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THE LESSONS OF SMALL BUSINESS BEGINNINGS

A CTO's Years in Small Business and the Tips That Could Make a Difference for a Team of Any Size

David speaks on his origins with small businesses and shares his top tips for ambitious teams.

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Chief technology officer (CTO)
at American Express Global Business
Travel (GBT),

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What is your role at GBT and what attracted you to a career in travel?

My role's responsibility is to manage the development and deployment of our product strategy to our clients and make sure those products are successful in the marketplace. I joined GBT because any business that can help solve business problems with technology is exciting to me. I've been helping companies transform with the use of technology for a long time. GBT is a great example of a company that is leading the charge.

2

What exposure have you had with small businesses either personally or in a working environment?

Personally, I've had quite a bit of exposure to small businesses. For example, I own a jet aircraft and in my management of that jet, I interact with fixed-based operators, which are the centers that operate airport fuel station hangars. Those are small businesses in the aviation category that service my needs. You could even consider my corporation that I've set up to manage my aircraft a small business. I've got fuel, expenses, maintenance expenses, all the various things that would be necessary to operate the aircraft.

3

In your view, what is the importance of emerging businesses to the economy and everyday life?

Emerging businesses are one of the most important employers, especially in the United States. As an example, in the United States, they are one of the most significant contributors to the US economy. They are the fabric of the United States economy. Many emerging businesses are very focused on their people and delivering a very high value to their customers. They drive a consumer-and customer-focused culture that is extremely valuable.

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If you could give a business five tips, what would they be?

1. **Develop a strategy for your business.** Many businesses figure it out as they go versus doing more proactive planning, but strategy is key.
2. **Don't reinvent the wheel.** There's technology that has been innovated for many aspects. There are many solutions available for human resource management, outsourcing capabilities, financial management, and more. Rather than trying to build it on your own, optimizing these capabilities could really help accelerate growth and simplify your business.

3. **Focus on your people.** The key to successful business is really the culture and employees' drive to service your customers.
4. **Know the customer.** The customer is the one that you center your business on. Focus on them, their retention, and their satisfaction.
5. **Get the right culture.** There was a software company that was very tiny that was servicing my corporation's needs. What I found is that every employee there I interacted with was happy, loved their job, and was dedicated to a culture of service. Eventually, I wanted to join the company. I left my job and joined that company. That culture of employee and customer centricity made an amazing company grow to be a multibillion-dollar corporation. That company was PeopleSoft, which was acquired by Oracle. It proves a small company can grow into something very large and impact millions and millions of people around the world.

Learn More

For more information about the Neo1 platform that helps manage employee spend for small to medium businesses, American Express Global Business Travel (GBT), and the services we offer, visit www.amexglobalbusinesstravel.com/neo1/



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