

## WHAT IT TAKES TO BECOME A GREAT LEADER

### PEPE MARAIS



Henry J Ford thought that the everyday American should be able to afford to drive a car, so he built one.. (Photo by Hulton Archive/Getty Images)

Why we do what we do as a business has always been simple — to make money. Capitalism demands nothing less, but if you ask children what they want to do when they grow up and why they want to do it, most below the age of seven won't say money. Their passion for fun and to help others are usually the reasons.

What if we adopted the same thought process of children, who often act on instinct, into our adult lives and into our businesses? Many of the ideas of visionary leaders of our time started with passion and purpose. This paved the way for a future vision in service of a greater cause.

[Bill Gates](#), who wrote his first software program at the age of 13 followed his passion. [Phil Knight](#)'s fortune was born out of a love of running. [Henry J Ford](#) thought that the everyday American should be able to afford to drive a

car, so he built one. [Steve Jobs](#) knew something few leaders knew when he built Apple.

As chief creative officer at Joe Public United I've had the privilege of discovering how when we put purpose above profit we thrive as a business. And for this to occur, you need to have leaders in place who understand this and make it their mission to implement it in all areas of their own life and in their businesses too. One can easily be fooled by titles. However real leaders aren't necessarily defined by a title. There is much literature on what defines a great leader, which is mostly subjective. But when you pay careful attention to those who've made their mark on this world you'll notice they have the following in common. They are purpose-driven, highly conscious, growth-minded, humble, have an unwavering sense of integrity, they bring out the best in those who surround them, they display courage, firmness, passion and love and strive to make a significant difference.

As the leader of a business, the company culture begins with you and is underpinned by a belief greater than the quest to make money. It's one that is grounded in the service of a greater cause. As the founder and owner of your business, what you say, do and believe in drives your company's unique culture and is what your employees and customers buy into. It's not something that can be easily replicated. Look at Samsung in its quest to copy Apple. Yes, it is a great copy, but it will never really be or compete with Apple. That is because their culture resides in the walls of Apple.

Visionaries are purpose-driven. A great leader knows that purpose is the foundation on which to build a sustainable business, and that the vision of such a business comes second to the purpose. In the absence of purpose, vision will mostly be self-serving, which is why visionary leaders start with purpose first. Such a purpose will be clearly articulated and known by all employees. The steps that connect the foundational purpose to the higher vision are the values of the business. A business with purpose has the power to not just make money but also act as a tool for driving change.

Great leaders are grown, not born. Many of our great leaders were born into difficult circumstances and have used their passion, talents and skills as drivers for change. This makes them resilient and able to find solutions. They never give up and have an inner sense that drives them. If great leaders are grown, then there is an opportunity to grow our children's mindsets from as young as 11 or 12, while they are still at school. Having a growth mindset will put them

in good stead for when things go wrong, or they fail in life or in business and will be willing to listen to feedback and know they can get up and try again.

Great leaders measure more than just profit. True indicators of a healthy business are more than just the bottom line. This considers spirituality, the health and wellbeing of people, a sense of family, the level of the craft in terms of the output, financial wealth, the type of customers you attract, the amount of innovation and adventure in the business and the level to which the business invests in its community.

It's easy to measure profits and we do it meticulously but measuring everything else is not. This is one of the most profound insights for any business that strives for greatness. Why not measure the state of our product and services? Or its annual improvement? Why not measure the delivery of our key performance indicators? Why not measure the growth of our people? Why not measure our service to society? Why not measure the involvement of our people?

In a world of scarcity, it seems we have made business somewhat unnatural. Nature shows abundance because nature behaves according to the rules of something far greater than humans. Yet as humans our business behaves under a human law, hence no-one really thrives. Is it right that some people make billions while others starve? I am the first to advocate that if you have founded and grown a business, you deserve to make your millions. Even hundreds of them. But I think we need to consider how we can create a new system, going forward, that shares more with more people. I think that purpose, true and lived business purpose is the starting point to figuring this question out.



[Pepe Marais](#)

Pepe Marais is the chief creative officer at the advertising agency Joe Public United