



Edwin Miller's

9 GOOGLE PRINCIPLES FOR SUCCESS





Google has continued to do things that we can observe and replicate to create success for ourselves and our companies. The Intersect Group's CEO, Edwin Miller, has written a series of articles focused on nine separate Google principles and how to apply these to just about any working environment. These principles can be overt or disguised, but all are built into Google's fiber and have afforded them great success.

While many other successful companies have the same underlying principles that have propagated across their culture and business, Edwin selected the Google framework due to its innovative nature. Most important, though, Google's innovation is key to staying relevant in a competitive landscape. Specifically, the kind of innovation often comes from endlessly expanding one another's ideas and actions. This series of observations discusses what each of us can learn from Google's success.

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Google Principle #9

BIRDS OF A FEATHER, FLOCK TOGETHER — RECRUITING THE BEST AND BRIGHTEST

To start us off, we examine the old saying, “Birds of a Feather Flock Together.” Google recruited the best and brightest people into their company, and they provided a competitive and safe environment where the culture could grow and evolve. We can learn so much from this saying regarding our business and personal brands. The people we surround ourselves with will shape our future. This was true when we chose our friends in high school and college, and this same principle applies into adulthood when we build our teams. The wisdom we glean from this simple truth can help us shape our recruiting philosophy, shape our Company’s culture and fashion the customers we acquire. As leaders, we should understand that the brightest people in the world want to work and compete alongside other bright leaders.

It is important to remember that every hire over the course of time will develop into a flock. When you recruit bright, committed, out of the box thinkers into your business they will not only make your company successful, they will attract more like-minded individuals who will want to join your team. When I am hiring, I look for resilient, tenacious and passionate individuals. While each of these potential hires will have a different set of specific skills and benefits they add to a team, I look for similar character traits that point toward their future success and their ability to add positive attributes and energy to our team. In addition to resiliency, tenacity and passion, I look for people who constantly live in a resource state. We all need to work with people that are living in a constant state of learning - or better yet - listening to other points of view. They are willing and searching for paths to alter their approach or course in order to improve outcomes.

We should desire to be around, recruit, work for and lead - etc... the types of people that challenge and motivate us. New ideas are often brought about by standing on the shoulders of the giants beside us, therefore shouldn’t we surround ourselves with giants that challenge our rigor and raise our personal bars? We need to lift together and continue to drive a higher level of capabilities and activities into our businesses and lives.

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Google Principle #8

BUILD A PROFITABLE MODEL — PERSONALLY & PROFESSIONALLY

After talking about the ninth Google principle, it is now time to elaborate on the eighth Google principle, the importance of building a profitable model. We all need to build a profitable business model both personally and professionally. We should always live within our means both personally and professionally, while reaching to achieve our best. Stretching ourselves should never be by living in debt up to our eyeballs or raising capital where we can never produce a solid return. We should raise capital thoughtfully, deliberately and realistically.

Google has done a tremendous job of building value for their shareholders for many reasons but having a growing and profitable business is a key component. Sure, they raised capital. Yes, it took time for them to find their way to new media. In the end, they have a highly profitable model with a compelling value proposition. Their revenue model is sustainable, even in the face of inflation and the speed of research and development. They have found a path to a low touch, high volume and high margin business model.

This equates to a great free cash flow business. They can afford to invest in other areas for growth. We all need to afford ourselves and our businesses the ability to invest in new areas of growth.

That stated, we should guard our brands against making a bet we cannot deliver on. Yes, we need to take risks and challenge ourselves, but that does not mean stepping on a field where we know we cannot compete. It means playing the game we have chosen to the best of our ability and building a great foundation on which we can stand upon. This takes time, patience and in the case of Google's model - a bit of good fortune and market timing.

Google saw the market, developed a strategy and grew their brand in a way that continued to accrete value. The bottom line is that they were in the game on a daily basis. They played hard, followed a set upon strategy, took risk and built a profitable model on which their brand has become a giant. Let's do the same in our personal brands and business. Are you working to create a profitable model at your company? What about your roles - professional and personal? It takes time and dedication to achieve success.

