



Passion: The Secret To Success

By: Carmine Gallo

Passion is the most important quality that separates mediocre leaders from those whose ideas change the world. Why? Because they have a driving sense of mission and a willingness to share that vision with all who will listen.

As a business columnist and author, I have interviewed dozens of extraordinary men and women who inspire others in their personal and professional lives—leaders who run companies like Google, Starbucks, and the Ritz-Carlton. I've interviewed people like Wendy Kopp, who turned a Princeton school project into one of the influential non-profits in education, Teach for America. I've interviewed award-winning educators like Ron Clark whose “rules” turned a class of students in Harlem, New York, from underachieving fifth graders into students who believed in themselves so much they outperformed a class of “gifted students.” Every one of these leaders has something to teach us, but above all, each is fueled by a passionate commitment to their service, product, or cause.

Here's the catch: It's not enough to say, “I'm excited about my company.” Dig deep to identify your true passion. If you're truthful with yourself, you'll soon realize that you're not passionate about the “widget,” but what the widget does to improve the lives of your customers.

Starbucks.

Starbucks CEO, Howard Schultz, did not build one of the most admired brands in the world because he blends the right mix of espresso, steamed milk, and foam. He likes coffee, but he's passionate about creating a workplace that treats people with dignity and respect. “When you're around people who share a collective passion around a common purpose, there's no telling what can happen,” Schultz told me. Schultz's passion is not “in the beans,” so to speak. He's passionate about what those beans ultimately mean to the lives of his employees and customers.

Zappos.

I interviewed Zappos.com CEO Tony Hsieh for one hour and he never mentioned shoes. Although Zappos sells shoes and clothes, Hsieh is not passionate about shoes. In fact, he owns very few pairs—and nothing fancy. He's passionate, however, about happiness—his customers and his employees. Hsieh studies the science behind happiness. Happy employees have better phone skills, better customer service skills. As a result, they make customers happy and those customers are more likely to return. Employees are so happy to work at Zappos, the company can't pay them to quit.

During a four week training course required of all new hires, the company has a standing offer of \$2,000 for employees who choose to walk away. Few do. Amazon recently bought Zappos for a reported \$847 million. Zappos' success can be directly linked to a CEO who consistently communicated the true meaning behind his company—happiness. It was never about the shoes.





Cranium.

On a cross country flight from New York to Seattle, Richard Tait sketched an idea on the back of an airplane napkin. He had an idea for a board game that would give all its players the opportunity to excel in at least one area. The idea was to bring “shining moments” into people’s lives. Tait’s passion was so infectious he convinced investors, employees and partners to back his vision.

Cranium became one of the fastest selling board games in history and was purchased by Hasbro in 2008. Tait told me that his father was a bit concerned when he left Microsoft to start a game company. “What will I tell my friends?” his father asked. Tait responded, “Tell them we’re following our hearts. We’re going to make history.”

Apple.

Apple co-founder, Steve Jobs, has always had a messianic zeal to change the world. In a famous exchange with then-Pepsi President, John Sculley, Jobs asked Sculley to work for Apple. Sculley refused Jobs’s offers until one moment on the balcony of an apartment on Central Park West. Jobs turned to Sculley and asked, “Do you want to sell sugared water all your life or do you want to change the world?”

Sculley later recalled that the remark hit him like a punch to the gut. Of course, Sculley took the position. Job is said to exert a “reality distortion field”- an uncanny ability to convince people to follow his vision. It’s not magic. It’s passion.

Jobs has never been passionate about computers, but how computers can be used as tools to “unleash human potential.” He has said that being the richest man in the cemetery didn’t matter to him. “Going to bed at night saying we had done something wonderful; that’s what mattered,” he said.

Jobs once said that life is too short to live someone else’s dream. Jobs is revealing the secret to living with passion-do what you love. Follow your dream-your passion-and communicate that vision consistently.

Find something you love to do so much you can’t wait for the sun to rise to do it all over again. Once you do, people will want to be a part of your world. You see, people are hungry for passion. If you have it, share it.

