful leader. A good way to exercise this skill is to take visitors (friends, job candidates, and executives) on a tour of the facility. During the tour, introduce them to the workers and tell the visitor why each worker is important to the organization.

“Having ambition to better yourself, to be a contributor, to make a difference, to grow professionally, to be more successful, or to become CEO of an organization is good.”

Always say "yes" to a senior executive's request - If a high-level executive asks you to do something, always respond positively. Listen carefully to the request, and then get the job done. Always do more than you are asked, sooner than was requested, and with some innovative, personal touch.

Arrive early and leave late - Come in 45 minutes early; leave 15 minutes late. Be first on the job. Arriving early tells those in authority that you like your job and gives you a psychological edge. Don't stay hours after work; this is detrimental to your family and personal life. Arriving early and leaving fifteen minutes late conveys the message that you are a hard and loyal worker, but still enables you to have time for your family.

“Regularly practice something Spartan and individualistic. Do something that you know very few other people are willing to do. This will give you a feeling of toughness, a certain self-elitism. It will mentally prepare you for the battle of business.”

Stay out of office politics - Out of control office politics point to an ineffective leader. Do not be sucked into office politics. Go to work to work. If someone starts to tell you something but warns, "it's confidential," walk away. Do not gossip; do not say bad things about anyone.

Keep a people file - From your first day on the job, keep a notebook, computer file, or address log of the names, numbers and addresses of all the people you meet. Make notes about what they do. If you keep a paper record, use pencil since numbers frequently change. Ask everyone you meet for a business card; they will most likely ask you for yours. Maintain this people file your entire career.

Being a Boss

Emulate, study, and cherish the great boss - Exemplary bosses are uncommon. A great boss is never preachy, harsh or critical. Great bosses are honest, hardworking, smart, open-minded, fair. A great boss will find ways to praise people. Observe how these bosses manage problems and deal with people. Practice their methods.

Over-invest in people - Strong leaders know that people make things happen. When hiring, hire the best. It is better to hire one strong, qualified worker at \$60,000 than two average workers at \$25,000 each. Give efficient and effective workers praise, freedom, trust, and encouragement. Workers give back what they are given. If you trust and respect them, they will trust and respect you. Hire workers with the three "Is" integrity, intelligence, and an "I can do it" attitude. Over-invest in this kind of worker. You will receive a wonderful return on your investment.

“Learn everybody's name and know something about them.”

Stop, look, and listen - Strong leaders listen, listen, listen, and think before speaking. They are observant. They don't make snap decisions. Listening is difficult for energetic, aggressive people, but you can learn. Heed body language, so you "hear" what is not being said. You must be able to interpret what others are saying with their hands, their frowns, and their eyes. Listen to everyone: salesmen, competitors, suppliers, customers, co-workers, colleagues, visitors, and supervisors. Learn to be a good conversationalist.

“Coming in forty-five minutes early and leaving fifteen minutes late is an hour a day. That's two hundred fifty hours a year or 31 days. You can get ahead quickly working one extra month a year.”

Treat all people as special - Treat people as individuals. Outstanding managers make others feel as if they are: "asked, not questioned, overpaid not underpaid, measured not monitored, people not personnel, sold on what to do not told, instrumental not instruments, workers not worked, and contributors not costs."

Be polite with everyone - Use good manners, all the time, with everyone. Be gracious. Never pull rank. Never wear your boss's stripes. Hear your mother's voice in your ear: don't swear, don't put your feet on the furniture, be on time, say "please" and "thank you," introduce people clearly, don't waste other people's time, return messages, and don't keep people waiting. Don't put your briefcase on a conference table. Treat your office, everyone else's office, salespeople's cars, and all company belongings as if they were yours. Courtesy is good business.

About the Author

Jeffrey J. Fox a graduate of Harvard Business School, is the founder of Fox & Co., Inc., a marketing consulting company. Fox is the winner of *Sales and Marketing Management Magazine's* Outstanding Marketer Award and the National Industrial Distributors

Award as the Nation’s Best Industrial Marketer. Fox has been featured in *The Wall Street Journal* and *Business Marketing*.