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Google Principle #7

VALUE PROPOSITION - KEEP IT SUPER SIMPLE

So, we have covered Google Principles: #9 and #8.

✓ Birds of a Feather, Flock Together - Recruiting the Best and Brightest

✓ Build a Profitable Business Model - Personally and Professionally

Now is it time for #7 – keep it super simple! This is a simple saying and would seem to be an easy thing to accomplish, but it is not. Just think about the number of businesses that fail each day because they could not convey or deliver their value proposition in a simple manner. Consider the brands that could not come up with something like Nike - “Just Do It.” There are so many examples of companies that could not keep it super simple. There are also many examples of people in their careers that could not simply convey who they were, what they desired for their next role, and how they would have an impact in that role for the benefit of the business.

We live in such a complex time. There is so much data and messaging coming at everyone. We are part of a global supply chain. We have superpowers battling over all sorts of macro and micro economic



items and a pandemic all around us. Thus, during this time, it is critical that we keep our message about our own brand and our Company’s offerings super easy to grasp. In our personal brands and our businesses, we must strive for simplicity. We must discern what we want to be known for and drive that message forward, over and over again. The simpler the business model and the easier we are to deal with personally, the more successful we will be in our endeavors.

Google created the easiest offering one could imagine, and it became a verb. They did not clutter their business model with the creation of their own proprietary content. Yahoo, Lycos, Alta Vista and many

other portals did just the opposite. These other search engines created a business model that would allow a user to search for content, but then remain on the same portal viewing the response to the search string. This was a sub optimal business approach, and it was NOT simple to execute. Contrarily, Google focused on helping a user navigate the web and became content agnostic. Later, they introduced the ability to monetize the model with “paid for” returns, but they did not mix their search business model with proprietary content formation. This was brilliant and simple.

Google does not even need to advertise their business, we all do it for them. When we have a search that returns useless data, we don’t call their support line for help – we simply retype another search string. Now, in the past few years, as their core business grew and created a giant amount of cash flow, they have entered new businesses that leverage data at the core. This has complicated their business and created internal business tension. But, in the beginning, they kept it super simple. We could all benefit from doing the same!

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Google Principle #6

SUCCESSFUL COMPANIES KEEP FOCUS ON THEIR CORE BUSINESS



Birds of a Feather, Flock Together - Recruiting the Best and Brightest



Build a Profitable Business Model - Personally and Professionally



Value Proposition - Keep it Super Simple

We are now discussing #6 – Focus, Focus, Focus.

Google’s search business was and is still its core business. Their advertising business, based on the search engine, is what made Google a very profitable business. This focus has allowed them to invest in other areas and eventually become the company, Alphabet. All of their investments are tied to a strategic plan to create a complementary portfolio of offerings.

As mentioned in Google Principle #7, during the early days of the web, the craze was for portals to have search functionality AND create content to keep eyeballs within their control. During this time, Google remained focused. This is not to say that we should not test new capabilities or markets. At this time, they were testing an enterprise sales effort to offer their search platform as a behind the firewall or on-premise capability. They were well ahead of their time trying to deliver their capability not just in the cloud, but on a private network.

As our businesses have core competencies and a business model, we also need to focus on individuals. We all have strengths and weaknesses. We are often told to improve on our shortcomings versus focus on our strengths and doing what we do well at a higher level. This is so important for us to understand as individuals. There is an assessment created by research performed by Gallup, that will inform us of our top genetic strengths. I encourage everyone to understand this study and learn more about yourselves, as I have found it very helpful. When we stray from our core competencies or strengths as a person or a business, we create risk in our being successful.



Here at The Intersect Group, we are a staffing business. We do not sell software or consulting services; we source exceptional talent for our clients. Focusing on our business model and adding value through differentiation is key for our future success and creating a higher growth business. Our near-term approach to drive differentiation will be in the business intelligence space and creating a data-driven staffing business model. We will make investments and test the ROI with real rigor.

