



David Friedman

Chief Strategy Officer

Stree: Global Investments in Women

At the time of this interview, David Friedman was Chief Strategy Officer for Stree: Global Investments in Women.

[The name 'Stree' is a Sanskrit word signifying women, dignity, empowerment and strength. Dr. Alles founded Stree to target strategic areas that impact women and how they view themselves. Stree focuses on weaving together three critical components for elevating the status of underserved women globally: health, education and entrepreneurial skills]

Prior to joining Stree, David was the Director of Strategic Development for a mobile applications platform company where he helped cultivate and manage relationships with investors, strategic partners and clients. Before MShift, David was co-Founder of Dreamlot.com, an automotive instant comparison-shopping e-commerce venture. David also spent two years doing strategy consulting at I4 where he divided his time between developing complex sales and partnering methodologies for biotech clients and creating the operations, tools and methodologies for a mentoring program focusing on the children of inmates. David is a member of the Board of the International Foundation for Handong Global University. He is also on the Advisory Board for the Handong International Law School and Senior Advisor to the Global Consulting and Research Group at CB Richard Ellis. David graduated magna cum laude with a B.A. in Political Science from Wheaton College. He went on to receive a M.A. Philosophy of Religion and Ethics from Yale where wrote his thesis on religion and politics.

professional

What are top 3 principles for success in your industry?

I think number one is integrity. That's always the basis for everything because that deals with honesty, your ability to communicate and understand, and an ability to sense those traits within people that you're working with. Another one is humility. We don't often talk about that, but humility allows you to recognize what you can't do. Humility allows you to acknowledge "I can't do it all alone," which is critical in Silicon Valley. Whether you're doing foundations or whether you're doing venture capital, no one can do it alone. And then finally, the third key principle would be to be faithful, not successful. I think that's a critical delineation. Being faithful means having a vision and a goal and working to attain it. As a Christian, that means letting go of the outcome of the circumstances and just being faithful to push along in doing the best I can do each day, being strategic for that day. And so those are three key principles.

What character qualities do you look for when hiring?

Integrity is key. If you can't trust someone, how can you work with them? I don't care how skilled they are. When I was hired for my first job, the person that hired me said, "We hire for character. We train for skills." Character is probably one the most important things because you can always develop skills, but there are people that probably have more natural aptitude. I would rather hire people that can change and grow and listen than someone who is already skilled and set in their ways. Probably the number one characteristic people will need to be successful in their jobs is the ability to change, rapid change. Reinvent, continually assess new things, taking in and then project out.

What makes a great leader?

There is a saying that says, "A great man can do the work of ten men, but a good leader finds ten good people and lets them do it." It's critical to know there are limitations. The other one I would say is strategic: You have to be strategic because you have limited resources, limited time, you have to be very disciplined and focused in what you're doing. Another we forget – because I see it so often – is people that are smart and are leading a company, but they don't understand relationships; they don't know to relate to people within the company; they don't know how to build a culture that's going



to sustain the innovation that they need to succeed within Silicon Valley. It's critical to have leaders who can relate on a one-to-one basis or to a group of people who can inspire and create a sense of awe. To capture, in Jeremiah it says, "Without a vision, the people will perish." There has to be that vision.

Who are your heroes and why?

How do I define heroes or what are my heroes? My mentor, Ryon Payton, is one of my heroes. Ryon's been a mentor to me in one of the key areas that I think is important which is relationships, but more importantly, Ryon's seen me go in and out of start-ups, and ups and downs. He's loved me throughout all that. And that was an issue for me: can someone love me if I'm not successful or regardless of the circumstances? Ryon's done that for me and I appreciate that. If we could also talk about heroes that don't exist, one of my heroes is King David. In the Scripture, David was a shepherd boy. He was a nothing, he was a nobody and God used him. More importantly, you look in the Psalms, David's heart ... and I think the Psalms were written when David was in the caves and that's a critical time. He was my hero in the caves because God had told him he was going to be King and it was 15 years between the time that he was anointed to be King and the time he became King. In that 15 years, if someone told me I was going to be King and I didn't become King the next day, I would have issues or problems with that. But David spent 15 years in caves, dealing with a bunch of robbers and no names and continued to worship the Lord, continued intimacy with God because of that, he is one of my heroes. Another one of my heroes is my spiritual mentor in Charlotte, North Carolina that has known me since I was born and continues to pray for me. He's my hero because in words and deeds, I don't know anyone that lives it out ... the wisdom he has. He's one of those people that you sit down with and his words are like a double-edged sword: they cut right through everything else. In his presence I feel peace and continuous wisdom. So those are my heroes.

