

The Ride of a Lifetime

Bob Iger

+ Former CEO & Executive Chairman, The Walt Disney Company



Over his 15 years of leading The Walt Disney Company, Bob Iger built Disney into one of the largest and most admired media entertainment companies in the world. During his tenure, Disney has been recognized as one of the “Most Reputable Companies” and one of the “Best Employers” by *Forbes*. Additionally, Iger has been named one of the “World’s Most Powerful People” by *Forbes*, among several other notable recognitions. His latest book is *The Ride of a Lifetime*.

Drawing from his book, *The Ride of a Lifetime*, Bob Iger shares how you can lean into the power of optimism, assess risk and navigate industry disruption, and build bridges with those whose values might be different than your own.

Value Relationships

One of Bob’s leadership principles is simple but surprisingly rare: be decent to people. He believes it is very important for leaders to cling to that tenet. Not only is it a fundamental human quality; business is about interpersonal relationships. Better relationships result in better business.

- Bob coined a new phrase, “Decent people finish first.” How would you rate the decency quotient on your team? What action can you take to support each other to raise the decency quotient together?
- Bob actively sought to restore Steve Jobs’ trust in Disney as one of his top priorities. Ultimately, they developed a strong friendship. As a team, note below some ways you can learn from how Bob valued and developed that relationship? What ways did you notice he built trust?
- How have you seen leaders repair relationships that were broken? List a few ways that you felt worked in that process.

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Take some time to reflect on your relationships:

- In what circumstances could you be more decent to people?
- Identify one relationship that you could begin to repair.

Share with your team, one way you can integrate your learnings on building trust into your current relationships?

Big Risks Equal Big Wins

Bob reminds us that we have to be a believer in what we're doing. And, it is important to have a vision of both success and failure. In our dynamic, ever-changing world—risk-taking and innovation, failure and disruption—are necessary parts of making progress.

- Think of someone in your life willing to take risks and embrace failure. How has that mentality affected their personal and vocational life?
- Ultimately, it was Bob's instinct that led to the decision that Disney should not buy Twitter. What role does instinct have in your decision making and should you value it more or less in future decisions?

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- Choosing to introduce Disney+ created and hastened the inevitable disruption being caused by newer media companies. Bob explains that if someone was going to disrupt Disney it might as well be Disney. What is disrupting your industry? Discuss together as a team, how you could contribute to a constructive response?

Bridge-Building

Bob believes in the importance and power of bridge-building between people with different points of view. The alternative, Bob says, is conversations that result in contempt, anger, and dispute. All of which are counterproductive and damaging.

- When have you observed a lesson in bridge-building? What specific benefit did the bridge-building accomplish?
- Take some time to personally reflect on your relationships. List below 1 person that employing the skill of bridge-building could be powerful. Also, note some specific ways you could get started with this connection.

Power of Optimism

Bob stresses the importance of a leader to be straight with people by creating a realistic set of expectations for the future, but that it must be balanced with a sense of hope. Bob describes this necessary balance as optimism with a dose of realism. Thinking of a crisis or change happening in your world (personal or work), note some ways that you could communicate realism and optimism. Work as a team if that is an option.

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Act

What have you heard from this interview that resonates most deeply? What one action step can you integrate into your leadership?