During this tough season, we are all experiencing, I encourage everyone to Focus on the little things. Focus on improving yourselves with training. Focus on creating a flywheel effect in your own business model.

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Google Principle #5

SUCCESSFUL COMPANY TRAIT: TAKING CHANCES

As we continue the countdown of the Google Principles series, we recount the four principles previously covered:

- ✓ Birds of a Feather, Flock Together - Recruiting the Best and Brightest
- ✓ Build a Profitable Business Model - Personally and Professionally
- ✓ Value Proposition - Keep it Super Simple
- ✓ Successful Companies Keep Focus on Their Core Business

We are now discussing #5 – Take a Chance!

The fifth principle Google demonstrates well is taking chances. They will make a bet and attempt to create a new market. They did this with “search”, and they continue, with Alphabet, to invest in areas that are outside of their comfort zone. For example: Google is late to the game on a cloud offering, but they are hiring strong leaders to take their technology to market and attack AMZN AWS. Another example is attacking the cell phone market with the pixel.

Will these be successful? It is hard to say, but Google has a knack for taking a chance and then measuring results in a relentless manner. Every business must re-invent themselves to not only thrive but survive. Consider what is occurring during COVID. Many businesses will not survive given a tired business model that lacked innovation. To innovate, we need to perform well in our change management processes as this is a must for all businesses.

Now, let’s discuss how this principle can impact our personal lives. As we discuss this area, keep in mind, that what we do personally will impact the outcomes for the businesses in which we compete. Our level of personal drive will impact our workforce engagement. So often in our own personal lives we stop taking chances and play it safe. We find ourselves beaten down, afraid, not willing, or just fearful to take a chance on something new or different. We may have experienced failure, a bad market, or the inability to reach our goals that were once formed in our youthful minds.

Know that with great risk comes great reward. While there is wisdom in knowing when to slow down or even when to play it safe, if you want to hit that homerun you’re going to have to swing for the fence. It has been a constant Google principle to reinvent

categories, technology, brands, offerings, media, software... We must have the courage and gutsy audacity to do the same. We must be willing to place a flag in the sand and say, “this beach is ours!” This is not a monetary principle; it is more of a character trait in innovative and successful people. The person that tries new things and fails is stronger than the person that never tried. I love the quote from Thomas Edison that reads, “I have not failed. I’ve just found 10,000 ways that won’t work.” Even if we fail, we will have learned. We will have experienced something others, the folks that are not willing to even step up to bat, have never experienced! The interesting thing about taking a chance or risk takers in general, is that the failure rate is really not that much different from the guy who always plays it safe. Peter Drucker shares this sentiment, “People who don’t take risks generally make about two big mistakes a year. People who do take risks generally make about two big mistakes a year.” Have a look at the image and be sure to read how MJ thinks about taking a chance. Use whatever tools are available to you to measure the business climate you are in, make your best judgments based on the facts you have...and then, Take That Chance!

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Google Principle #4

FORWARD THINKING LEADERSHIP



In our 4th principle that contributes to Google's success, we share how constantly looking towards the future can help identify opportunities. Look forward, innovate and live in a resource state!

Forward thinking means you are seeking the next big opportunity. Google is always contemplating how to innovate their current products and business model. Peter Drucker wrote that innovation is the specific instrument of entrepreneurship — this is the act that endows resources with a new capacity to create wealth. Let that statement soak in for a moment. Innovation is the instrument that will change any business for the better. So many of our businesses, during good times, fail to disrupt their business model and innovate. It is easy to become comfortable.

That is the exact time to test the business model and determine where change and looking forward is necessary.

