

WHAT I LEARNED FROM A CAREER IN STARTUPS

**3 QUALITIES OF A GREAT SOFTWARE
ENGINEER**

WHO AM I



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- ▶ Co-Founder and former CTO of Codeship
- ▶ Former CTO of Serverless Inc

MY STARTUP CAREER SO FAR

- ▶ Started Codeship in October 2010
- ▶ 3 very diverse Founders
- ▶ ~30 people at the moment
- ▶ Offices in Boston, Vienna and many Remote
- ▶ ~11 Mio raised in Capital from mostly US Investors
- ▶ Left in Feb 2016
- ▶ Joined Serverless April 2017
- ▶ Got fired in November 2017
- ▶ Consultant since then and starting something new now

3 QUALITIES

1. PERSONAL EXCELLENCE

TECHNICAL EXCELLENCE

- ▶ Experience to come up with solutions and ideas for a new problem
- ▶ Process to tackle any new problem
- ▶ Ability to ship high quality software quickly

**WILL HAPPEN AS YOU'RE
INTERESTED IN THIS**

STILL HARD WORK

**USE YOUR INTEREST IN
TECHNOLOGY TO BUILD GREAT
PRODUCTS**

**SEPARATE WHAT YOU WANT TO
BUILD FROM WHAT NEEDS TO BE
BUILT**

**BIAS DRIVEN ENGINEERING
IS A BIG PROBLEM**

EXAMPLES

- ▶ Don't want to use the cloud because it might be expensive in the future (without any supporting data to back that up)
- ▶ I'd rather build that myself, because I don't like how they have implemented xyz (without any evidence that your approach is better)
- ▶ I don't want to give up control of this part because we might want to build more complex features here in the future (have you checked that against the plan for your product?)

**YOUR GOAL IS TO SHIP QUALITY
PRODUCTS, NOT JUST QUALITY
SOFTWARE**

**QUALITY AND SHIPPING
ARE EQUALLY IMPORTANT**

[HTTP://BIT.LY/INTERCOM-SHIPPING](http://bit.ly/intercom-shipping)

**DON'T LET PERFECT BE THE ENEMY OF
SHIPPED**

**GET ORGANISED AND
GET FOCUSED**

**DISTRACTIONS AND
INEFFICIENCIES ARE EXPENSIVE**

([HTTP://BIT.LY/CODESHIP-TEAM-PRODUCTIVITY](http://bit.ly/codeship-team-productivity))

**SO MUCH TO BUILD, SO LITTLE TIME TO
BUILD IT**

2. WORKING WITH AND UNDERSTANDING PEOPLE

**SOFTWARE ENGINEERING
IS A TEAMSPORT**

VERY HARD PROBLEM

**MUCH MUCH HARDER
THAN ENGINEERING**

THINGS YOU NEED TO UNDERSTAND

- ▶ Motivations

- ▶ Why is somebody choosing a technology or direction?

- ▶ Wants

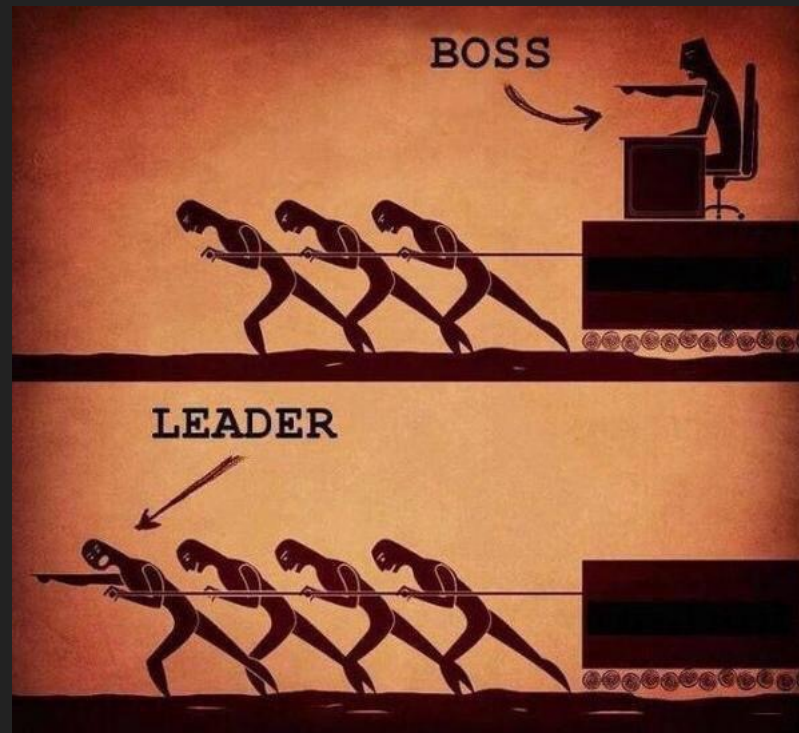
- ▶ What do they want to gain out of this project? What is the direction they are going into next in their career?

- ▶ Needs

- ▶ What do they need to be successful? How can you help them become successful?

