

## 26 Lessons from a 26 year old CEO

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"On April 25th I turned 26, and a few weeks later my Web Marketing agency turned two. What started as a single person mini-business, has turned into a 26 person global Web Marketing firm in just two short years. I've been immensely grateful for the opportunities life has presented me with. And, as I look forward to the future, it would only be fair to look back as well. Here are 26 lessons I have learned as a young entrepreneur and CEO."

**1. A written Vision of what you want your company to look like in 3 years is important.** It isn't enough to envision your goals in your mind. You must have your Vision & Action Plan on

paper. This helps to define & clarify it. Every decision you make, ask yourself: does this help me get closer to my vision?

2. **Listen to your Clients.** When we started, we were only offering Social Media consulting services. But, clients quickly demanded more. We eventually ended up serving as their Web-Marketing department. The marketplace will tell you what it needs. You only have to listen, and then deliver a great solution that meets their needs.

3. **Half the job is Keeping up.** The other half is going twice as fast. The pace of technology will only continue to quicken. It doesn't matter what your industry is, you have to keep up, in order to offer the latest, greatest.

4. **It's Value, not Price.** Always judge your product, adding features, staff based on the value something or someone brings to the table. Price is relative.

5. **Only hire people who have a Passion for your Product.** In a small, starting business, passion is a must in every position. Hire people who are driven to do well, believe in your vision & want your business to succeed.

6. **If you must fire someone, be graceful and professional about it.** This is the worst part of being a CEO. It is tough to let people go, but for the greater good of the business, some-times it must be done. It doesn't matter if you are firing or being fired, but don't burn bridges. Things, people change.
7. **Forgive & Forget.** Things happen. People change. You can't move forward in business - or in life - if you can't forgive and move on.
8. **Cash flow is crucial.** This is especially true when your just starting, when the economy is slow, or if you are growing quickly. Work with clients to get payments upfront, as much as possible or in a quick turn.
9. **Balance is over-rated. Aim for joy.** When work is fun, you don't feel the need to take as many breaks, escapes. However, balance your life, so you are happy with your mix – family, friends, hobbies, etc.
10. **Don't under-estimate the power of PR.** The power of the press may now be in more than just the hands of journalists (um . . . . Social media, anyone?). Learn to be a friend to the Press.

11. **Treat your Team well.** People will follow a leader who treats them with respect. Learn to value your team's input, and acknowledge it. Reward your Team for a job well done.

12. **Focus is the most under-rated Skill that you must master.** When in doubt of what to do, review the Vision & Action Plan. Focus on what's the most important then, to keep you on the path toward the goal.

13. **Multi-Tasking doesn't necessarily mean greater productivity.** Numerous studies have shown that multitasking diminishes brain power by dispersing it. If you can, focus on the next most important thing to do and do a great job, so you can make your contribution to the company's success. Then move on to the next most important.

14. **Age isn't just a number.** Age does matter. Passion does. Managing a Gen Y employee is different than managing a Baby Boomer, because they have different values & goals in life.

15. **Appearances matter.** Dress appropriately, so you make a good impression that you are a relatively normal person. "You don't get a 2nd chance at a 1st impression".

16. **Learn to View Situations Objectively, because there are many points of view to consider.** Just because you would or wouldn't do something, doesn't mean others are the same way.

17. **Life is short, and very easy to take for granted.** Life is temporary, and the most important thing that matters is, how you treated those around you.

18. **Pets make the workplace better.** I think that every office should have a mascot. With a loving lively pet, no day is a sad day.

19. **A Support Network is crucial.** You can't do it alone. You don't have the time or talent. Building a personal and professional support network is imperative to having a successful company. Besides, you'll get lots of good input from them on how to run your business better.

20. **Give "Lady Luck" her due.** Luck has played a huge part in my life. I don't deny it. When you get it, grab it and hang on. I am just grateful that I had "good luck" just at the right time – to succeed.

21. **Hard work is a given.** I've learned that there is always work that will need to be done. The task list is never complete. So, just do the best you can and move on to the next task.

22. **It IS lonely at the top.** But the view & the accommodations are both amazing. Enjoy.

23. **Mostly ignore your Critics.** They like the power the anonymity of the internet gives them. Have a quick look and see if they have an idea that can improve your product, otherwise, don't pay them any more attention. Do it your way. You know your Customers & Product better than anyone. You know what's right for your Customers.

24. **Be picky when choosing your Friends.** My friend list (and I don't mean Facebook) is short. Surround yourself with people who "inspire" you and phase out the ones that "tire" you; drag you down.

25. **Karma exists in Business & Life.** "What goes around, comes around." The older I get, the more I see this being true. Think twice before you act; consider the consequences.

26. **Being a CEO means being a CVO - Chief Value Officer.** Always ask yourself: How can I create more value for our clients? Our prospects? Our internal team? The answers will guide you to keep building a better company.