Google is relentless at looking forward and innovating their business model. Sure, there are firms today that are inventing all types of offerings, but Google has always been forward looking in their business model. The best businesses emulate this thinking and strive for the future by embracing change as a way of being. Let's also think about what *"living in a resource state"* means. I think of this as living in a constant state of listening and learning. It is the ability to have an open mind and be curious. While curiosity killed the cat, it also helps businesses thrive in good and bad times. What is working and why? How could we improve a process or role in the business? How can we create delighted clients? All of these questions, and many more, should be rattling about in an organization on a daily basis.

In our personal lives we also must always think of how to reinvent, improve, and innovate our own personal offerings and brand. Again, in good times, we become comfortable. We should understand that if we are not improving ourselves, then we are surely declining in this competitive world as someone else is improving at a faster pace. We should live in a resource state. Personally, I search for this attribute in all people I interview. Are you in a constant state of learning? Are you always thinking about how to alter your approach and course to improve your outcomes? If you are, you are living in a resource state. I find that many people will circle the same proverbial block their entire life. Do you? If you see the same houses or trends over and over again in your life, then you have not yet reached the resource state that Google has demonstrated.

I have found that if there is an issue that needs correcting, I can either correct the issue myself or someone else will correct the issue – and possibly to my demise. We all fall short and will struggle to break out of the mire at times. However, if we keep our eyes looking forward, innovate, and live in a resource state, we will gain the most value on the time we invest. Change is inevitable. Looking forward and driving change is key.

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Google Principle #3

BUILDING A HIGH VELOCITY SALES TEAM

The third Google principle is to drive high value creation through a **low touch, high volume** and **high margin** model. Let's define touch, volume and margin as they relate to a business model.

Touch

First, the touch in a business indicates how many customer interaction cycles there are in the development, marketing, sales, delivery and support areas for your offerings. You need to know the type of buyers and users your business serves, and just how much maintenance these customers require. How difficult is it to market and sell the product(s) to them? Is it a solution sales process that requires a longer sales cycle? What about delivery of the offering? Is it "one and done," or do you need to go on-site and spend time with the customer to deliver the product offering? Further, do the customers support themselves once they receive the product or is ongoing support required?

Volume

Volume simply measures the number of new or repeat customers within a period for a business.

Margin

Margin includes both the growth and net margins of the business. Regardless of what type of product or service a company sells, these depend on the relationship of direct and indirect costs with price.



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Google has built a low touch, high volume and high margin business. They perform billions of transactions where they are touching the consumer very quickly and then sending them on their way. The business drives billions of transactions that are all of high value to their ecosystem.

Google has created so much power that their company name is now a verb. This is truly powerful. Their model is low touch, meaning the cost of sales, marketing, delivery, and support are very low for their business as a percentage of revenue. This is a lucrative model that provides incredible growth in

terms of NR while also creating strong and growing margins. Their model is high volume, meaning billions of quick transactions occur and they do this at a high margin.

As a start-up, Google began selling enterprise search to the Global 2000 and this was a High Touch, Mid Volume, Low to Mid Margin business. The media model to which they transitioned is nothing of the sort. We, as individuals must think on how each of us can achieve this. If we are in a job that requires long hours and only affords us the opportunity to do that one job while paying us a lower wage than we

would like, we have effectively built our brands and our personal business model on the opposite model of Google. We must find a way to have lower touch, higher volume, and high margin on those touches. How can we create value while we are sleeping? How can we truly add value to our ecosystem that is systemic and scalable? Google did this, and if we can achieve this model in our own personal ecosystem, there will be high returns on our time.

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Google Principle #2

CREATE FLAT AND EMPOWERED ORGANIZATIONS

The second Google principle is to create flat and empowered organizations that help bring all of the other Google principles to life. Google has embraced and understands this principle in that they strive to recruit the brightest talent and then empower them to make decisions – essentially, working as the CEOs of their business within Google. They drive a flat structure (smaller teams) where everyone can be creative and lead. Everyone at some point is expected to create an idea or offering that is leveraged by the Google machine. They work in teams, but they are associates, not a just a hierarchy.