**LEAD PEOPLE TO MAKE THEM
AND YOURSELF SUCCESSFUL**

LEADERSHIP DOES NOT MEAN MANAGEMENT



<http://bit.ly/1tZbOUI>

EXAMPLES

- ▶ Asking more of yourself than you ask of others
 - ▶ You follow all coding guidelines every time you open up a pull request
 - ▶ You always follow the agreed upon engineering processes so nobody gets surprised
 - ▶ You keep your promises, deliver on time and let people know earlier when you're not on time
- ▶ You invest time into researching new ways to do things, but limit it to what is necessary without getting lost in details
- ▶ You proactively reach out to others to help them to ship their code
- ▶ You put team productivity and team success above all else instead of jumping into unproven technology without clear advantages just because you like them

**LEADERSHIP IS NOT GETTING WHAT
YOU WANT, BUT HELPING THE TEAM
HIT THE GOAL**

WHEATONS LAW - [HTTP://BIT.LY/WIL-LAW](http://bit.ly/wil-law)

[HTTPS://WWW.YOUTUBE.COM/WATCH?V=T3ICROE-QIW](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T3ICROE-QIW)

DON'T BE A DICK

[HTTP://BIT.LY/EGOLESS-PROGRAMMING](http://bit.ly/egoless-programming)

REMOVE YOUR EGO

**UNDERSTAND OTHER PEOPLES
EGO AND DON'T TRAMPLE ON IT**

**NOTHING WORSE THEN BEING RIGHT
AND FORCING OTHERS TO ACCEPT IT**

STORY TIME!

**BECOME GOOD AT CONSTRUCTIVE
FEEDBACK WITH CONTEXT**

**IT'S OK TO NOT KNOW
THIS IF YOU LEARN IT**

HOW TO GET BETTER AT IT

- ▶ Talk to more experienced engineers about situations they had to deal with
- ▶ If something feels uncomfortable talk to colleagues to find out what their issues are and learn from it
- ▶ Books (No replacement for real life experience)
 - ▶ Peopleware
 - ▶ Mythical Man Month
 - ▶ Phoenix Project

3. CONNECTING BUSINESS AND TECHNOLOGY

ARE YOU HELPING?

- ▶ Why are you building what you are building?
- ▶ Are you building the right thing?
- ▶ Can you even understand what the right thing is?

**WHAT ARE THE KEY METRICS THAT
SHOW THE SUCCESS OF THE
BUSINESS**

**ASK TO BETTER UNDERSTAND
THOSE KEY METRICS**

**AM I WORKING ON THE
MOST IMPORTANT THING**

**REPORT BACK WITH YOUR IDEAS
OTHERS DON'T KNOW ABOUT**

HOW TO GET THOSE SKILLS

GET GOOD WITH THE FOLLOWING

- ▶ Email
- ▶ Short and concise arguments in writing or verbal (really key for getting your point across easily)
 - ▶ Start writing blogposts to get better at this
- ▶ Talk to your co-workers regularly how they feel, what they are looking for and what things they have planned in their future
- ▶ Understanding of the key business metrics and how you can help meeting the goals of the company. Ask your Boss about this, be engaged

ANALYSE YOURSELF CONSTANTLY

- ▶ Where do you suck
- ▶ Where do you need to get better
- ▶ Who can give you feedback or tell you where you suck
- ▶ What skills are you lacking that you need to succeed in the future
- ▶ Are you a nice person or are you not (aka an asshole)

GET A MENTOR

**SINGLE BEST ADVICE I
DIDN'T USE FOR TOO LONG**

LEARN TO RECEIVE IT TOO

ASK FOR TOUGH FEEDBACK

**PEOPLE GIVING YOU FEEDBACK
CARE. PEOPLE SHUTTING UP DON'T
CARE ABOUT YOU**

**FIND THE PEOPLE WHO
CARE ABOUT YOU**

**BUILD SOMETHING OUT
OF YOUR LEAGUE**

**CHALLENGE YOURSELF
TO GROW FASTER**

**WORK WITH PEOPLE WHO ARE
VERY GOOD AT WHAT THEY DO**

**BEST TIME TO START
FINDING THEM IS NOW**

IT WILL ONLY GET HARDER FROM HERE ON OUT

**NOW IS THE TIME TO START YOUR
NETWORK**

- 1. ACHIEVE PERSONAL EXCELLENCE**
- 2. UNDERSTAND PEOPLE**
- 3. CONNECT YOUR WORK TO BUSINESS GOALS**
- 4. MAKE OTHER PEOPLE MORE PRODUCTIVE**

STARTUP TIPS

TIPS FOR JOINING A STARTUP

- ▶ Low Salary for better Equity is almost always shit (unless you are super early)
 - ▶ Consider Equity worthless
- ▶ Know what you're worth and demand it
- ▶ Developers are a super hard to find commodity so you have leverage
- ▶ Join a team with an experienced Founder (No first time founders for your first git)

TIPS FOR JOINING A STARTUP

- ▶ Interview the Team you're working with when you start there
 - ▶ Ask them everything you can think of about their process, ...
- ▶ Ask somebody who has already done it (send me an email)
- ▶ Think globally, look for opportunities everywhere and remotely

TIPS FOR STARTING A COMPANY

- ▶ Find a problem you're passionate about
- ▶ Build Network early so you can have people to join your Startup
- ▶ Become great at Marketing yourself (YES ESPECIALLY AS A DEVELOPER)
- ▶ Be **EXCITING** when telling your idea to others. You're building the coolest shit!
- ▶ Fundraising is a tool, not a goal
- ▶ Sales and Marketing are at least as important as Technology
- ▶ Sales and raising money means building long term relationships!

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