



**David Roosevelt**

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At the time of this interview, David worked with Troy Star Services.

professional

### **What are top 3 principles for success in your industry?**

Do what you love. I believe we are all given certain talents, certain abilities. Certainly there are things we all need to develop. But I do believe that we need to focus in on what it is that we love because at the end of the day, business and the business world is so competitive and if you don't love what you do, you're not going to be putting in the time, energy and effort to really excel at it. So find what it is that you love, where you have core skills and go for it. You've got to be willing to take a stand. And you've got to be willing to move forward when other people don't necessarily expect you to. Picking up the ball. I also think core leadership skills. What do I mean by that? Having the ability to take a stand for something that is not necessarily what everybody else is taking a stand for. Create an idea, something that may be unpopular, buying a stock when the market is absolutely hammered. Whatever it is. You have to be comfortable being uncomfortable and not being with the crowd. And that's something that takes a lot of practice to do.

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### **What makes a great leader?**

Well, I think we've got to talk about some core character traits. Number one, I think leaders have to be honest with themselves and others. Well, what does that mean? I'm a big believer that I deceive myself, more than anyone else deceives me. So I have to constantly be on guard with that and be honest, with what my resources are, what my weaknesses are, what my strengths are. So number one, honesty. Number two, interpersonal skills. You've got to be able to communicate effectively with people. Leaders are people who are drawing people around them. They're people who have an ability to establish a vision and empower others to meet that vision. A core ability to that is being able to communicate effectively with people. Being able to resolve conflict with people. A leader, by definition, is going to take an unpopular stance on how you bring people along to follow you. There are going to be some conflicts. You have to be persuasive. Those are some key character traits that I think are absolutely critical. Team building skills. I think we've got to know how to do that. How do we motivate others? How do we meet each other's needs? I think it's absolutely critical. Each and every person is created with a unique set of gifts. Skills, talents, weaknesses. The challenge of a leader is to identify what those gifts in the people around them. Or the people that are in the organization with them. Identify them, develop those and put those people in the right place. Now, by definition, leaders

are going to have to deal with uncomfortable circumstances. They're going to have to hold people accountable to certain specific goals. I said set a vision. It's got to be set for the organization as well as specific individuals. If someone is not willing or able to meet those goals, the leader's got to give them a second chance. But they have to set specific and measurable expectations and defined goals before they can do that in the first place. But ultimately, my objective is to find the right place for the right people and if I have to give them a second, a third chance, I do. A lot of times it's finding the right place for them. But if people ultimately can't be held accountable, then I don't believe the right place for them is in the organization that I'm leading, so I have to find a new place for them or let them find a new place for themselves.

### **What are the 2-3 most valuable lessons you learned in your career?**

Theodore Roosevelt says a couple things that I think are incredibly insightful. Number one, he says, "Dare mighty things." And I can honestly say that personally, it's difficult to do. And I'm personally ... today ... struggling with daring mighty things. I have tried to dare mighty things in the past and have got nipped in the pants. It's difficult to continue to be courageous. But at the same time, I think "Dare mighty things" says so much more about just the actions we take and the risks we take. It says so much about our thought process and taking risks and being very wise in the process. It means challenging ourselves continuously. Something else that he said, which I think is critically important, especially in today's society is it's not the critic who counts, it's the guys in the ring. What he's really saying was, if you look at a boxing match, who cares if you were the fighter, what anybody else thinks. Whether you win or lose, there's a draw. The fact of the matter is, you're in the ring and you're going for it. Who cares about the ten thousand people who are standing around that ring and saying, "Oh, he's not having a good fight" or "Oh, he shouldn't have gotten hit." At the end of the day, they're not where you are, so don't listen to them. Who cares. Just do your best, strive for excellence and challenge yourself regularly.

p e r s o n a l

### **How do you define success? How has your definition evolved?**

My idea of success today is excellence. Where? Excellence throughout life. Being an excellent steward or being an excellent employee, if you're an employee, being an excellent friend, because we're all called to be friends. Being an excellent husband or a wife. Or a son or a daughter. The point I'm really getting at is success is having balance in life, and really doing well in each one of those areas. My concept of success has certainly changed over time as I've grown, as I've learned about responsibility. And the different things that life throws at us. I think probably ten years ago, my idea of success was making \$10 million a year in business. Period. Well, after observing different things that happen in different people's lives, from a failure or success or challenge or a thriving point of view, I've realized success goes way beyond that.

### **How do you prioritize your time/values? What are your priorities?**

The things that are most important to me, starts with family. I've got the greatest wife I could ever ask for in the world. Period. I don't deserve her. She is a blessing each and every day. And I'm just so thankful that I met her in Cancun, Mexico on Spring Break when our trips overlapped by one night. Who would have figured that not only was she the love of my life when we got married, but this love just keeps getting deeper and deeper and deeper. So I'm just loving being in love. I've been married for four and a half years. That being said, marriage certainly does have its challenges and I can honestly say that the challenges have only made it so much better because we're going to stick by each other, no matter what. And not only stick by each other, but love each other through those circumstances and that's just rich. I feel incredibly fortunate. The other priority is balance and I'm struggling with that. I'll be very, very frank. I am challenged to balance my responsibilities with my wife, responsibilities with my work, responsibilities with community activities and responsibilities and in other social activities. And the key thing, with respect to that, is I'm not sure I've necessarily found exactly what that unique path is in certain areas of my life, which means it's harder than it should be.