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

The two most valuable lessons I've learned? 1) God calls us to be faithful, not successful. My time at Dream Lot, which was a start-up (I was co-founder), my fellow co-founder was Michael Yang who had been very successful and we just hired the former CEO from Nissan. We had been in the newspaper, all the things right that every great start-up that's going to do well were happening. I remember my professor from Wheaton had called and asked me to do this interview and I did it. I told the students the greatest challenge for me ... would I rejoice if things weren't going well? Because things were going great. Well, things started turning south and we had to lay off half the people. My former roommate from Wheaton had just moved out here, I felt like the world was on my shoulders. I was young. We had to let go of the CTO and all these critical business decisions. God began to use that to change my emotions. It allowed me to transcend the vicissitudes of those circumstances and have a greater foundation to be a better manager, a better leader in that circumstance. 2) God's more concerned with who I am than what I do. Silicon Valley is a place where success and who you are is defined by what you do. It's the first question you get at every party. What do you do? He can make me the CEO of a successful start up or he can make me this ... whatever. He's more concerned with my character and who I am. If we look at Moses, God said, "I speak to other prophets in dreams, I speak to Moses face to face." In the one confrontation between Aaron and Miriam, when they confront Moses, God comes back and He says, "No one speaks to me like Moses does." And then there's a small verse that says, "Moses was the humblest man on the face of the earth." And I think that is critical in key to understand. God's more concerned with who you are than what you do. Those are the two key lessons I've learned.

What was your worst career decision or mistake?

Probably something I do regret that I did in the early stages as I was developing and growing was, I was working for a fellow brother at a company and saw a really great opportunity and rather than really approach a human being honest from the onset about that situation, I kind of made the decision and had already planned to leave and then went back and told him, in retrospect, that I was leaving. And as I look back, he was hurt by that and the right thing to have done would have been to be honest about that from the very beginning and say this is something I feel like is the best decision for me. But it didn't. And I had to go back and I had to ask his forgiveness - I made a mistake and I was



green and I was new. And he forgave me. But, you know, that was good for me because I've been very conscientious about that going forward in the things that I've been doing so it's a real lesson.

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What is the difference between success and significance?

There is the answer I can give you and I can articulate and then there's really what resides deep within me that's shaped by - the image I get is this acid that coats you as you walk around Silicon Valley of what success is - the billion dollar IPO or the \$800 million acquisition. We are so driven and in a constant environment where you're driven to that goal, I pray that [God] would redefine and reshape my notion of. God controls the outcome: Success looks for an outcome. Let your definition of success be bathed and shaped, forged in the shadow of the cross and with that success.

What does balance mean to you? How important is balance to success?

My mother has a great saying that I was raised which is "you have time to do what you want to do." I thoroughly believe that. A lot of my friends, who have kind of retired at an early age because they've achieved such wealth, have more difficulty trying to prioritize their time. I think it's critical to craft a personal mission statement and vision statement and short-term objectives and long-term objectives because those create perimeters that help you very quickly say what you are going to do. For me, one of the things I think God's called me to do is spend time with young men and walk beside them in much the same way that mine does with me. Just to listen and encourage. I make priority for that and that's one of my top priorities and I put energy and time into those relationships with people and I'm very strategic about other things that don't fit within my mission and my vision. I think you have to be very clear about what your goals are and whether something fits within your goal. It doesn't mean that you don't allow flexibility for what God's calling you to do, but as we were talking about this morning and I coin this new phrase, I think God calls us to be 'strategically agenda-less', to come with no agenda, but be very strategic about what you're doing. That's what Christ did.

How do you define yourself?

We try to define ourselves by what we do, achievements and success. I'm very competitive and always define myself by my GPA or what State Championships and all these kinds of things, but [God] began a process, in college, to deconstruct and dismantle who I was or who I thought I was. And it took him a long time. I would really define myself by my character, not by what I do. That's how I want to define myself. My relationship and my walk with God is very important. It's the center of how I define that character. We've all heard the definition of character is who you are when you're by yourself. What do you do when you're by yourself? And so that's how I desire to define myself. I had a friend who once said if your job is up and down and an emotional roller coaster and your life is your job, then guess what? Your life's an emotional roller coaster. That day I really sat back and I said, "Wow." My life was my work.

What was your best investment?

As a broad category, probably the number one thing that's the best investment for me has been my relationships with the people around me. Ironically, I can say the best investments are the things that I have given up. In an odd way, the pursuit of different things or the desire for this material wealth and the investment has really been in being free to be what God's calling me to be. And investing in my time with the Lord is something I need to do more investing in because it has the best fruits and the best yields. Spending time with God each day in intimate relationship, that's the source of my identity, it's the source of everything else.

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