



p-TIPS

Leadership for entrepreneurs (The antiheroic stance)

In the June 2003 issue of the business journal *INC.*, Michael S. Hopkins asserts that “If you’re an entrepreneur, almost everything about ‘leadership’ as we know it is bad for you.” The style of leadership generally referred to as “charismatic” or “heroic” depends on the personal energy and vision of an individual and focuses on the good of the business. According to Hopkins, however, an entrepreneur should focus on his or her own good. Unlike elected leaders with term limits, entrepreneurs can stay with their companies and enjoy their success. If you start a company to be happy, however “happy” is defined, then determining a method to run it that makes you happy is important. “Antiheroic” leadership has slowly been developing among entrepreneurs, and leaders practicing it follow four general rules.

1. Ask why you’re here. Know what you want. Don’t apologize. When the company doesn’t fulfill the needs of the entrepreneur, it can’t fulfill those of employees, customers, or suppliers. Antiheroic leaders understand their dreams, imagine companies to realize them, and are unapologetically honest about personal needs and abilities.

2. Don’t ask “How?” Ask “Who?” Assume you’re not the answer.

Antiheroic leaders don’t have to do everything or even know how to do everything. Instead, getting capable people involved with their companies will attract other capable people, freeing entrepreneurs to explore more possibilities.

3. Embrace the difference between “I am my company” and “I have a company.”

Antiheroic leaders allow others to help form the company vision and take turns leading. They never act as if they were the embodiment of the company. Parent-child relations are prevalent under charismatic leadership, but organizations led by antiheroic leaders are full of capable adults.

4. Forget Superman. Be part of something.

Under antiheroic leadership, entrepreneurs know that they don’t have to supply all the energy and oversee every detail. Being a superhero is not only hard work, it’s lonely. Antiheroes get to be part of the companies they create.