The key priorities in my life is pretty simple. God. I didn't say that earlier and the reason that is the key



priority is really simple. Everything in life changes or has the capability of changing radically. I could walk out of this room today and have a brick fall off of a building, hit me in the head and be dead. My wife could get cancer. My parents could die in a plane crash. At the end of the day, nothing is guaranteed. It's that simple. But there is one thing in life that does not change, it has not changed and never will change and that is God. I didn't know a lot about God until college. I always went to church. I went to a Christian School growing up, thought I understood Him, but it wasn't until somebody took the time to sit down with me and explain to me who Jesus Christ was, the fact that He was true, not a legend and what he actually did, not only for me, but for the entire human race, anybody who is willing to accept the gift that He has offered, that I really understood what the Christian faith is all about. And I've been struggling in that growth process. The fact of the matter is, the deeper I get my knowledge and understanding of faith in this guy, Jesus Christ, the more it becomes real and the more it becomes easier to live out. For instance, there's more legal historic proof for Jesus Christ's resurrection than there is for Napoleon's defeat at Waterloo. No historian's going to tell you that that battle never happened and there is more scientific evidence that Jesus Christ lived, died. There is more ... I don't know what the actual term is ... literature evidence, in terms of the way the Gospel is and the way of the Bible, which is not one book, but which is many books put together. So at the end of the day, the deeper I get into this thing, the more I realize this is true. There truly is a Creator, He truly knows me, He knows how many hairs I have on my head. He knows more about me than I will ever know and he has a plan for my life. And a key aspect of this priority, per se, is the more I get to know Him, the more I go to Him in prayer, Scripture ... study the Scriptures ... the more I see Him just working in my life. They call it the Living Word and it's living for a reason. If somebody had talked to me like this ten years ago, I would have thought they were crazy. The fact of the matter is, when I talked to my parents about this, like I am right now, they think I'm crazy. But I can't deny the evidence. And if it's a lie ... and I don't believe it to be a lie ... it is the greatest lie of all time in terms of what it has actually done in the hearts, in the lives of people. It's just that simple. You look at the world today and you look at community-based, you look at philanthropic-based organizations ... certainly there is so much good being done by so many different communities, but the Christian community has taken the lead. Why is that? Because they're not taking the lead at all. It's because Jesus Christ is taking the lead through them. God does miracles and I see Him doing them in my life and countless others and I just can't deny Him. So that is the priority. Because everything that I have in my life can be snuffed out like that. My life, my wife ... which is the most important thing to me on this earth ... my family, my possessions. I'll tell you, I know a lot of people whose wealths have been absolutely decimated in the last year because of the crash in the market. They had no idea that was going to happen. They would have bet that it never would have happened. Nothing is guaranteed on this earth except for Jesus Christ and so I want to place my faith on what I consider a foundation of rock, not a foundation of sand. And that's what I want to build my life on. I know this for a fact ... if I seek the plan the He has for my life ... it says He knows the treasures of my heart more than I even know them ... I'll be able to look back on my life, whether I die when I walk out of this room or die when I'm 105 and whether I was the biggest success in business or zero success at all, I'll know this. I'll be able to look back and say, "My life was more rich, had more fulfillment and more meaning and more significance than I ever hoped or dared imagine because of what this guy did for me 2000 years ago on the cross and because He has a plan for me and because I lived according to that plan. He created us unique, each and every one of us. My struggle right now is finding what that plan is. I'm doing that by trying to get on my knees and reading the Scriptures. I'm confident that first and foremost ... I know this ... his will for me is to come and be at His feet. Everything else will be taken care of. So that may be a little too religious for a lot of people, but that's honest. And God's been very good and I can say whether He calls me to be missionary in Africa, calls me to go work in a soup kitchen in Times Square or calls me to run GE someday, it will be a life of fulfillment because of Him. And just as a brief aside, there are so many guys out there in the business or in every walk of life, who are absolutely miserable because they're not experiencing that specific, unique calling that God has for them.

s p i r i t u a l

**Can you follow Christ and still have a successful career, family and such?**



You bet. Absolutely. I know incredibly successful guys who are following Christ and are success in business. That being said, I know a lot of incredibly successful guys, in business, who are absolutely miserable. They're not believers. I think at the end of the day, the key is ... none of us figure it out. And we're never going to have it totally figured out. That's the human condition. It's just doing the best we can with the right focus. And I've chosen a place that focuses on Jesus and the skills and the talents he's given me are in business. He might call me to utilize those in different areas some day, but right now He's got me in the business field. I know that's where He wants me. I think his name was Eric Liddell in "Chariots of Fire". He was a runner. His sister had a real issue with him running and not being a missionary in China. And he told his sister, "When I run, I feel the Lord's pleasure." Where is it in your life that you feel the Lord's pleasure? That you feel pleasure? I think the vast majorities of Christians are not called to the missionary field. But I think we're called to where we experience the Lord's pleasure.