Giving employees a sense of empowerment and a creative voice is a huge motivating approach to gain the most engagement and productivity from each person within your business. This makes everyone a true knowledge worker striving to create the next big thing or add real value to the product or offering they are working on with their team. The fewer layers in an organization lessens the noise in the communication. The more empowered an employee feels, the more they will achieve. Bill Gates said this about building flat organizations:

"...here at Microsoft we eliminate politics by giving everybody the same message and maintain a flat organization in which all issues are discussed openly."

As leaders of organizations, we all must insist on clear and direct communication, prevent competing missions or objectives, eliminate rivalry between different parts of the organization and empower teams to do innovate while owning and being accountable for the outcomes of their work.

There are many advantages to a flat organizational structure:

- It allows expense and performance management at a higher level of granularity.
- It lifts the participation and improves connected knowledge of the employees.
- It improves the speed of communication and coordination within the firm.
- Fewer levels of management encourage an easier decision-making process among employees.

There are also disadvantages that must be managed:

- Flat organizations can lead to having a lack of specialists.
- Many times, unless well organized, job functions may not be well understood.
- Confusion in the reporting structure and decision making can be grey.
- As companies grow, they must continue to break into smaller organizations for clarity.

CONTINUE READING



One of the largest issues I have seen around flat organizational structures, as mentioned in the list above, is around the lack of clear reporting structure. It is difficult for a person to have more than one manager. That stated, during our career, all of us have likely seen or experienced working for more than one person at the same time. While creating a flat and empowered organization, we must focus on driving the good outcomes while removing the downsides. Flat and empowered organizations tend to create great cultures and solid business outcomes for all involved, if managed appropriately. If you do decide to move to a flat and empowered organization, ensure transparency and strong lines of communication are in place. Have weekly check-in meetings to ensure the objectives of the business are aligned and being executed.

NEXT CHAPTER

Google Principle #1

WHAT HAPPENS IN BUSINESS WHEN YOU GIVE MORE THAN YOU RECEIVE?

Last but not least, as we wrap up the series, we look at how giving more in value than you receive results in differentiating yourself from your competitors.

The first Google principle is to give more than you receive. This is simple, yet so powerful – and frankly hard to accomplish unless we are intentional. With all of the craziness in 2020, we all need to give more than we receive. We need to consider others first. We need to change our hearts and minds toward listening and understanding before trying to be understood. For our customers, if we exceed expectations, they will return time and time again without us having to ask them to return. We need to alter the mindset of business from one of greed or “getting” from our customer, to one of giving or providing exceptional value to our customer.

Most people are perceptive enough to know when they are being looked at as a dollar sign or a means to an end. What if we transform our way of thinking? What if our real goal in any interaction with our colleagues or customers was to give more than we receive regarding any transaction? Picture a world

where our customers really sense that our ultimate goal is to provide them exceptional service and / or products versus the profit we are making from the transaction.

Google demonstrates this principle when they allow a person to perform a search. The Google search engine provides the results to the search. The consumer then leaves the Google platform and goes along their way to another content or offering provider. We all use Google each day to find things we need to understand or need to acquire. The failed business models of the search era would allow you to leverage their search engine, but then served up the content via their own portal. Google did just the opposite. They allow the search to deliver non-Google content. Today, they certainly leverage the advertising model, but in the formative years, they sent us to the best “googled” resource.”

Now, for this model to be successful, Google had to first create a high value interaction whereby people would return and tell others about the value. Once the community was built, Google could then create

and drive their financial model – thus advertising around search. We can learn much from them regarding this powerful principle.

“Give more than you get, and people will return.”

So, don’t hold onto your customers so tightly that they feel like you are squeezing them to death. Give them the opportunity to see the value and make the decision to come back again and again. The open source model, in its pure form is similar, where a product that is created to solve problems is offered to a community at no charge. Now go give!

As we count down our Google Leadership series, Edwin Miller, CEO of The Intersect Group shares his thoughts on how Google focused on getting their sales process right and generating a steady stream of revenue through a high velocity sales team.



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About The Intersect Group

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